REVISITING POSTCOLONIALISM AND THE PLIGHT OF THE AFRICAN CHILD IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE’S PURPLE HIBISCUS AND HALF OF A YELLOW SUN

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Abstract
This study examines the plight of African children with close reference to Chimamanda Adichie’s novels, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The study maintains that child abuse is sometimes caused by parents. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Eugene Achike as a deviant father, subjects his children Jaja and Kambili to physical and mental torture. The plight of Jaja and his sister Kambili is neatly captured as their father beats them frequently, scalds their feet with hot water, breaks Jaja’s finger, and does not allow them to live a normal life since he has a strict schedule that they must adhere to. Their father has “imprisoned” them in their own home. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the children suffer as a result of poverty and war. Poverty is responsible for their plight as some are denied education and subjected to child marriage, child labour or sexual abuse. The Biafran Army rapes children at will. Little children are conscripted into the army and sent to the war front without formal military training. The plight of children in these novels is an indication of what children are passing through in Africa and only the adult world can alleviate their plight. Postcolonial criticism attributes Eugene’s deviant behaviour and the civil war (the main causes of child abuse in both novels) to colonialism and its aftermath.

Keywords: African Children, Child Abuse, plight of children

Introduction
Children deserve a decent upbringing so that the future of the society will be a promising one. Many African nations make effort to ensure that children grow up in a society that loves and cares for them but with modernity and attendant introduction of capitalist economic systems, child abuse has become a common phenomenon in some African countries as adults manhandle children. It is as a result of this that Michael Fleshman states that, “life for tens of millions of Africa’s youngest and most vulnerable inhabitants remain[s] difficult, dangerous and all too often, tragically short” (1). The plight of children is worst in African nations that are at war or have experienced war recently. In such countries, Fleshman observes that children are “trapped in a downward spiral of war, disease and deepening poverty” (1). The experiences of African children when a war takes place are demonstrated in this study when considering the experience of children in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, a Nigerian civil war story.

Chimamanda Adichie’s first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* exposes religious fanaticism which makes some parents like Eugene to deny children their fundamental human rights. His own religion is a brand of religion that encourages the manhandling of his children in God’s name. The children are denied love and care by their despotic father, Eugene. This analysis of Adichie’s novels uses postcolonial theory as a theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework
Postcolonialism is a theory that battles with colonialism and issues like the effects of the colonizers’ religion, language, and education on the culture and tradition of those who were once colonized. From the perspective of postcolonialism, Eugene is a product of the colonizer, having acquired the colonizer’s language, religion, culture and education. It is against this background that we can understand why he subjects his wife and children to physical and mental torture.

Postcolonial theory is a literary theory that has been embraced by many critics (as well as theoreticians) and it dwells on colonialism as well as its aftermath. The theory seeks to explain the burning issues in postcolonial nations that have attained independence but are held back from development due largely to the influence neo-colonialism. Literary critics approach postcolonialism from different points of view, and as a result of this, a generally accepted definition is difficult to arrive at. According to Rasiah Sugirtharajah, this “field of inquiry is not monolithic but rather a field which provides and caters for a variety of concerns, oppositional stances.” (7). This being the case, the paper relies...
on the definition of postcolonialism as conceived by Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin and Gareth Griffiths. Postcolonialism as they have seen it, cover[s] all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonialism to the present day. This is because there is continuity of pre-occupation throughout the historical process initiated by the European imperial aggression. We also suggest that it is most appropriate as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is continued. (Empire Writes Back 2)

This opinion on postcolonialism is a deliberate attempt at avoiding the argument on whether or not postcolonialism should be seen as referring to literary works emerging after independence only. Considering this opinion as put forward by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, Shija observes that the definition is “simplistic as it merely chronicles all written literatures of the people who were once colonized regardless of its contents as post-colonial literatures” (3). Also commenting on the definition of Postcolonialism by Ashcroft above, Childs, Peter and Patrick Williams, state that Ashcroft, Tiffin and Griffiths have provided “a definition which has become somewhat notorious” (3). They see the definition as notorious since they notice that there are inconsistencies in the definition adding that it may not be easy to identify a “continuity of preoccupations” as claimed in this definition over such an expanse of time. However, an indication of why one may be inclined to accept the position of the trio is expressed by Stephen Slemon who holds the view that Postcolonialism ought not be restricted to the era after independence but should cover even the period of colonialism itself. He goes further to state that the, definitions of “postcolonial” of course vary widely, but for me, the concept proves most useful not when it is used synonymously with a post-independence historical period in once colonized nations, but rather when it locates a specifically anti or postcolonial discursive purchase in culture, one which begins in the moment that colonial power inscribes itself onto the body and space of its Others [colonies] and which continues as an often occulted tradition into the modern theatre of neo-colonialist inter-national relations. (3)

Slemon does not restrict the discourse to merely spatial considerations but to the content of the discourse, namely: the relationship between cultural production within neo-colonial nation state. In another text, Ashcroft, Tiffin and Griffiths state that postcolonialism is, “a way of reading and rereading texts of both metropolitan and colonial cultures to draw deliberate attention to the profound and inescapable effects of colonization on literary production; anthropological accounts; historical records; administrative and scientific writing” (Key Concepts192). In this particular instance, Ashcroft and Slemon’s views cohere. This is because they both emphasise literature in former colonies has always analysed the effect of colonialism on the culture of the colonized as well as other issues. The founder of Negritude, Aime Cesaire, in his criticism of colonialism maintains that contrary to the popular belief that colonizers were out to provide a culture and education to a cultureless set of Africans, colonization was “neither evangelization, nor a philanthropic enterprise, nor a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease and tyranny, nor a project undertaken for the greater glory of God, nor an attempt to extend the rule of law.” (32) He establishes the fact that the colonizers never had any pure motive since they acted hypocritically sometimes as barbarians towards the natives that they had colonized and made away with the resources of such nations to their own countries to enrich themselves.

The colonizer used religion to further the process of colonization. Ana Clarissa Neneve adds that “the religions of the colonized subjects were frequently belittled and seen as irrational beliefs or paganism and therefore, used as a reason for what the colonizer claimed was their mission to civilize”(35). Aside from religion, the
colonial masters also had education to their advantage. Colonial education emphasized the superiority of the colonizer over the colonized and also promoted the language of the colonizer. Postcolonial literature is interested in identifying and condemning the impact of colonialism on the culture of the colonized and celebrating the culture of the postcolonial nations. Postcolonial criticism seeks to offer a voice to those who have been rendered voiceless by exposing the Eurocentric opinions that had been in existence during and after colonialism. The attempt to offer a voice to the voiceless and reject Eurocentric notions on the colonized is also stated by Jim Parson and Kelly Hardings that, postcolonial theory calls for justice and seeks to speak to social and psychological suffering, exploitation, violence and enslavement done to the powerless victims of colonisation around the world by challenging the superiority of dominant perspectives and seeking to reposition and empower the marginalized and subordinated.

This study upholds the opinion of Parson and Hardings that Postcolonialism actually seeks to give voice to those whose views were muted and calls for justice in the postcolonial nations. Adichie’s novels expose issues like the consequences of war, religious fanaticism, corruption, and the plight of women and children in the hands of despotic fathers. All these are serious issues in postcolonialism. Such an interest explains why Adichie’s novels are being approached from a postcolonial perspective.

The Plight of the African Child in Purple Hibiscus

Purple Hibiscus tells the story of Kambili and her brother, Jaja as they grow up under the guidance of their parents. They grow up in a home where everything they need is available but they lack joy since they are harassed and pushed around by their father Eugene. This points to the fact that some children suffer much because their parents who are supposed to make life comfortable for them, choose to oppress them and this is the case in Purple Hibiscus. Adichie takes her time to portray Eugene as an abusive parent and the plight of his wife children. Commenting on the character of Eugene as an irresponsible parent, Corinne Lynette Sandwith observes that “Eugene subjects his own children to routine physical and emotional abuse” (97).

Kambili explains that her father Eugene Achike does not allow her to interact with other students and has placed an order that she must run to the gate and be driven home immediately she hears the last bell in school. She tells us, “once Kevin told Papa I took a few minutes longer, and Papa slapped my left and right cheeks at the same time, so his huge palms left parallel marks on my face and ringing in my ears for days” (Purple Hibiscus, 51) Kambili’s plight is neatly captured in her narrative as she explains the treatment meted to her and Jaja when their father decides to pour hot water on their legs for having committed the “sin” of sleeping in the same house with her grandfather who is a heathen: “Papa was holding me with one wide hand, pouring the hot water carefully with the other. I did not know that the sobbing voice “I’m sorry! I’m sorry!” was mine until the water stopped and I realized my mouth was moving and the words were coming out” (Purple Hibiscus, 192).

Only a religious extremist like Eugene, blinded by those who colonized his senses, will say that staying in the same house with a grandfather who is not a Christian is a sin. He tells his children after scalding their feet with hot water that, “that is what you do to yourself when you walk into sin. You burn your feet” (Purple Hibiscus, 192). Here, Eugene uses religion to justify child abuse. This is just one out of the many incidences of the harassment of Kambili and her brother by their father (Eugene) who has chosen to be their oppressor. Only a religious extremist will reason this way. Naomi Ofori adds that “Eugene Achike caught up in fanatic Catholicism, terrorizes the entire family and imposes a senseless order on the family” (72). Kambili also explains how her father dealt with her when he saw her with a painting of her grandfather’s image, “he started to kick me. The metal buckles on his slippers stung like bites from giant mosquitoes.” (Purple Hibiscus, 206)
Commenting on this domestic violence in Eugene’s home, Sadiya Abubakar notes that, “in Chimamanda Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus the extent of domestic violence that prevails in the patriarchal society of Nigeria is shown or projected through the character of Eugene” (605). On the other hand, Edgar sees it as “parental cruelty towards children” (134).

Another aspect of child abuse is when Eugene sees Kambili eating on Sunday before Mass. Kambili compares her father with Fulani nomads who beat their cattle mercilessly: “Papa was like a Fulani nomad although he did not have their spare, tall body as he swung his belt at mama, Jaja and me” (Purple Hibiscus,75). These words compare Eugene to illiterate herdsmen often considered wild, who would tie the children to their beasts. It is telling that a father would treat his own children as animals. In his essay, Martin Shauna takes a close look at this pathetic situation and concludes that “Kambili and her brother have no other option than to put up with Eugene’s dictatorship” (14). Unfortunately, society and even the Church fails to protect the family from abuse.

The plight of children in contemporary African society in some cases, takes the form of children being denied love and parental care. In Purple Hibiscus, Kambili and Jaja are denied love by their father who is so domineering and despotic in his relationship with them. The only sign of love in Eugene’s home takes the form of inviting the children to come and sip hot tea. There is no love in this act as kambili tells us, “the tea was always hot, always burned my tongue and if lunch was something peppery, my tongue suffered” (Purple Hibiscus,8). This ‘love sip’ that burns the tongue is not the kind of love that the children need. The children need love that will make them relax and laugh happily. In addition to this, Eugene does not allow his children to sit and chat or play, as it is expected of all children. They are forced to remain silent in fear of their father Eugene. Kambili in her narrative comments on this silence that Eugene, their father has imposed on them

our steps on the stairs were as measured and as silent as our Sundays. The silence of waiting until Papa was done with his siesta so we could have lunch; the silence of reflection time ... the silence of evening rosary; the silence of driving to the church for benediction afterwards. Even our family time on Sunday was quiet. (Purple Hibiscus 31)

This silence is imposed on the children thereby, denying them the joy of childhood. Doris Ann Ike adds that Kambili describes Eugene’s home as “an inhibiting environment that restricts the inhabitant’s growth, development and freedom of movement” (51). Also reasoning along this line, Juliet Tenshak states that, Jaja and Kambili “are held within the confining walls of their family home by a father who exerts absolute, tyrannical control over them” (135). Eugene does not give his children the opportunity to go out and interact with their school mates. Aside from church and school, the children are not allowed to go anywhere. As a result of this Kambili expresses the extent to which they have become fed up with their (prison) home: “our furniture was lifeless; the glass tables did not shed twisted skin in harmattan, the leather sofas’ greeting was a clammy coldness, the Persian rugs were too lush to have any feeling” (Purple Hibiscus, 190). She also adds that in their house, “the silence was broken only by the whir of the ceiling fan as it sliced through the air. Although our spacious dining room gave way to an even wider living room, I felt suffocated”(Purple Hibiscus,7). As a matter of fact, this silence imposed on the children by Eugene continues till his death. Kambili expresses the joyful silence that now exists after Eugene’s death. She says, “it is a different kind of silence, one that lets me breathe” (Purple Hibiscus,297). This means that the silence that existed when Eugene was alive was suffocating. Ironically, it is only when he dies that she lives.

The novel neatly captures the plight of Eugene’s children based on the fact that they are not exposed. This is because Eugene has caged them and as a result of this they do not know how to relate with other children. Kambili becomes timid and cannot speak out when the need arises: “I cleared my throat, willed the words to come. I
knew them, thought them. But they would not come” (Purple Hibiscus, 48). When Amaka’s friend asks Kambili if her hair contains artificial hair or not, Kambili cannot even open her mouth to say if she is using artificial hair or not. She says, “I wanted to tell the girl that it was all my hair, that there were no attachments, but the words could not come.” (Purple Hibiscus, 140). Kambili’s timidity surprises Amaka and she later tells her mother that, “she (Kambili) behaves funny. Even Jaja is strange. Something is not right with them” (Purple Hibiscus, 141). This study agrees with Amaka that something is actually wrong with Kambili and Jaja. Their father has turned them into timid robots that cannot socialize. Reading their story makes us appreciate the plight of Kambili and Jaja who are a symbolic representation of many other children in Africa who are abused by their own parents.

The plight of Kambili and Jaja can also be seen considering the fact that they are denied freedom and made to live regimented lives under strict schedules prepared by their father. These schedules of activities are written on paper and pasted in their rooms. They must adhere strictly to this daily schedules. Kambili reports this,

I pushed my textbook aside, looked up, and stared at my daily schedule, posted on the wall above me. Kambili was written in bold letters on top of the sheet of paper, just as Jaja was written on the schedule above Jaja’s desk in his room. I wondered when Papa would draw up a schedule for the baby, my new brother, if he would do it right after the baby was born or wait until he was a toddler. Papa liked order. It showed even in the schedules themselves, the way his meticulously drawn lines in black ink. (Purple Hibiscus 23-24)

These schedules spell out what the children will do and whatever is not in it is not allowed. This denies the children freedom to be involved in other useful activities. The children are left with no option than to remain silent, as Ade Coker the Newspaper Editor observes, Eugene’s children “are always so quiet” (Purple Hibiscus, 57). Considering the strict schedule of activities which Eugene has imposed on his helpless children, Eva Corneliussen observes that,

the rigid schedules make the home into a prison where Eugene is the self-appointed executive and his family his obedient subjects. Their luxurious home reflects the feeling of entrapment where Kambili feels suffocated despite the spacious open rooms … Kambili’s family is physically as well as psychically excluded from the outside world living in their father’s unpredictable mercy.” (48)

On another occasion, Eugene breaks Jaja’s finger just because Jaja did not answer a question in the church correctly. Kambili tells us that “when he [Jaja] 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 left hand with his right, and Papa drove him to St. Agness Hospital” (Purple Hibiscus 144). We may then ask the following rhetorical question: why will a parent abuse his own children if it is true that his actions are justified by his religion” (5). This leads us to another rhetorical question, if it is true that his actions are justified by God, why will a parent abuse his own children in the name of God? Ono Victor Onyango, Kitche Magak and Muhoma Catherine provide an answer to this question. These three critics state that, Eugene behaves deviantly because he is mentally ill. They conclude that “Eugene’s mental ill-health generates fear in Kambili and her father’s house ceases to represent peace and comfort that a home offers, instead the presence of her father terrifies her” (465). Such comments point to the fact that the society makes no provision for the treatment of mental illness. Jaja and Kambili suffer psychological trauma as they are harassed and oppressed in their own home. In addition to this, their father beats their mother and she loses her pregnancy. Thus, instead of the joy of childhood, what the children experience is
the abuse of childhood. This paints a clear picture of how children are terrorised in many African nations both within the home and outside the home.

It must be noted that Eugene was brought up as a house boy of white men in the colonial era. Through those white missionaries Eugene acquired the colonizer’s language, religion, culture and education. As a result of this, Eugene suffers from what postcolonial theory calls alienation. He becomes alienated as he no longer values Igbo language. Kambili tells us, “he hardly spoke Igbo” (Purple Hibiscus, 13). He also insists that his children should speak English only so as “to sound civilized in public” (Purple Hibiscus, 13). Western education and religion have made him see Igbo culture and tradition as fetish. When his father dies, he refuses to be present at the funeral because his father is not a Christian as he tells his sister on phone, “I cannot participate in a pagan funeral” (Purple Hibiscus, 186). Eugene also suffered in the hands of the colonial missionaries. He tells his children, the white man he served, “poured the hot water in a bowl and soaked my hands in it” (Purple Hibiscus, 194). The concept of “mimicry” in postcolonialism is applicable here. Eugene simply mimics the white man’s inhuman way of punishing a child as we see him subject his children to different forms of child abuse. Postcolonial theory appreciates the fact colonialism has ended but neo-colonialism has taken over. Corneliussen further explains that in such postcolonial nations undergoing neo-colonialism, “the complexities of the colonial influence are explicitly displayed through the natives’ alienation or hybridity in terms of their religion, language and ethics” (70).

Eugene is one of those who are experiencing neo-colonialism since his parish priest is a white man (Fr. Benedict) who frowns at the use of Igbo in church and insists on the use of English and Latin only. Kambili tells us, “Fr. Benedict had changed things in the parish, such as insisting that the credo and the kyrie be recited in Latin; Igbo was unacceptable” (Purple Hibiscus, 4). The colonizer will always see the language of the colonized as “primitive” and the culture, “unenlightened.” The influence of Fr. Benedict on Eugene is neo-colonial. Eugene who was colonized by the white men has decided to be a colonizer also. His house becomes his colony and his wife and children are there for him to colonize. His wife eventually demands “independence” from her “colonizer” by poisoning Eugene. By killing her husband, Beatrice becomes a nationalist fighting for her independence and that of her children. A tyrant deserves no pity, neither does a deviant despotic father and husband deserve any. Kambili tells us that only Sisi the house girl cried, when Eugene died: “it was only Sisi who had cried in the household” (Purple Hibiscus, 282). Indeed, Beatrice and her children have won independence.

The Plight of the African Child in Half of a Yellow Sun

The plight of the African child also features significantly in Adichie’s second novel, Half of a Yellow Sun. The plight of some of the children is as a result of poverty. Ugwu, for instance, comes from a poor family that can hardly provide his needs. He and his younger ones drop out of school just because their father’s crops failed. One may observe that the crops did not fail every year. Ugwu’s parents should have sent him back to school the following year. Odenigbo who becomes his master rightly points out that, “your father should have borrowed” (HYS, 11). However, in a village setting where most people live at subsistence level, it is not easy to borrow or even when one borrows, for how long and how many times? Children suffer when parents do not take their education seriously. Half of a Yellow Sun clearly points out the plight of children who come from such poor homes. The parents are forced by circumstances to send Ugwu out to anyone who wants him as a servant. Adichie’s brief description of Ugwu and his younger ones gives us a clear picture of what they are passing through. “Ugwu stood around while his little cousins and siblings, the younger ones naked and the older ones in oversized shirt” (HYS, 120). Being a servant becomes the only option for him and his parents but this is another form of child abuse called child labour. The parents of Ugwu readily accept child labour as an option because they cannot provide his needs. The novel clearly captures the plight of these
child labourers as they serve different masters. Though Ugwu is fairly treated by his master, other servants are not. Adichie states this contrast clearly, “Ugwu came to realize other things. He was not a normal house-boy; Dr. Okeke’s houseboy next door did not sleep on a bed in a room, he slept on the kitchen floor. The houseboy at the end of the street with whom Ugwu went to the market did not decide what would be cooked” (HYS, 17).

The plight of African children is noticed among these child labourers who have been denied education and sent out to other homes as houseboys. Aside from the fact that they suffer in the hands of their masters, their future is not bright. They have a very bleak future since they have no education and no certificate. Furthermore, such children are subjected to much abuse and traumatic experiences. In other African countries, children suffer much when war takes place. The plight of many other children in Half of a Yellow Sun, is vividly captured in the war which makes them suffer malnutrition. Malnutrition comes with many other medical and social implications. It is said that, “Baby’s hair was falling out, hunger was stealing the memories of the children” (HYS, 389). This establishes the poor living condition of children in the novel during war. Some children even die in the process.

This analysis of the plight of African children which manifests itself in various forms of child abuse will be incomplete if the fate of the girl-child is not mentioned. The plight of the girl child in poor homes is neatly captured in Half of a Yellow Sun. Ugwu comes from a poor family, and his younger sister (Anulika) is to be given out in marriage at the age of fifteen years. She has no other option than to accept her fate. Olanna expresses surprise at such early marriage, “Anulika? Is she not a little young?” (HYS,122). The only justification for this premature marriage is that, “her mates have started to marry” (HYS,122). This then means that the others that married before her may have married at 13 or 14 years of age. This is a time when the girls are yet to be physically and psychologically mature. Victor Ifeanyi Ede and Dominic Zuoke Kalu take their time to explain that, “child marriage is the marriage whereby, minors are given in matrimony … such marriages are typically arranged and often forced; as young children are generally not capable of giving valid consent to enter into marriage” (47). This is the legal condition where parents consent to marry out their daughters.

In Half of a Yellow Sun, the plight of the girl child does not end with early marriage which is also called child marriage. As the Biafran war goes on, some parents offer their daughters to “sugar dadies” for survival. The girl-child becomes a gift item or an item used in exchange for food and other things lacking in such poor families. Adichie captures this in Half of a Yellow Sun through Eberechi who is given to a soldier unceremoniously at night, “the story was that her parents had given her to a visiting army officer, as one would give kola not to a guest. They had knocked on his door at night, opened it, and gently pushed her in. The next morning, the beaming officer thanked her beaming parents while Eberechi stood by” (HYS 200). The favour sought from the soldier is obtained as Eberechi later tells Ugwu, “he helped us. He put my brother in essential services, in the army”(294). It must be further stated the girl child’s plight does not only exist when parents begin to give them out as they did Eberechi. The plight of some children especially girls, begins when they are born. Some parents prefer male children to female ones. This is the case with Odenigbo’s mother who says she does not need a female child abandoning her granddaughter at the hospital. To worsen the situation, the baby’s mother also rejects her because she too does not want a baby girl. This rejection is based on the fact that “she wanted a baby boy” (HYS, 250). Olanna decides to adopt her and become her guardian, now that she has been rejected by her mother and grandmother just because she is not a boy. In many African countries, female children pass through much humiliation because they are not valued.

One other form of child abuse that children in Half of a Yellow Sun encounter is child rape. During the Civil War, the soldiers decide to rape little girls. Ugwu sees his fellow soldiers raping a girl. There is a graphic
description of one of such incidents(s) as Ugwu recounts: “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, biko’. Her blouse was still on. Between her legs, High-Tech was moving” (HYS, 365).

Besides rape, little children in a refugee camp experience sexual exploitation. The priest in charge of the refugee camp (Rev. Father Marcel) insists on having sex with those little children before giving them a little food to go back and eat with their parents in the camp. He even impregnates one of them. Kainene informs her sister, “can you believe who is responsible for that small girl, Urenwa’s pregnancy? Can you believe it is Rev. Father Marcel” (HYS, 398). Kainene also attacks the second priest Rev. Father Jude by asking him: “how could you stay here and let him spread the legs of starving girls? How will you account for this to your God” (HYS, 398).

Another instance in the plight of children in Half of a Yellow Sun is based on the fact that little boys are conscripted into the army and sent to the war front without formal military training. Ugwu finds himself conscripted into the Biafran Army at a tender age. He is not the only child conscripted into the army. He sees other children and observes that, “the other was a teenager of perhaps fifteen” (HYS,357). Ugwu also sees another teenager crying after being conscripted in to the army,

The teenager was sobbing. He looked familiar; perhaps he was one of the neighborhood boys who had fetched water at the borehole before dawn. Ugwu felt sorry for him and yet angry, too because the teenager’s cry made the hopelessness of their situation stark and final. They really had been conscripted. They really would be sent to the war front with no training. (HYS,358)

The plight of these children conscripted into the army can be better imagined based on the fact that their parents will not be there with them despite the fact that they are too young to be away from home and parental care. Furthermore, soldiering is not a genteel profession so they cannot expect any pampering from other soldiers. It is unfortunate that they have found themselves in this ravaged situation. Ugwu as a conscripted child soldier observes that “he was not living his life; life was living him” (HYS 364). Indeed most of the children seen in Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow sun, are not living their lives, instead, they can be compared to the living dead, without hope.

The main concern of postcolonialism as a theory is to identify colonialism as a retrogressive, unrewarding and unwanted phenomenon that has a damaging effect on the culture, language, religion and progress of nations that have experienced colonisation. This is the reason why the theory is “committed to addressing the plague of colonialism” (Parson and Hardings,1). It calls for total decolonisation and eradication of all forms of injustice in Africa and other postcolonial nations. This includes the outright condemnation of child abuse and other anti-social conduct especially that which affects children and other vulnerable members of the society. Postcolonial theory has effectively, waged war against the coloniser and Western influence in Africa. With the untiring effort of postcolonial theorists and critics, African will experience socio-political and economic transformation.

Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis, it can be concluded that Chimamanda Adichie’s two novels (Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun) dwell on different themes but they all portray the plight of helpless children who are not old enough to rise against their oppressors. In Purple Hibiscus, the children (Kambili and Jaja) suffer in the hands of a deviant father who, in the name of religion, becomes a tyrant. Half of a Yellow Sun also identifies children that are faced with forces that they are not grown up enough to fight. All African nations must take some steps to ensure that children are not abused by adults. Parents should appreciate the fact that children are a gift from God and should not be subjected to any form of abuse neither should they misinterpret church doctrines and abuse their children in God’s name as seen in Purple
Hibiscus. In addition to this, government and law enforcement agents should declare a total war on child abuse. Parents who are poor should be made to realise that they are not supposed to subject their children to child labour, child marriage and gender discrimination. The entire African continent must realise the negative consequences of child abuse and do all they can to love and care for children so that the future of the continent will be a brighter one.

Works Cited