

CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE AND THE DIALOGIC IMAGINATION: A
BAKHTINIAN RE-EXAMINATION OF *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN*, *PURPLE
HIBISCUS* AND *THE THING AROUND YOUR NECK*

A

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MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE.

BY

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is written by me; and that it is the outcome of my study for a higher degree. That it has not been presented elsewhere for the award of such degree; that all borrowed terms and quotations have been duly acknowledged through references.

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Certification

This study entitled “Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and The Dialogic Imagination: A Bakhtinian Re-examination of *Half of A Yellow Sun*, *Purple Hibiscus* and *The Thing Around your Neck*” by Iknechukwu Vine Nwaisu, has been thoroughly examined and approved by the Committee of Supervisors under whose auspices it was carried as meeting the regulations governing the Award of a Master Degree in English literature of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and indeed recognized for its contribution to knowledge in literary theory.

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Dedication

Elder Vine and Deaconess Dorothy Nwaisu,

My parents

And financiers,

Wonderful planners

And planters.

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It is not so much a hypothesis as a practice-based fact that writing a thesis is no longer a one-man business, but indeed a cooperative undertaking. So, come to that, I entirely wish, in most honorific terms, to mention a few generous names who patiently stood to balance my focus during the two-years stint of study in Zaria. One of the outstanding and upstanding persons on this list is the chairman of my supervisory committee and practical-thinking teacher – Professor Yakubu A. Nasidi who, while I gathered research data, guided me on how to interpret them appropriately to achieve the aim of my study. And being a senior research party to the work, he has also provided some thought-inciting books and thoroughly led me through the “technology” of writing right or rather putting a complete sense in a complete sentence. For this vast deal of his contribution, I am yet to find a very suitable phrase other than the conventional “thank you” to show an avalanche of gratitude which I now owe him. Quite ready on the supervisory committee was Dr Abubakar A. Liman who gave me a lead-help where I needed it, and also reminded me through a harmless academic joke to beware of my research statements, (my *turunci*). Both of you supervisors are exceptional, as without you, I would not have achieved this feat.

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Abstract

“You cannot do literature without theory”.

A statement made by Professor Y.A.Nasidi in a lecture with his 2009-2010 MA students at A.B.U.Zaria.

In the imagination of authorities like Nasidi, no conscious critic could by any means pass up the aesthetic strength of theory in literary and methodical science of interpreting a text, the *unsaid* of a text, if he intends to make meaning by keeping the relations of signs and codes of such text. This persuasion has led to the Choice of the Bakhtinian theory of the novel to explain the system of dialogic imagination and related codes of language and describe how these parameters triggered off cognitions in differential relations in Adichie’s texts. The Bakhtinian theory of the novel was developed by Mikhtail Mikhailovich Bakhtin in the 1930s (predated by earlier work of Gyorgy Luckas in 1916). There Bakhtin’s key argument is dialogism – a polyphonic form of voices in dialogue. He maintained that the novel has a narrative reputation of irregular distribution of the resources of language to characters. In others words, the novel constitutes a multi-layered system of interacting and intersecting languages within a *language* with most reference to socio-ideological and conflicting values. Indeed, characters are indulged in this kind of dialogic intercourse as a result of the different versions of truth their individual minds are capable of conceiving or constructing about the world. As a result such contradiction of voices points to a mode of signification – the signification of the peculiar nature of the novel - the very nature of an insoluble ideology of the novel (save as it is in the aspect of monologism – see p. 101) as Bakhtin argued. Consequently, the Study follows the argument to show the unresolving tendency of the voices and how it leads to social conflicts amongst groups of individuals in *Half Of A Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus*; and *The Thing Around Your Neck* with another version of the argument – monologism, less thronged with conflicting voices. The study is split into five chapters. Chapter One gives a detailed Introduction to Bakhtin and looks at the Background to the Study, Background to Adichie, Statement of the Problem, Scope and Delimitation, Objectives of the Study, Review of Related literature and Theoretical Framework. Chapter Two considers *Half of a Yellow Sun*, using heteroglossia to explain the dialogic opposites between characters in line with Adichie’s concern in representing the failure of the intellectual elites in their role as nation builders. Chapter Three presents the carnivalesque as a means of liberation, through which the harsh ideology of Puritanism is questioned in *Purple Hibiscus*. In Chapter Four, an attempt is made at the interpretation of *The Thing Around Your Neck*, in relation to monologism. At this point, the story shows monologism as the signification of the stentorian voice of the ruling class which has an element of finality in discourse, and Chapter Five is the Conclusion of the Study.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction, General

In this study, every chapter is thoughtfully and specifically organized with a different introduction. With this arrangement, this chapter discusses in detail the basic comments on the Background to the Study as well as the Evolution and Growth of African prose fiction; Statement of the Problem, Significance of the Study, Scope and Delimitation and the Background to Adichie - author of the works I hope to re-examine. I also review previous Literature of those works, present Theoretical Framework and finally make Statements on the choice of the model I have chosen.

Certainly, a study of this kind must begin with a clue to what the researcher intends to do. Having borne this in mind, it is necessary to emphasize that the study adopts the Bakhtinian theory of the novel to explain the dialogic imagination in the works of Adichie. Therefore, in order to give a lucid explanation of what I intend to do, I shall indeed begin with the Background.

1.1 Background to the Study

This study re-examines the prose fiction of Adichie in the light of Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin's theory of the novel. Consequently, it traces the power of "the dialogic imagination" as used by Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Purple Hibiscus* and *The Thing Around Your Neck*. Indeed, the major concept of the Bakhtinian theory of the novel is dialogism, which has three other aspects. Dialogism, according to Bakhtin, is a multi-system of voices in dialogue. A system of social interaction that leads to the interaction of

different social values, resulting from opposing world views. The other aspects are heteroglossia, polyglossia and monoglossia or monologism. Thus, my aim is to see how these theoretical concepts lead to the conflicts between social groups in narrative fiction through a decentralized state of competing sub-languages and diverse opinions. The study, therefore, re-examines the prose fiction of Adichie in relation to the fictional formation of characters in dialogue. In the light of that, I have put the linguistic activity of interaction in place to assess the manner of intercourse of the characters. Interestingly, this activity reveals a characters intention and action during an exchange with other characters. To this end, the nature of dialogic language leads to the understanding of their differences.

Unarguably, the Bakhtinian theory of the novel is not commonly used to analyze literature in this part of the world. This fact was proved to me when I was conducting this research. However, I believe that even though the theory is not often considered in literary discourse, especially in Nigeria, it is truly useful to be applied. As a result, I have used it in this study with the hope that it will give a new perspective to the meanings of Adichie's texts.

The theory was developed by Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin who, according to *The New Encyclopida Britannica* (voll:815) was born on November 17, 1895, in Orel, Russia; and he died on March 7, 1975, in Moscow, USSR. A Russian philosopher, interested in the literary tradition and culture of his time, he studied Classics (was a scholar of Greek and Latin literature) at St. Petersburg University and had worked as lecturer in the 1920s, especially at the Mordov Pedagogical Institute. His source of the theory of the novel was Gyorgy Lukacs' work, entitled *Die theorie des Romans* (1916; *The Theory of the Novel*).

As a lecturer in the early 20th Century he had started writing during the Stalinist era, addressing his linguistic and literary theories against the already established school of Russian Formalism, which sees the essence of literature as only that which constitutes its *literariness* — “an autonomous science of literature, based on concrete poetics” (I.R.Titunik, qtd in Volosinov, 1973:175) that is capable of isolating the subject from the same social reality whence it came. His theoretical writing was a radical, Marxist-oriented approach to literature and language, but not quite Marxism as it was anti-hegemonic of the epistemological and intellectual practices of both Marxism and Formalism. It was a new method called “Sociological Poetics”, whose concern is basically the social quality of literature. To this end, Bakhtin argued that the Formalists have failed as a result of their indifference about the social quality or relevance of literary ideology, since, according to Voloshinov (1973:179) “everything ideological is semiotic, and every sign, *as sign*, is a social phenomenon” In the same spirit, he expressed in strong terms the shortcomings of Marxism as *problem of specification* as it tends to be general in its relation to society and history. Marxism, stimulated by its monistic philosophy which more or less gives every object of knowledge, Literature, for instance, a definitive role, as a result, deemphasizes its aptly considered social associations. Therefore, based on the social quality of every ideology of studies or object of knowledge as literature, the Sociological Poetics school led by Bakhtin, claimed that Formalists, in their attempt at studying the object of literature, had misrepresented the aim of their study. During this period some of the critical writings of Bakhtin came under the pseudonyms of Voloshinov and Medvedev, who some scholars are still referring to as separate individuals other than Bakhtin himself, yet essays and

books that are published in those names are credited to Bakhtin, which he himself did not dispute. I shall therefore mean Bakhtin when I refer to either of these his pseudonyms.

Bakhtin's special interest in language against the background of the Marxist - Stalinist form (the adoption of Marxist approach to language by Joseph Stalin) and how it was applied to literature, started to develop from the essay of Voloshinov entitled "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry: Questions of Sociological Poetics" (1926), which was the first work presented as a typical text of the school of Sociological Poetics, with apparently a unique model of social use of language that was free from authoritarianism. "The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship" (1928), published in the name of Pavel Nikolaevich Medvedev, expresses Bakhtin's critique of Russian Formalism, which, according to him, by recognizing only what constitutes the *literariness*, tends to destroy the social relevance of literature. His view here was predicated upon the social nature of language in narrative. Literature is made up of social characters of utterances, which is further explained in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929), published in the name of Valentin Nikolaevich Voloshinov. In this book, Bakhtin did not only criticize the Russian Formalists, but equally the Structuralists, whose insight into language is based on the work of the former. Here Saussure's linguistic model of *langue* which Voloshinov called *abstract objectivism* is extinguished when he (Voloshinov) suggested the context and dialogical basis of linguistic sign. As such, Bakhtin accused Saussure of *theoreticism* - the abstract process in which language is removed from its concrete reality or historical context.

Bakhtin published in his official name, *Rabelais and His World*, a study of the work of Francois Rabelais and the Popular Culture of the Middle Ages and the

Renaissance, which qualified him for the award of doctorate degree at the Gorkii Institute of World Literature, in 1940, but because of the controversial problems generated by the work during the harsh atmosphere of Stalin's government, he was not awarded the degree until 1951. At last, the work was published in 1965 as a classic. Also the "Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics" (1929), a study of the Russian writer, Fyodor Dostoevsky, in which Bakhtin argued a mutual relation between meaning and context involving the author, the text, and the reader, each constantly affecting and influencing the other, and the whole influenced by present political and social situations. He called this mutual context of intersecting influences polyglossia.

This view is further expanded in "The Dialogic Imagination" (1975). He stated that language evolves dynamically and is affected by, and affects the culture that produces and uses it. In this instance, he coined yet another phrase, heteroglossia — meaning multiple voices which refer to the interaction of the social-ideological languages existing within a society. In all his works, his argument on language is directed against the Marxist theory of language that was then adopted by Stalin, who got his inspiration from *The German ideology* (by Karl Marx) that conceptualizes language as arbitrary between "class relations and ideologies, and that the power of the ruling class extends to the use of language" (Bottomore, 1983:282).

Like some Marxists, Bakhtin quite agreed on the functions of language as arbitrary relations. To him, language mediates between social and ideological phenomena, as such, it tends to signify but not to mean between these relations; to this end, he decisively disagreed on the class character of language. For example, N.Y.Marr, as a Marxist, believed that language determines class consciousness, "that different languages

represented the product of different classes ...” (ibid.p:283); and that one language class is constantly in battle or struggle with another within a social community. To drag his argument home against different classes of language as corresponding with class rank or status, Bakhtin maintained that these different social classes or ranks within a specified speech community use the same language. So, at no point should class struggle give birth to individual languages as Marr supposed, rather he opined that the class struggle is however taking place inside language itself, and it is thus responsible for the eruption of sub-languages or speech genres within the *one* language. On the other hand, his idea refers to a constant creating and shifting of the meaning of language amongst users. According to him:

Existence reflected in sign is not merely reflected but refracted. How is this refraction of existence in the ideological sign determined? By an intersecting or differently oriented social interest with one and the same sign community, i.e, by the class struggle. Class does not coincide with the sign community, i.e., with the community, which is the totality of users of the same set of signs for ideological communication. Thus various different classes will use one and the same language. As a result, differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes an arena of the class struggle (Voloshinov, 1973:23).

In this argument, there are two profound words of interest: “existence” and “sign” which must be followed, as they would uncover Bakhtin’s conception here. First, Bakhtin located “existence” in Marxist terms, which suggests that the social linguistic activity of man is determined by his socio-economic existence and his social interaction with others. Although, contrary to the metaphysical speculation or idealized myth that imprisons consciousness which the Marxist’s brand of language supports, the Sociological Poetics insists that this consciousness is a struggle that is going on within a language. As such, no

individual, be he a ruler or a follower has the absolute truth or finalizing voice in the language; as every one of them is capable of creating and recreating utterances within that language. Second, “existence” or to exist, in Bakhtin’s view, means *answerability* — the capability of a living “self” to respond to the *addressivity* directed to it by the “other”. In this particular case, Bakhtin laid emphasis on these important phenomena — “Self and Other” bearing their opposite particulars; nevertheless, sharing at least one common background of simultaneity. They occur in space at the same time, regardless of rate or degree in which one or other participate in action. And each has a considerable, dialogic impact on the other. “Self is dialogic, a *relation* [in existence]” (Holquist, 1991:19). So, this relation gives it the opportunity to define itself in terms of the other. Other, as a matter of fact, refers to consciousness — the differential relation between the center [self /soul /God/ “illusion of presence”] and all that is not that center”(*ibid* p:18). Following the assumption of existential and essential relations in dialogism between these phenomena, it is therefore logical, as Bakhtin argued that for the self to claim its position in life, its consciousness to challenges addressed to it by the world or human agency must not be excuse-oriented. In the general sense, every self /individual must participate in the *activity* called life — affecting and being affected, refracting and effecting change; as:

each one of us occupies a place in existence that is uniquely ours; but far from being a privilege, far from having what Bakhtin calls an *alibi* in existence, the uniqueness of the place I occupy in existence is, in the deepest sense of the word, an answerability: in that place only am I addressed by the world, since only I am in it. Moreover, we must keep on forming responses as long as we are alive (*ibid* p:30).

The forming of this responses equally corresponds to the use of private language or the individual’s ability to refract or change utterance (probably the meaning) within a

language, which Bakhtin called a “doubly-oriented” system of language. A system in which an ideal language, as it was with Stalin, cannot survive.

In a dogmatic approach to language, Stalin himself had written an article, entitled “Marxism and Questions of Linguistics” (1953), which Bakhtin, with his argument about language, especially his trenchant reconsideration of Soviet linguistics, responded with his presentation, “The Problem of Speech Genres” which linguistically challenges the Stalinist dogma. At this point, Bakhtin had demystified the centripetal power of language that had been in place in the Stalinist era. During this time in Russia, Stalin adopted the Marxist linguistic theory, developed from the aforesaid work of Marx, which eventually, but, for a little while favoured the bourgeoisie.

Of course, Bakhtin suffered both social and intellectual harassments by the Stalinist government as a result of his works on many philosophical and cultural topics. Nevertheless, he became rehabilitated following the accession of Nikita Khrushchev who denounced Stalinism by declaring that the era of dictatorship over the proletariat had ended, and that the Soviet state had immediately become the state of freedom. However, at the end of 1928, Bakhtin was already ill, and one of his legs was amputated in February, 1938, as he was suspected to have been suffering from osteoporosis and frostbite. Prior to the amputation, he was arrested for his suspected affiliation with the St. Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Society, and was given a ten-year prison sentence on the Solovetskii Islands. Although the prison terms were reversed on appeal by Maksim Gorkii, and subsequent intervention by his friends, a lesser evil of six years exile in Kazakhstan was imposed on him.

Bakhtin had begun the work on his now renowned theory of the novel, while still in Kazakhstan. He had written the theory of the novel or rather reformulated it in 1933, from which he culled and presented some articles in seminars at the Vitebsk Proletarian University, where he also met his fellow philosophers, such as Chagall and Malevich who had equally settled in Vitebsk town to avoid the privation of the raging revolution in Russia. Amongst the articles are “Discourse in the Novel” (1934), “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel” (1937) “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse” (1940), and “Epic and Novel” (1941).

Two dramatic things happened following the emergence of the theory of the novel in question. First, in the 1920s, Bakhtin started with a considerable interest to translate it, but later dropped the idea when he learned that Lukacs, its initiator, no longer considered the book good. Second, is when in the 1930s Lukacs became so much interested in politics and as a result, compromised his earlier philosophical position by endearing himself to Stalin regime. He became a strong Marxist idealist, anti-modernist and a *right* Hegelian. At this point his initiated theory of the novel became a seminal work to Bakhtin in view of the prevailing political issues. Bakhtin, without hesitation, returned to the work and reformulated it. In it, he agreed with Lukacs that the novel symbolizes the “essence of the age” and that irony is the basis of the novelistic tradition. Nevertheless, he decisively rejected Lukacs’ argument that unless the novel idealized or prioritized the world of anarchy or authoritative regime, the novelist has complied to bourgeois decadence. Based on the idealist, authoritarian model of Lukacs, the novel is expected to represent nothing more than a “full comprehensive reflection of its era”. For him, it is the era in which the social life of the proletariat is decided not by nature, but in the *house* of the aristocrat.

Contrary to this, Bakhtin's socio-ideological model of the theory of the novel suggests that "the novel must represent all the ideological voices of its era... all the era's languages that have any claim to being significant".

Having reformulated it, Bakhtin is now popularly associated with the origin of the theory in question. Obviously, Bakhtin's point of departure remains that the novel's subject-matter will continue to be unresolved and open-ended, since it is a selection of utterances or sub-languages, rooted in dialogism. Indeed, unlike the characteristics of the novelistic genre to which I have referred, the subject-matter of the poetic genre, he argued, could easily be decided, as it is dominated by a unitary utterance of the poetic convention, which, Voloshinov corroborated by describing it as a "powerful condenser of unarticulated social value judgments" (Voloshinov 1973:192).

1.2 Evolution and Growth of African Prose Fiction

What is commonly defined and understood as African prose fiction constitutes both short and long narratives, expressed in a language that is free from poetry; it concerns the entire creative art and habit of Africa. This creative art reveals the continent's cultural and political practices, as well as its corporeal and incorporeal desires. In other words, it refers to a constant recreation of African life-style based on the nature of her existence. In fact, it deals with the imaginary form of narrative which explains the nature of man and woman and how they face reality in the continent:

Therefore, any work which does not reveal life as it affects the [African] character, and personality, that is a work which does not engage itself in a conscious reconstruction of the ontological grounds of being [African] in all its ugliness and beauty cannot be considered as [African] novel (Udumukwu, 1998:2).

Here, I am concerned with the evolution and particulars of African prose fiction. Like the English narrative, its African counterpart, though in English, is one in its own right. History has periodized the evolution of English literature, but no such standard record other than those sociological constructs of subject-matters such as political and leadership flaws treated by African writers and critics. Having been engaged in the internal outlook of the continent in terms of her relation to others in the globe, their attention was also balanced on European's misconception of it. The misconception was an attempt to misrepresent African cultural image and integrity, especially in the colonial days. This matter was the most engaging in the fictional creation of the First Generation writers, afterward, their artistry shifted to the ceaseless questioning of the need for political independence entrusted into the hands of corrupt politicians. And the decades of yesterday and today that follow, what is more? African writers and their texts and their audience shed tears on the increasing rate of heinous crimes against humanity in the continent. Their most criticized critic, Charles Nnolim of Nigeria could no longer withhold his worry about the issue as he has lamented (in 2010) that African literature in the 20th Century was one with profuse tears: "it was lachrymal, a weeping novel".

It is on this backdrop that I am slightly tracing the developmental stages of African narrative fiction on the basis of its function in each of the stages. This will automatically lead to the knowledge of who writes, and what reason (ideology) does he or she write? Following this trend of thought, I would like to place the evolution and growth of African narrative fiction in Frantz Fanon's light as he has argued in *The Wretched Of The Earth*. He stated that literature of the nations who were subjects to European colonialism emerged from three stages. The first, according to him, is the stage of assimilation. During this

earlier stage, the former colonized nations copied the colonialist writing pattern as if they were begging their Master to accept them into that writing tradition which they were not familiar with until then. This stage refers to the first celebrated written literature in English, even though it sounds so pedestrian. What I have in mind in reference to this first narrative are Amos Tutuola's *The Palmwine Drinkard and My Life in The Bush of Ghosts*, which according to Charles Nnolim, “belongs to the fictional world of the bush and the jungle, of fantasy and superstitions” without original focus to the crying need of the ordinary men and women as they face reality in their life (emphasis is mine); and Cyprian Ekwensi's *People of the City* whose imagination is much based on the city life.

Central to Fanon's argument of this stage is that the colonized nations did not see any difference in their conception of what constituted literature of a people. Their creative world-view did not differ from their European masters. In other words, the reality of difference did not bother the colonized, as they imitated the same world-view, as a result the function of their literature stood as an appendage of existing original. For the second stage, the emergence of the literature of the colonized nations came at the point when the colonized were worried and disillusioned with the cultural view of the colonizer that pretended to dominate the others. Their worry was informed by the urgent need to identify their culture and express it in literature. With their literature at this stage, they were able to denounce the form of expressing themselves in a foreign culture, (except in English and in French).

Having denounced their confinement to the “prison house of culture” set by the colonizer through literature, they initiated an intense awareness of being different, and belonging to a particular cultural background and a commitment to defend it. It is in the

defense of this specific culture that literature then took its role. Nasidi (2002:.2) is of the view that:

The new writing [literature] "at once dynamic, original, independent and indigenous" would become the cultural counterpart of political independence, "what, politics achieved in the colonial sphere", a critic could declare, "African literature has achieved in the field of culture".

Nasidi's use of the metaphorical statement that what politics has achieved in the struggle for independence, literature has achieved it also by elevating African cultural essence is very relevant here. And his idea seems to suggest that this African culture expressed in literature is unique as its people, and as Europeans' is for the Europe. By metaphorical statement, I mean that he sees literature as a kind of strong political writing that has liberated Africa. Specifically in African literature, the works that fall under this stage, championing the cultural identity are Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God*, Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine*, *The Great Ponds*, *The Slave*, Phaniel Egejuru's *The Seeds Yam Have Been Eaten* etc. As it was in this stage, narrative fiction became the source through which cultural nationalism was articulated.

In the third stage, the literature of the former colonized nations emerged when the colonized discovered a new and truly national culture charged by their ardent commitment to maintain it. In this stage, as Fanon said, the writer is charged with a new spirit of national consciousness through which he places the nation at the centre of his artistry. At this point, literature becomes the channel for articulating this consciousness and raising high the spirit of nation building, in order to make national sense. Here African prose fiction distinguishes itself by addressing issues relevant to the continent, questioning the idealist construction of Africa at large by the former nationalists. It also

concerns itself with suggestions, where necessary, on how to tackle the besetting issues of the new continent, particularly the cant and corruption spread all over by politicians. The works of literature that were addressed to serve this purpose are Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*, *Anthills of The Savannah*, Labo Yari's *Climate of Corruption*, Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy*, Ousmane Sembene's *God's Bits of Wood*, etc.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The pre-eminent question to be answered here is predicated upon the fact that critics such as Nnolim, Ogwude, and Onyerionwu who have studied Adichie's texts have tended to lay emphasis on the aesthetics of language, feminism, historicism, religious conflict and the image of the Diaspora. They are indifferent about the rich meaning which dialogism as a theoretical concept could reveal. So, being aware of this critical gap, I am primarily concerned with introducing dialogism in all its forms, to show that in terms of dialogical structure, Adichie's texts are typically a representative of multi-expression of ideologies that will lead to a thorough understanding of them, and the circumstances that inspired her to write them. That is, the reading of her works will make more sense, following the Bakhtinian concept of dialogism. To this end, I shall quickly add that what I have achieved with this study is, amongst other things, the use of the Bakhtinian Theory of the novel to stimulate new, fascinating readings in Adichie's texts.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is rooted in the Bakhtinian theory of the novel whose primary concept is dialogism. And as such, I have used the concept to re-examine Adichie's texts, bringing out some political and cultural issues in them as they point to a society as Africa where classes of different speaking voices of ideologies conflict one another. Each of the voices

represents its class and distinct behaviour. However, the Upper Class makes as much effort as possible to present a total-authoritarian voice and impose a single ideology as *all* perfect, while the Lower Class puts such monologic closure in bracket and reject it through a protesting voice of ridicule.

Adichie's works have provided rich data through which I have applied the very concept to interrogate the issues responsible for the opposing voices. One of these issues as scramble for secession is obvious in *Half of a Yellow Sun* where characters engage in dialogical battle against each other to arrive at the truth of nation building in order to ensure security and stability during the war. Also important here is the premise, truth is relative, in other words, the truth they struggle for is a pragmatic one, because, since they are in disagreement no one of them can tell objective truth as it was during the Nigerian/Biafra War. Furthermore, I use the phrase "Pragmatic Truth" here in terms of its philosophical value, with less interest in dealing with its linguistic reference. Thus, in a dialogue, especially as it is in this study where one character engages with the other, looking for a logical truth, as such there is always intellectual application of pragmatics as basic principles of truth. To this end, it follows that what seems to be the truth is basically the question of subjective enterprise. What is truth in the thinking of a particular character may likely be a falsehood in the logical reception of another character. In other words, pragmatic truth belongs to the category in which truth is relative, not absolute.

Approaches to this truth are what will be shown, as I re-examine the characters through their motivation to action and how dialogic speech reveals this stimulating practice in Adichie's works. And at the end of the study, it will be clear to see how dialogism has

contributed to a more meaningful reading of Adichie's texts, other than the previous reading paths taken by other critics.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

Primarily, the objectives of any research in the academia are no less than contributing objectively or otherwise to the growth of knowledge and the acquisition of skills. It is the justification of this claim that makes David Singer, quoted in Odiwo (2009:13) to state that the objective of any research undertaking is the acquisition of knowledge whether to aid in solving human problems or to satisfy intellectual or aesthetic objective of the researcher. If this statement seems convincing enough, then the objectives of this study are thus:

- a. To show that dialogism is a theoretical technique that will give a new insight into the reading of Adichie's texts as representative of multi-expression of ideologies.
- b. To demonstrate that in an exchange, the language of one speaker is populated with thought and intention, and represents his version of the world.
- c. To illustrate that dialogical utterances can mar or make a social group.

1.6 Methodology

This study explicates the Bakhtinian theory of the novel, with focus on Adichie's prose fiction. It re-examines in detail characters in dialogue, explaining how the dynamics of a character's speech action is followed by the speech of another character. As such it leads to the understanding that the novel imitates a multi-voice system of African nations, in which the utterance of one voice is already awaiting the other. However, the study is purely research-oriented, using a library method approach through which necessary

materials are collated from many fields of interest in relation to prose fiction. Journal articles, unpublished theses, dissertations; magazines, news paper articles and books, as well as the internet have provided invaluable sources by which the study runs with ease.

1.7 Scope and Delimitation

The subject of this study is simply a re-examination of Adichie's prose fiction, adopting the Bakhtinian theory of the novel as a model. This model is quite promising, as the task is to present how dialogic language becomes responsible for the social conflicts amongst groups of individuals. These individuals have different ideologies which they tend to protect differently.

Having her fiction in mind, it is worthy to clear that this study limits the scope of its investigation to only those of prose which provide the possibility for what I hope to achieve with Bakhtinian theory of the novel. These include *Half of A Yellow Sun*, *The Thing Around Your Neck* and *Purple Hibiscus*. In these texts the very different views of life and ideologies by these characters are based on different psychological and environmental influences. Some specific ones amongst them are ethnic disparities and claustrophobia – the fear of being in an encased space.

Consequently, the more engaging part is the existence of the social classes of the characters and the relationship amongst them and how language registers their differences. Although Adichie captures the cultural, socio-political and ethnic sleazes, which, without doubt are key issues for their differences, however, I do not quite consider them as important clues in locating the meaning (s) of her texts because the issue of dialogic language supersedes them. In the light of that, *Half of A Yellow Sun* is logically

interpreted, with the use of heteroglossia to explain the disagreement amongst the characters, resulting from their social classes, beliefs and biases to represent the intellectual mess of the elites who have failed as nation builders. In *The Thing Around Your Neck*, I raise the issue of monologism as the representation of the voice of the ruling class whose authoritative opinion is final in discourse. While in *Purple Hibiscus*, I discuss the carnivalesque as a means through which the encased consciousness is liberated from the harsh ideology of Puritanism via ambivalent laughter.

As I have said earlier, my focus is more on the dialogic speech analysis rather than the sociological structure of the texts which is very much in the consciousness of Adichie's historical bias in placing the nation in her fictional imagination, and which, to some uncritical minds, would become the guide to the meaning of her texts. Therefore, to achieve this feat of the study, I would rather agree with Nasidi (2001:12) that: "to do this successfully, we need theory, by which I mean a form of discourse which is extremely sensitive to its own basic assumptions".

It is indeed imperative to know that in the context of this study, Nasidi's assumed theory, as it were, is the Bakhtinian theory of the novel on which the study is successfully based.

1.8 Review of Related Literature

Despite the awards she has won, Adichie is still very new in literary practice. Consequently, her texts have not received much critical attention as compared to the attention those of Ngugi, Achebe, Amadi, etc have attracted. I am not saying that her works have not been criticized; rather only suggesting that critics who have studied her works in this early period of her debut are very few, and that their critical concerns are

mainly on the historical content with the themes of betrayal, feminist ideology, and religious conflicts. Nevertheless, few studies of Adichie's works have depicted the process of dialogism, though in entirely different dimension which could not articulate its reality in Bakhtin's thought — being the very thought I am concerned about here. Undoubtedly, the study of Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2010) is one of such studies. In their work, they have said that a certain dialogue in *Half of A Yellow Sun* discloses Kainene as a woman endowed with rare characteristics and qualities:

The following dialogue between Kainene's father and Chief Okonji, the finance minister, reveals much about Kainene's personality.

“So Kainene will manage the cement factory? Chief Okonji asked, turning to her father. “She'll oversee everything in the east, the factories and our new oil interest. She has always had an excellent eye for business”.

“Whoever said you lost out by having twin daughters is a liar”,
Chief Okonji said.

“Kainene is not just like a son, she is like two”,
her father said (p:205-6).

What is obvious from Onukaogu and Onyerionwu understanding of dialogue is that it serves to excite the reader with Kainene's business skill. They could not explore the potential of dialogism as characterized by divergent voices and views. Those of Chief Okonji and Kainene's father for instance, only have the possibility of presenting in a better way the feminine actuality.

These two critics carry their feminist idea further to *Purple Hibiscus* and *The Thing Around Your Neck*. In these texts their argument presents Adichie as a preacher of feminine consciousness. To them, Adichie sees a woman as subject whose voice must be

heard and respected in the society. Unlike the pre - colonial/colonial times and works of earlier writers such as Achebe and Ekwensi who have presented a woman as either crying or remaining silent before a man, Adichie's have given her uplift. It is to reverse the male-dominated society and leave a woman with what Derrida called *a-venire*, meaning she is now understood in terms of her possibilities, that Adichie, according to Onukaogu and Onyerionwu:

Seeks to deconstruct the myth of a lifeless and powerless woman constructed by the colonialist, and apparently aped by early African writers to retrieve the image of the African woman from the obscurity of the colonial mentality (ibid.p.199).

On the basis of religious conflict, Sophia Ogwude has studied Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* where she located Eugene as a religious ideologue. In her observation, Adichie places Eugene in a wide contrast with his entire family, particularly Papa-Nnukwu who becomes the custodian of African traditional religion and values. Ogwude has shifted her critical observation beyond Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* in order to delineate the affinity it shares with other works in this respect, particularly the two texts of Ngugi, *The Rivers Between* and *Petals of Blood*. In a related creative imagination as Adichie's, she comments that:

Ngugi satirises obsessive African converts to the new Christian religion because they barely understood much of what they so resolutely defended and held up for emulation against their tested culture (Ogwude, 2011:113).

Studying *Half of a Yellow Sun*, in respect to the theme of betrayal, Nnolim discovers that in addition to how it features between lovers and married couple "Biafra betrays Nigeria by its act of secession" (Nnolim, 2010:147). Having cited the positions of these critics from previous literature, I have no intention of agreeing with them as they could not articulate the idea of dialogism which must give those works of Adichie a tinge of superior reading.

1.9 Adichie's Background

Chimarnanda Ngozi Adichie is a native of Aba in Abia State of Nigeria, born on September 15, 1977. She started her nursery, primary and secondary education at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where she also had her early university education as student of pharmacy. During her early undergraduate days at Nsukka, she received Anthony J. Drexel Scholarship for Academic Excellence of Drexel University, Philadelphia, U.S.A, where she read Communication. To her credit are five published works: *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of A Yellow Sun*, which earned her the Orange Prize and brought her as acclaimed novelist of international repute; *The Thing Around Your Neck*, *For Love of Biafra* (a play text), and *Decisions* — A collection of poetry.

1.10 Theoretical Framework

Historical Antecedents

Bakhtin would not have theorized without the philosophical and revolutionary trends pursued by his contemporaries (The Bakhtin Circle; and M.M. Bakhtin was the Principal of it) against the Stalinist dictatorship in Russia. The Circle was known to have been launched by Matvei Isaevich Kagan (1889 - 1937) when he returned from Germany where he read philosophy. He was a student of the founder of Marburg Neo-Kantianism Herman Cohen and had attended lecture by Ernest Cassirer. He had also introduced a "Kantian Seminar" during which many philosophical, religious and cultural issues were deliberated. Of Jewish origin, Kagan was a renowned scholar and was a member of the Social Democratic Party and, perhaps, was attracted to Cohen's philosophy for its acclaimed alliance with Marxism.

The interest of the Circle was to address the philosophical, social and cultural issues posed by the Russian Revolution and its decline to Stalinist dictatorship. In doing so, the prime concern of their undertaking was to investigate the relevance of social life in general and literary creation in particular, as such, assessing the dynamic process through which language was responsible for the conflicts between social groups. They maintained that speech production is basically dialogic, established during social interaction which subsequently leads to the interaction of different social values by which one voice amongst others, logically re-echoes the speech of others. They continued with this view and said that society is made up of class-relations with different ideologies of voices which literary creation imitates. These are recognizably the Upper and the Lower classes. Indeed, the sense of the Lower Class is embedded, presumably in the Middle class. As a result, I shall not give the Middle class any separate explanation here. However, what is important within the very class-relations is that while, according to Bakhtin, the Upper Class tries to present a superior voice of ideology, the Lower Class constantly reacts against it through ridiculous act.

A 1928-critical work of Russian Formalism published by P.N. Medvedev seems, as it were, to have been one of those submissions from which M.M.Bakhtin gathered inspiration in his concern for sociological-cum-linguistic constructs being responsible for the divergent voices of the novel. In the critique, Medvedev started by defining literary scholarship as “one branch of the study of ideologies” a study which “embraces all areas of man's ideological creativity”. He argued that though Marxism has initiated the foundation of that study in relation to its economic influences, still the study of the specific structures or forms and qualitative particularity of one of the structures of ideological creation : art,

ethics, science, religion, etc, lies in the developmental stage. And, in spite of other intellectual efforts of replacing “symbolic forms” (that is the canonizing of certain social ideal through symbol) with “structures of ideological creation”, the sequence of approaches remains the same.

Similarly, Cassirer argued that the symbolic forms are issues or images which recur, as it were, in the mind of the individual to enable them apprehend their peculiar perspective of the world. Medvedev, in the same order, examined the "sociological laws of development" which could aptly be seen in any structure of "ideological creation", yet expresses itself in specific form. Therefore, Medvedev saw the Formalists as been correct in their effort to define the various features of literary manifestation, but have been careless to idealize literary *devices* as fundamental in the study of literature, which, according to him, tended to efface the ideological and sociological meaning of literary form. Medvedev lambasted the Russian Formalists on the grounds of their partisan alliance with the Futurist Movement and their participation in its inclination towards possible elimination of the social relevance of literature, but he lauded Western "Formalist art scholarship", particularly the works of Hildebrand, Wolfflin and Worringer, as these theorists were relevant for the emergence of the Bakhtin Circle.

With a critical note on the relevance of dialogic language to discharge meaning in a discourse, V. N. Voloshinov, in his 1929 book, entitled *Maxism and the philosophy of language*, investigated the relationship between language in use and ideology as they were never before then investigated. In his quest, he examined two already idealized accounts of language: the one he called "abstract objectivism" which has Saussure as pioneering exponent, and the other "individualistic subjectivism" which has evolved from the study

of Wilhelm Von Humboldt by the Romantic idealists - Benedetto Croce (1866 - 1952) and Karl Vossler (1872 - 1942).

Voloshinov drew attention by arguing that the two accounts originated from the spirits of rationalism and romanticism and shared all the features of strengths and weaknesses as to the orientation and spirits of those movements. In "abstract objectivism", he attacked the linguistic development of Saussure which outlines the systematic selection of utterances from already packaged ones — *Langue*, which I refer to as socio-automatic behaviour of language. He also conceptualized the Saussurean idea as a “system of self – identical [specific] forms” which tends to misdirect the origin of language usage. As such, according to him, Saussure was confused and had abstracted language, and wanted it to be understood less from its historical or contextual foundation in communication. With this trend, a part of language in use is considered more important at the expense of a whole. That is, one linguistic parameter is regarded as a *thing* while undermining the dynamics and credibility of the total utterance in a social context. A harmonization of the meaning of a word is taken against the multiplicity of meaning which a singular word is capable of generating, and against different accents which could lead to this very meaning. Therefore, language is viewed as a ready-made system of “words catalogue” whose user is bound to select from, without a damage to its grammatical assumption. By grammatical assumption here, I mean the syntactic orderliness of a word in an utterance. In this argument, grammar is defined as the rules of words and context governing understanding between the speaker and the listener (the two in a dialogue).

It is by paying attention to the ability of a word to generate a certain meaning in a specific context that makes Voloshinov to argue against Saussure's *parole* which means the individual's linguistic performance resulting from ordinary selection out of ready-made meaning. Here, according to Voloshinov, Saussure with so much interest in his proposed *parole*, had become blind to the issue of context where the meaning of a word or utterance can be referred to. Therefore, against Saussure's position, he said that the primary part of meaning is assured by the specific context that leads to the specific utterance.

Consequently, it is this issue of “ready-made-meaning” guiding utterances as posited by Saussure that Voloshinov lambasted. The foundation of his argument rests on individual experience or "context and accent". For him (Voloshinov), in order to locate the meaning of utterance, one must understand its context, and possibly the accent of the speaker. Accent in this argument means intonation — the different levels of voices which a speaker could explore in discourse. In this illustration, I agree with his statement that the primary part of meaning is generated by the specific context that leads to the specific utterance. To embellish this statement, he gave an instance of two persons sitting in a room and both at the same time looked up at the window and saw that the weather had started to snow again, as such they felt indignant of an incessant winter, and immediately one said the word *well!* No lexicon will ever interpret the meaning of this *well* as Saussure proposed, rather, Voloshinov maintained that, in that context, *well* expressed the impression of "indignation and reproach moderated by a certain amount of humour".

The second account, “individualistic subjectivism” Voloshinov asserted that this account was right to see language as a constant generative process in terms of creativity that is obtainable. However, it was, to him, totally wrong in attributing the rules of that

creativity to those of individual psychology, where the constant generative process is considered similar with art and the whole system of signs interpreted as a static structure of the creative process. In other words, this view explains the creativity of language as a stable and individualized system of linguistic culture. That is the speaker is, without recourse to anything outside him/her, the site of the meaning of language. Nevertheless, Voloshinov argued that a stable system of the knowledge of linguistic signs with reference to the psyche of the speaker is purely a transcendental absence or scientific abstraction as such idea was motivated by the romanticist notion as the basis of expressing meaning. In point of fact, Voloshinov's argument being that the generative process of language is dynamic; therefore, the basis of linguistic meaning is to be found in no other site than its social context. Hence, he did not consider the individualistic attempt at explaining language in psychological terms. Therefore, he maintained that the effective use of language is based on social context where speakers have a common background of understanding. As a result, he continued that the rules of the generative process of language are linked to social functions of language.

Voloshinov's concern for language even undermines the current Post-Structuralist model which is based on the premise that linguistic meanings are relative, and at the same time war against each other. Although, similar to the Post-structuralists, he agreed on the sign-bound nature of utterances as well as the dynamic possibilities of language. However, he disagreed with them on the dominant influence of a re-occurring "subject" as chain of signifieds in a narrative being agent of differences, but argued every dialogic utterance as microcosm of social conflict. This follows that the sociological crisscrossing or intersection of ideologies and the multiplicity of voices in language be traced to the

history of context in relation to individual's impression of the world of reality. To this end, Voloshinov agreed with von Humboldt W. on the relative nature of an "inner-form" of utterances. Similarly, he joined Cassirer and Hegel to say that the various linguistic forms of expression occur as to reflect the construction of individual's version of the world.

1.11 The Bakhtinian Theory of the Novel

This theory, otherwise known as the theory of dialogism was developed by Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895 - 1975). It was to address the issue of multi-layered nature of language and variety of voices as characteristics of the novelistic genre. He conceptualized these many voices of the novel to intellectually stand against the political background of Russian dictatorship exemplified by Joseph Stalin who adopted a single voice of authority (monologic closure) in his government. Then that was a challenge to the ordinary people of Russia. Subsequently, he found Stalin's administrative activities especially in the use of language very useful and introduced it to literary studies when he studied the history of literature in the 1930s. Following the outcome of his study, he was able to recognize the various genres of literature based on their differences in stylistics. On this grounds, he associated a monologic use of language to the epic/poetry/drama and every other literary genre (excluding the novel — his favourite genre), the short story, for instance, that has uncomplicated, centripetal narrative style or direct use of language) which, according to him, symbolized the ruling class which did not recognize conflicting or competing references. In the novel he argued a decentralized state of competing sub-languages which he finally referred to as polyglossia and heteroglossia. The two concepts mean the incorporation of many differential voices in discourse. Or the use of unofficial language that embraces the suppressed voices in the social scheme of things as in polyglossia that

renders every official language powerless by engaging it in “ambivalent laughter”. The same Bakhtin called “carnival laughter”, targeted at the ruling class.

As Bakhtin continued, his study challenged György Lukács who was previously of the same intellectual path with him but later compromised with Stalin dictatorship and consequently became a right-wing Hegelian. During this period the Right-Wing Hegelian adopted Hegel’s first category of dialectics to approach language. According to the idea of Hegel, the first category of dialectics is a logical process that deals with the principle of idealism which regards a speculative insight into language as a means to the absolute or eternal or truth. However, in relation to the novel, Bakhtin rejected a reference to the Hegelian philosophy of the first category. He preferred the second which is the dynamo of the first. The second and dynamo means an effective logical system that takes cognizance of opposite contentions as a way of coming to terms with truth or in Hegel’s word, the *absolute*, which is not very absolute in the real sense, but a metaphor — an open concept, of which history will continue to crush or change. Following the dynamo, truth is however found in Hegel’s conception:

Truth is the whole and error lies in oneness, incompleteness and abstraction; it can be recognized by the contradictions it generates, and remedied through their incorporation in full, richer, more concrete conceptual forms (Bottomore 1983:122).

As I have said, Bakhtin rejected a reference to the first category of dialectics in relation to the novel that was his favourite genre. It is clear that his trenchant rejection manifests in his work — *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* published in 1929. Dostoevsky’s novel popularizes reactionary ideology, a characteristic of democratic spirit. But critics, such as B.M.Engelgardt have seen democratic spirit in the novel as

discouraging; rather they have suggested that such democratic deliberation amongst separate voices should come to a point of absolutism. Therefore, Engelgardt characterized Dostoevsky's creative imagination as Hegelian first category of dialectics. However, according to Bakhtin, there is no merging of voices into an ultimate, authoritative voice as in the Hegelian absolute. Dostoevsky work does not present a vague dialectics, but an unmerged dialogue of voices, and as a result each of the voices is judged on equal terms with the other. This led Bakhtin to crib the word *polyphonic* voices from the German novelist and critic Otto Ludwig, which is also implied in the words of Cassirer as multiplicity of cultural forms of voices expanded to a multiplicity of discourses in a society and the novel. As such, voices in the novel intersect and interact, closely unraveling their ideological structures, strengths and weaknesses, biases and constraint. Consequently, each of these voices makes as much effort as possible to validate its view in relation to the other. Bakhtin captured this in his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*:

In Dostoevsky, consciousness never gravitates towards itself but is always found in intense relationship with another consciousness. Every experience, every thought of a character is internally dialogic, adorned with polemic, filled with struggle ... it is accompanied by a continual sideways glance at another person (Harland, 1999:159).

In that earlier work, Bakhtin had no doubt in the conception of Lukacs concerning the novel as a representative of the “essence of the age”. And that irony remains the major element of the novelistic system, but disagreed with his statement that except the novel demonstrates some level of relative truth in anarchic cause, in other words demonstrates a despotic perspective, the novelist has therefore subscribed to bourgeois decadence. Lukacs found Bakhtin's experimentation in the use of multi-system of voices with particular reference to the novelistic genre as a reflection of “bourgeois decay”, a rebel to the ideal or

ruling class. Of course Bakhtin saw the many voices in the novel particularly those of laughter as in “carnival laughter”, being the subject of *Rebelais and His World*, as critical voices directed to the ruling class. Undeniably, Bakhtin conceptualized the novel as the embodiment of the dynamic forces capable of shaping the human society in a popular democratic setting.

Nevertheless, for the sociological and political functions of literature, Lukács prioritized epic closure or monologic voice as the ideal form of narrative. Where Lukács championed a centripetal narrative presence, Bakhtin championed the incooperation of multi-voice system, with no central presence — a centrifugal dialogue, as imperative of the narrative tradition. To this end, Bakhtin remained a left-wing Hegelian in opposition to Lukacs. That is, in his theory of the novel, he refused to submit to that reality resulting from authoritarianism which Hegel, in his “Phenomenology of spirit,” called absolute.

Another important aspect in the history of Bakhtinian theory of the novel is expressed in *Rabelias and His World*. A classical study where he focused on the break down of the rigid hierarchies of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance. His interest was to see the pattern through which ancient methods of living and working as a group in accordance with natural demands reappeared in the forms of popular culture as opposed to official culture. He made this observation when he explored the Camivalesque in Rabelais’ Sixteenth Century novel — *Gargantua and Pantagrue*, which according to him “celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and

prohibitions”. As such, the liberation of this kind, he continued, carried with it a conceptual and behavioural unity:

All things that were once self - enclosed, disunified, distanced from one another by a non carnivalistic hierarchical world-view are drawn into carnivalistic contacts and combination. Carnival brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid (Harland, p: 164).

This merging of all things which were previously separated through self-enclosure becomes the evidence of the possibilities provided by the carnival. One of such possibilities could be understood by the chances available to the participant to play as many roles as possible in a specific outing. The philosopher and writer J.W.Goethe, who visualized time in space and tried to explicate a 1789 Roman Carnival said that “each person was free to participate as “both actor and speaker, their freedom is shown in a jamboree with poor people playing the roles of Kings and Kings serving as fools” (Imenyi, 2002: 74).

For Bakhtin, the carnival opens up a ground for interaction and exchange of these hilarious roles which also constitute Menippean satire. In relation to the novel, as it is specifically understood, Menippean Satire deals with the Juxtaposition of several speech genres or hilarious languages and world views (imagery) by characters in dialogue, with little attention to permanent role of a character. What Bakhtin was saying is that the novel, in all its forms belongs to the narrative category of dialogism to represent the formative structures of discourse and those sociological experiences from which the voices of different perspectives must engage each other.

For the sake of scholarship, it is worthy to note that M. M. Bakhtin was not the only scholar who had addressed the issue of dialogue as a mode of communication characterized by an open exchange of ideas and meanings. Scholars such as the European philosophers — Martin Buber, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jurgen Habermas; the ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates and the quantum physicist, David Bohm had equally done the same, though their approaches to the subject differed. However, their differences in approach are not many. They are rather subtle, as they all agreed that dialogue serves a communicative role of relational learning process in a democratic system in which each person is unavoidably influenced through engagement with another person.

It is this general understanding of dialogue by other scholars that informs Bakhtin to emphasize the dialogic character of all study in the “human sciences”. In that instance, he said that one needs to deal with another “I” who can speak for, and about his or herself in an essentially different way than with an inanimate and voiceless object. In other words, that one should take cognizance of the possibilities of meaning by the speech of the “I” as subject than the voice of the abstract object. Here, he lucidly made his position as different as possible from that of the Soviet structuralists, who adopted the “abstract objectivist” approach to language with a blithe emphasis on the slippery nature of the very subject. However, his position, unlike the Soviet Structuralists, emphasizes the importance of the word of the subject as it comes through a dialogic process, which means a realistic exchange of utterances. To this end, he undermined any abstract speculation about language. With this view of language, this study will indeed explore the necessary concepts of Bakhtinian theory of the novel as a thread through which it will carefully re-

examine the works of Adichie in order to give them new, and more so, some sublime readings.

1.12 Choice of the Model

It is so clear that the development of the Bakhtinian theory of the novel since the 20th Century till date has been to address the multi-layered nature of language in a less authoritarian style, both in literary tradition and in social life. As such, it is appropriate to say that Bakhtin's eventual achievement was his statement that the novel as well as other socio-ideological discourses are characterized as been formed by many voices that will never synthesize for the undue advantage of any sacred voice. To this end, other scholarly arguments have risen to disagree with Bakhtin. Cases in point are B.M.Engelgardt's argument against the multiplicity of voices, and Lukacs submission against the democratic spirits or the emergence of voices in the novel or in any Socio-ideological discourse as projected by Bakhtin. Lukács proposed one central, authoritative voice which Bakhtin called monologic closure, and which to him (Bakhtin) should not feature in a democratic setting where there is no final authority of voice.

Being in sympathy with this engaging theory, I am somewhat restless in suspecting that some scholars as those aforesaid have bracketed Bakhtin's postulation as ridiculous because of its radical orientation to extinguish authoritarianism in a narrative or elsewhere. Whatever the case may be my position as ardent admirer and fan of this very theory is to show how it gives an enthusiastic insight into a newer way of understanding Adichie's texts.

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CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Introduction

My analysis here follows the form and content of the novel which is nothing but a product of pseudo-representation of Nigeria amidst the characters as they appear. Thus, the reader should detach himself/herself from an attempt at making extreme analogy between the imaginary Nigeria of the novel followed by my recreation of it and the real Nigeria in Africa.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie is undeniably biased in the plot, yet she writes with high imaginative piquancy, giving the story an emotional contour, the kind, I suspect, Longinus called “The Sublime”. Her bias, as it were, arises from her personal outlook of what the intellectual elites are in the world of the historic text. As she sees it, they make an intellectual mess of the Nigerian Civil War. Hence, I have used their controversy of the mess to develop this chapter with the topic — “The Logic of Intellectual Mediocrity in *Half of a Yellow Sun*”, which concentrates on the novelist’s view of the intellectuals. Nevertheless, to show whether or not Adichie is correct in conceptualizing such a rarified class of people as mediocres is not my intention here, rather what is important is an attempt at harnessing their controversial dialogue — their dialogic opposites in order to communicate the meaning of heteroglossia as I interrogate the text. So, by intellectual elites I mean the highly, socially organized people who are occupied almost all the time in the pursuit of scholarship. These people are concerned with issues of research, teaching and publishing books and other related materials in order to enlighten the people as well as making them to acquire necessary skills in life. In a similar interpretation, A.K.Odiwo (2009) quoted Hussein Alatas as interpreting an intellectual as a person who is engaged in thinking about ideas and non-material problems using the faculty of reason. In the same

way, Robert Michels (1949:46) viewed the intellectuals as those whose judgement based on reflection of knowledge derived directly and conclusively from sensory perception.

Finally, Odiwo continued with Alatas as stating the intellectuals as people or persons:

- a. Recruited from all classes though in different proportions.
- b. Found supporting or opposing various cultural or political movement.
- c. Whose occupations on the whole are non-manual being for the most part writers, lecturers, poets, journalists, agriculturalist, medical professors, etc.
- d. Who to a certain extent remain at a distance from the unprincipled part of a society.
- e. Who are not merely interested in the purely technical and mechanistic side of knowledge: ideas about religion, the good life, art, nationalism, planned economy, culture and the like but belong to their world of thought.
- f. The intellectuals, in contrast with the specialists, see things in a broad perspective in terms of their inter-relation and totality.

Therefore, I try to present Adichie here as creatively criticizing the deviation of the intellectuals from what she assumes is their path to nation building, particularly in the time of the Nigerian Civil War. To bring this idea of aberration and capriciousness clearer, I have used the concept of heteroglossia, which, to that effect, shows the inability of the intellectuals to have a consensus voice in a way that can help them actualize their dream of secession.

2.1 The Logic of Intellectual Mediocrity in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Half of A Yellow Sun (2006) tells in part the story of the Nigerian Civil War, which was fought between 1967 and 1970; and which was between the Nigerian Federal troops

and their Biafran counterparts who broke away from the former on July 5, 1967. The novel records scenes of carnage, maiming and several other forms of violence against humanity. Interestingly, Adichie was born seven years after the Civil War. However, from whatever source her information and inspiration might have come, she writes, notwithstanding, with a vicarious heat of perception. So, in her imaginative import, the novelist condemns the intellectual elites who converted their academic talent to destructive actions like war and a sudden irrepressible urge for secession.

The narrative is presented through multiple narrative perspectives. The novelist uses the technique of who experience *what* to relate the story. A technique that allows the story to unfold, by adopting the perspective or angle of specific characters in specific scenes, leading to the understanding of these specific characters' opinions or comments about an outstanding character or hero amongst them. Based on this aspect of narration, Bakhtin said that:

The author [narrator] neither argues with his hero [character] nor agrees with him. He speaks not with him, but about him. The final word belongs to the author, and that word based on something the hero does not see and does not understand, on something located outside the hero's consciousness – can never encounter the hero's words on a single dialogical plane (Harland,160).

What Bakhtin was communicating is that the perspective or view of a narrator about an outstanding character or hero is supreme or final because such narrator sees and understands better the actions of that outstanding character more than he himself does. So, this very author/ narrator could relate the action of the hero to the audience without encountering a thwarted progression or interruption. These perspectives are carried into

dialogism and opened the path with which the audience will understand the theme of the intellectual elites' failure towards nation building.

As I am arguing from the perspective of heteroglossia in this chapter, it is indeed important to say that every narrative creation or novel is populated with diverse socio-ideological discourses. That is, the novel form has a dialogic style which carries a democratic spirit of voices towards the attainment of reality. In the process, each of the voices is given equal dialogic right as none of them has any linguistic access to the final truth or reality of the *world* discussed. In other words, no individual perspective of these voices is sufficient to total reality in itself, rather only the concrete totality of voices or perspectives can present reality, which, to Bakhtin is impossible, unlike the Hegelian ideal.

Adichie seems to have been conscious of the principle of heteroglossia to tell a historical story of the Nigerian Civil War so as to reveal the intellectual mediocres who abandoned their noble responsibility and began to agitate for war and eventual secession. Through the dialogic style, the novelist shows how the many voices of the intellectual elites of the novel do not help them to achieve their secession scramble. She does this by placing one voice, following the rule of heteroglossia, to see reality in itself which never agrees with the views of the others. Hence, language becomes the agent of conflict amongst social group. It is this *heteroglossic* language of unmerged form of voices that makes Ernst Cassirer to insist on a plurality of cultural forms to be extended to a plurality of discourses in the society and the novel.

Half of a yellow Sun, in some allegorical aspects, is a representative of the social milieu that pervaded the country during the civil unrest. The novelist is determined in her

imagination to present the plurality of discourses and social actions that rocked Nigeria during that period of hard pull and push. Heteroglossia provides the impressive possibility of understanding the horrendous involvement of the intellectual elites and the least expected roles they played which the novelist reveals by staging them in dialogue. And having read it once or twice, one can simply see that *Half of a yellow sun* is full of horror, as Nnolim argues that:

African literature in the twentieth century was not happy. It was lachrymal: it was a literature of lamentation ... Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a yellow Sun* is a carry-over from the twentieth century. *Half of a yellow sun* is a weeping nove. (Nnolim, 2010).

Of course, scenes in the novel are not happy ones. There are stages where characters do not agree. Following this development, a wrangling scene emerges over the issue of pan-Africanism – a concept that seems, in that context, to be a unity pack for the affected countries, but Odenigbo as an accomplished tribalist whose words of argument never wonder far from discrimination takes a contrary view. His view is racial prejudice. Remember the effect of opposing views in the Bakhtinian theory, and what is more, Adichie sets her characters within this dialogic pattern where voices do not agree at all, so that the picture she paints becomes clearer. As a matter of fact, disagreement becomes one of the responsible agents for the intellectual elites' failure in the novel. Indeed, this picture becomes clearer when the characters engage in dialogue with decentralized voices:

“We should have a bigger pan-African response to what is happening in the American South really” Professor Ezeka said. Master cut him short. “You know, pan-Africanism is fundamentally a Europeans notion”. “You are digressing”, Professor Ezeka said, and shook his head in his usual superior manner. “Maybe it is a European notion”, Miss Adebayo said, but in the bigger picture, we are all one race”. “What bigger picture?” Master asked. “The bigger picture of the white man! Can't you see that we are not all alike

except to white eyes?” “Of course we are all alike, we all have white oppression in common”, Miss Adebayo said dryly. “Pan-Africanism is simply the most sensible response”. “Of course, of course, but my point is that the only authentic identity for the African is the tribe”, Master said. “I am Nigerian because a white man created Nigeria and gave me that identity. I am black because the white man constructed black to be as different as possible from his white. But I was Igbo before the white man came”. Professor Ezeka snorted ... “But you became aware that the Pan – Igbo idea itself came only in the face of white domination. You must see that tribe as it is today is as colonial a product as nation and race”. “The pan-Igbo idea existed long before the white man!” Master shouted. “Go and ask the elders in your village about your history”. “The problem is that Odenigbo is a hopeless tribalist, we need to keep him quiet”, Miss Adebayo said (p.20 - 21).

I have quoted this dialogue in full because of its importance in the light of heteroglossia. Heteroglossia, being the multi-layered system of language, indicated by socio-ideological contradictions and carried forward from a previous speech by another character in a chain of dialogue, demands, in this practical re-examination, such length of quote. For this reason, one quickly sees that what are responsible for this long dialogic intercourse are the different views or levels of understanding and interpretation of the word “Pan-Africanism” and are also responsible for emerging voices, each taking account of the other to react in the opposite. Here evidences are that understanding and interpretation are reflective of phenomenology where reality of the world of experience or concept lies within the individual consciousness rather than public consciousness. In other words, reality of the world lies in the meaning which the individual mind is capable of conceiving as against a general preference. Therefore, as language in dialogue is the gate way to this reality, there is no doubt that the individual choice of language is a medium by which he communicates his vision. According to C. Adams and M.V. Manen:

Our language can be seen as an immense linguistic map that names the possibilities of human lived experiences. The value of phenomenology is that it prioritizes and investigates how the human being experiences the world: ...how we experience novel ways of interacting with others [in dialogue] (Given, 2008).

To this end, the individual understanding to what seems to be reality within their world is shown in the manner of their discourse. That is how they are engaged in the talk about Pan-Africanism.

For Professor Ezeka and Miss Adebayo, Pan-Africanism is understood in terms of human relationship and unity. In other words, its significance lies in conceptualizing the black race as one and the same, without discrimination by any region under its umbrella. This is further cleared in the words of Miss Adebayo "... we are all one race". As it is, the subject being introduced in the dialogue by Professor Ezeka as "what is happening in the American South", therefore informs him that the conglomeration of the black race to what is known as pan-Africanism should be used as a black force to help any of the black nations who are subjected to any form of torture against humanity, no matter the part of the world where they are. The truth is Professor Ezeka is referring to those black peoples who are in American South.

As in any age, the intellectual elites here are talking about the issue prevalent in their time. This is the issue of violence against the black race, referred to as "what is happening in the American South". Reading between the lines, one will understand that the image Professor Ezeka has drawn here from "what is happening..." is a presage insight of what would unfold in Nigerian Republic as in the pogrom of the Civil War fought between 1967 and 1970. Therefore, as an intellectual mediocre, he longs for a failed effort to avert it. As for Odenigbo, he has a nauseating understanding of Pan-Africanism which

underscores his tribalistic tendency. For him Pan-Africanism should not be used to inspire oneness of a people. Rather oneness and unity of a people should be interpreted on the basis of tribe. Consequently, what Adichie has presented in the dialogue in pursuing the revelation of their failure is an adroit dramatization of the tribal game which has denied the intellectual elites a single sense of historical connection with one another in the larger nation:

The absence of a clear historical interest in and a serious commitment to... intellectual heritage is indicative of a national failure to establish a nation with a strong sense of history that should always inspire its future (EL- Miskin, 2007: 36).

El-Miskin's statement is very relevant in this context. Odenigbo and his cronies' lack of historical interest for a common identity with other tribes destroy their noble integrity and intellectual prestige. This genealogical lack, in the wider sense of it, urges them towards a ravenous quest for secession, and as well, turning them blind from the immediate reality of the nation, and more so, leaving them as empty intellectuals. As Mboya observed in *The Challenge of Nationhood*:

Nothing could be more disastrous than having the intellectuals sit back as professional theorist, finding faults and making forecast of disaster or upheavals, without saying or doing anything constructive at worse still is that man who thinks he can be an honest intellectual and a tribalist at the same time (P.111-112).

Another level of their failure as intellectual elites manifests at the point of betrayal. For instance, Odenigbo as the key character in the secession scramble betrays his country Nigeria. Secession is usually the breakaway or falling apart of one group from a larger one for the reason of war or for a mere political will. People, generally, hold the intellectual class at awe. As such, they see them as role models. Besides, they expect their act to be the epitome of peace and progress amidst proliferation of knowledge which are assuring points

of social stability. However, there is a contradiction in reference to this very expectation from the intellectual community who inhabits *Half of a yellow Sun*.

Consequently, this contradiction or misdirection of intellectual prowess is brought to light to mock Odenigbo. It is a sharp sarcasm against his craving for secession. This effect is accentuated in the dramatic song of Olanna and Baby in the bathroom to highlight the image of a grave danger lurking behind Odenigbo's desire. The photographic scene becomes clearer as the interlude interrupts him when he was tuning his radio, and this draws Ugwu's attention from the message he was giving about his sister's upcoming marriage. The narrator reports that:

Master was in the living room when Ugwu came in and greeted him.

"How are your people?" Master asked.

"They are well, sah. They send greetings".

"Very good".

"My sister Anulika will be getting married soon".

"I see".

Master was focused on tuning the radio. Ugwu could hear Olanna and Baby singing in the bathroom. London Bridge is falling down, falling down falling down London Bridge is falling down, my fair lady (p.121-122).

In the context of the song text or ditty, what Adichie has called to order in relation to the theme of failure of the intellectual elites towards nation building is the inevitable fall of the nation Nigeria if they who are the life wire of some sorts in the nation do not live up to her expectations. She uses the irony of London in that song to stress the importance of Nigeria as a big nation which her citizens and denizens hold with pride. London is the most treasured city in Europe as is Nigeria in Africa. Hence, there is a drawn analogy, as the

song warns Odenigbo of the falling of London which will symbolize the eventual fall of Nigeria. To understand this idea, one needs to connect it to the noun phrases of London “Bridge and My fair lady”. The head noun “Bridge” connotes the eminent link or affinity between Nigeria and her subjects, Biafra inclusive which is inescapably within the landmass of Nigeria. The possessive determiner “My” in the second phrase refers to the sense of social commitment and ownership, whereas “...fair lady” in this context completes the sense of this social commitment and ownership. Therefore, Olanna and Baby see in the song their dear, young innocent Nigeria as the target of this falling.

Connotatively, one could aptly say that the song text of Olanna and Baby has incriminated Odenigbo’s irrepressible desire, and, in the most part, his action towards secession. Therefore, from the song, Olanna and Baby demonstrate a specific insight into the situation to unravel the paradox of Odenigbo’s intellectual ineptitude and backwardness. To mock his obtuseness towards the comprehension of the dangerous effect of secession as it will rock the nation. Odenigbo, as an intellectual mediocre, is so narrow minded and his ears block up that he cannot decipher even the least meaningful sound around him. Meticulously, one has come to understand his obtuseness from an informing background as Baby sings the song, struggling to pronounce the subject of the song, London Bridge. But unfortunately, or rather accidentally or perhaps deliberately, Adichie’s creative imagination has affected her pronunciation to be slightly different enough to inform Odenigbo about the mass destruction of lives and properties which lie ahead in his secessionist dream. “Baby’s London, in her tiny, unformed voice, sounded like bonbon”, (p. 122). In this instance, the narrator informs that Baby lacks fluency in speech sound.

Probably, her vocal cords are not mature. Therefore, in her innocence, she naturally pronounces the word bonbon, instead of London.

As the narrator informs the reader about Odenigbo's malicious desire, the informing background of word or sound is taking into consideration to elicit the effect. As a result, the sound bonbon as it naturally escapes Baby's mouth in her innocent attempt to sing London is not without signification. So, bonbon here has given an informative clue of the psychological and environmental damage which war can cause. The outlook is that bonbon has a subtle connotation through sound and physical witnesses in this passage. In the auditory sensation, for example, it connotes a harsh, unbearable sound. And physically, it means an avalanche of artillery shells, capable of mass destruction just in a twinkle of an eye. So, logically, in her aforesaid natural and innocent voice, so much so in her ignorance, Baby has overtly caution Odenigbo against his unguarded dream of secession that can lead to violence and war and subsequent shelling of artillery and bombing.

The incorporation of the song in the text has reminded one of another dimension of Bakhtin's argument that the novel generally contains many voices. In it, different voices of the dialoguing characters are present, so are those of narrators, and of "reproduced" letters or journals (or song text, as it is here). Finally, the different voices assumed by the author in addressing the reader. Following these many other voices, Bakhtin opined that the novel is open to outside influences, hence, he saw it as the only literary production capable of imitating some extra-artistic genres, the song text, for instance. This novelistic code of creativity does not only imitate but exposes the conventionality of forms and language of these extra-artistic genres. To him, therefore, the novel is not a genre in itself, but a radical make-up of anti-genre. Adichie has explored these other radical aspects of the novel,

blending them with heteroglossia to reveal a community of voices where even those of the song text integrate to detail a dramatic influence referring to the intellectual elites' failure.

I have argued that *Half of a Yellow Sun* tells its story through multiple narrative perspectives. Taking this fact across the work, one understands that apart from the other narrative-cum-linguistic variables, one of the profound paths one must follow in order to understand this failure is the narrative point of view. Every writer uses narrative point of view as a telling style through which the reader discovers social experiences presented in the world of the narrative. It is in this dimension that the imaginary power of narrative fiction to imitate life by presenting man and the idea of himself and the pattern of his existence becomes interesting. Accordingly, this narrative background will lead to the concept of point of view. Again, since narrative fiction is all about man and his life in the society, it is indeed through point of view that his story is told, making a reader to understand him and the idea about himself in relation to others.

Point of view, according to M.H. Abrams (2009):

Signifies the way a story get told — the mode (or modes) established by an author by means of which the reader is presented with the characters, dialogue, actions, setting and events which constitute the narrative in a work of fiction.

Besides this definition by Abrams, the ordinary reader may likely see point of view as automatically the aspect or angle from which a narrative is presented. Presumably, such a reader, in his/her understanding is correct, but his/her view is puritanical or peripheral as regards the complete sense of it. Because apart from the reader's attempt to see it as the aspect or angle from which a story is told, he/she must also understand how it matches

with the dialogue between characters in the story. Similarly, Udumukwu (1997) quoted Wayne Booth as saying in his argument about “Distance and Point of View”, that:

To say that a story is told in [the] 1st or 3rd person, and to group novels into one or the other kind, will tell us nothing of importance unless we become more precise and describe how the particular questions of the narrative relate to specific desired effect.

Therefore, following the outcome of “dialogue, actions, setting and event” in a narrative as conceptualized by Abrams, the more profound way to appreciate point of view in line with the theme of intellectual failure in this study, is to translate heteroglossia into the necessary clues of:

- a) Who is telling the story and on whose perspective?
- b) Who is in dialogue with who?

I have already emphasized that *Half...* is narrated in multiple points of view. By multiple points of view, I mean, the several dominating narrative perspectives or aspects which the writer adopts to articulate the actions and events of a novel or narrative using the narrator whose voice, according to Bakhtin “ resides beside the voices of the characters” who see and tell (emphasis is mine). To this end, point of view is equal to all the different narrative perspectives which the novelist uses to achieve his/ her objective. Adichie has achieved her objective in presenting the theme of failure of the intellectual elites who abandon their role as nation builders. She does this by making good use of the multiple points of view throughout the story.

Odenigbo as intellectual mediocre is more understood through what other characters say about him. The knowledge of literature (narrative) proves that a character is better known by what others say about him. As it is in the story of *Half ...*, therefore, the

reader's knowledge of Odenigbo eventually becomes vivid through the multiple narrative perspectives. These are the ways by which other characters have interpreted him. Following a peremptory demand for a song, for instance, Ugwu is able to see Odenigbo far beyond his physical appearance to his psychological make-up which enables him to draw a hilarious conclusion that Odenigbo is deranged:

“Sing me a song” [Odenigbo demanded].

“Sah?” [Ugwu asked].

“Sing me a song. What song do you know? Sing!” Master pulled his glasses off. His eyebrows were furrowed, serious. Ugwu began to sing an old song he had learned on his father's farm. His heart hit his chest painfully.

“Nzogbo nzogbu enyimba enyi ...” He sang in a low voice at first, but master tapped his pen on the table and said “Louder!” so he raised his voice, and master kept saying ‘Louder!’ until he was screaming.

The singing had loosened something inside him, he was breathing easily and his heart no longer pounded. And he was convinced that master was mad (p.12).

I have cited this passage here so that I can show clearly, the issue of narrative point of view- which will illuminate, in the best understandable manner, the theme I am discussing. As such, it is appropriate to say that the narrative point of view from the excerpt above is that of third person. Ugwu, being presented as the one who sees from this piece of narrative is not the narrator, neither is the narrator, in the real sense of it, any known character in the text, rather he is outside of it; but tells from Ugwu's perspective or view. In other words, Ugwu remains a passive narrator. He is called passive narrator because those words are not directly coming from his mouth, but from his mind. Or rather are presented as if they were coming from his mind, and are related to the reader through the

main narrator whose name is not revealed, rather he is at best placed as what is known as third person narrator.

In a related development, one sees a conversation between Olanna and her parents with their guest – Chief Okonji. Her parents try to persuade her to accept an affair with Okonji who they prefer to Odenigbo. As the narrator tells from her parents' perspective that Odenigbo is not good enough for her and is rather crazy and can not be possibly assessed by the people; he is a nuisance. Olanna's effort to stop her parents from having a negative feeling against Odenigbo is to no avail:

...but it did not stop them from telling her that Odenigbo was crazy and wrong for her, one of those hot-headed university people who talked and talked until everybody had a headache and nobody understood what had been said (p. 33).

There is a scale or degree with which the two adjectives of “mad” and “crazy” have come to correspond with this mediocrity of a character. Odenigbo, like his cronies, has acted below expectations. In other words, he is lesser than his intellectual claim as an academic. Consequently, the scale at which the two words of mad and crazy have interpretive base is in metaphor; because the two words are used absurdly to describe his erratic emotion in his interpersonal contact, besides his inability to remain focus as a numerical genius or mathematician. The narrator informs that: “He's a mathematician but he spends all his time writing newspaper articles about his own brand of mishmash African socialism” (p.69). This excerpt is informative. It reveals both the erratic behaviour and mediocrity of Odenigbo being demonstrated through Kainene's perspective or the angle by which she understands him. In all these instances, none of the characters, with their perspectives has held Odenigbo in high esteem. I mean, none has described him throughout

his action as an achiever, rather as a failure. He has failed because as Adichie has it in the story, he turns his intellectual prowess to destroy the nation by craving for secession which he later has himself to blame. The narrator says, through Olanna's eyes that: "he had joined the Agitator corps; after work, they went into the interior to educate the people about the great nation that Biafra would be" (p.262). Rather than use his intellectual capability to rescue the nation from falling, he, without the sense of compunction educates a war-desirous people to throw in their best for the cause of unprovoked secession, as Elechi Amadi (1982) has reported:

Some Ibo (sic) intellectuals genuinely believed in the rebel cause and threw their best into the fight... for their consciences did not prick them and they worked with quiet unswerving courage. At the end of the war, some fled the country. Those who remained behind have kept absolutely quiet. A few have even been bold enough to say that no one misled them; that they took their own decisions and could not blame anyone (Sunset ... p.41).

Indeed, Odenigbo blames himself when he is caught in a situation where he is reminded, through a military confrontation how he has used his knowledge of the book wrongly. This is clear in the dialogue between the Nigerian officer and Odenigbo:

"Why do you still have Biafran number plates? Are you supporters of the defeated rebels?"

His voice was loud, contrived; it was as if he was acting and very aware of himself in the role of the bully.

"We will change it when we get to Nsukka", Odenigbo said.

"Nsukka?" The officer straightened up and laughed. "Ah, Nsukka University. You are the ones who planned the rebellion with Ojukwu, you book people". Odenigbo said nothing, looking straight ahead.

The officer yanked his door open with a sudden movement.

“Oya! Come out and carry some wood for us. Let’s see how you can help a united Nigeria”. Odenigbo looked at him. “What is this for?” (p. 416).

With a disdainful remark by the officer, it is obvious that Odenigbo as well as other intellectuals who are found around the university in Nsukka have given the institution a wrong image. The image being that the institution becomes a breeding ground for rebels and therefore a threat to the Nigerian soldiers. To this reason, the troops see the university in Nsukka as an institution that cannot be trusted as it is full of intellectual and practical possibilities which nourish rebellious machinery. As a result of this suspicion, the troops cannot help but seek for all means possible to raze the institution to the ground. One eloquent, drastic action to assuage this suspicion is the burning of books:

Ugwu stooped down beside the wildly overgrown bush with the white flowers and stared at the pile of burnt books. They had been heaped together before being set on fire.

“Why did they have to burn them?” Olanna asked Midly. “Just think of the effort”. Master squatted beside him and began to search through the charred paper, muttering, “my research papers are all here, nekene nke, this is the one on my rank test for signal detection...” see the mound of blackened books that the vandals had emptied out of the library and set on fire (p.418 – 22).

No doubt the burning of these books symbolizes the destruction of the contact between them and the intellect as power. So, the troops could not have delayed their action one minute, as even Emiley Dickson realized this wonderful mechanical power of the book to move faster and change things in his poem — “There Is No Frigate Like A Book”. Still looking for a way, perhaps to save their little heads from, say, the strange influence of the book, they issue a threat to reduce the number of the university intellectuals who think of nothing now but secession that can wrench the nation apart. The narrator informs, through Ugwu:

Ugwu had heard that the Nigerian soldiers had promised to kill five percent of Nsukka academics, and nobody had heard of Professor Ezeka since he was arrested in Enugu (p422).

It is important to recall that the soldiers have demonstrated certain levels of aggression against the members of the intellectual community in the university. Also, it could be remarkable, if one would ask: why should the soldiers bully the intellectuals? Of course, such aggressive urgency, demanding to know *why* may come to arouse subsequent consciousness and further furore in regard to the wrong use of the power of the book or otherwise complete the issue that soldiers are to protect not to kill or bully a nation's territory and her citizenry. And what is more, the intellectual elites are society reformers by means of their teaching and research practices. However, soldiers are to ensure the security of the territory where these intellectuals dwell. Similar function of the soldier was treated by Aristotle in *The Republic*. In *Half ...* the intellectual elites have failed from being the society reformers or nation builders to warmongers. So, not only do the khaki men fail to take care of their security but become aggressive to them. Consequently, the object of the aggression of the soldiers against these intellectuals is the fear of the damage which their (the intellectuals) wits are capable of causing across the nation if their plan in secession is not withdrawn. This fear is even emphasized through a satirical tone by the Nigerian officer when he says to Odenigbo: "Ah, Nsukka University. You are the ones who planned the rebellion with Ojukwu, you book people". There is no doubt, the officer understands the amazing and revolutionary power of the book, which, in the narrative, one discovers that the intellectuals have applied it with destructive tendency. Like his intellectual cronies, Odenigbo pulls his intellectual resources together and is obsessed with the thought of enlisting in the Biafran army as he relates his desire to Olanna who is not only angry but derides his foolishness:

“I’ve been thinking of the army, nkem”, he said. “Maybe I should join His Excellency’s new S–brigade”.

Olanna said nothing for a while. She felt the urge to yank at his new beard and pull out hair and draw blood.

“You might as well find a sturdy tree and a rope, Odenigbo, because that’s an easier way to commit suicide”, she said (p.331).

Interestingly, there is the need to pay attention to the meaning of suicide in this context. Ordinarily, it means the abominable act in which a person intentionally kills himself/herself. In Nigeria, for instance, suicide is not an act for self honour; but in most cases, to terminate alongside with your life a certain stigma of shame. Or the victim must be in such a condition that he/she is bereft of all hope. Olanna’s use of the word suicide leads one to delicate but subtle issues. First, she is asking Odenigbo that in all his knowledge of the book he cannot think of any necessary, justifiable option that will better his life and the nation at large, but to join the Biafran warring barons where he may ruin his life? Second, she opens up a cognitive space for Odenigbo to realize that he, like the others of his kind is the bearer of intellectualism – that is the rarefied and epistemological process that involves the time of deep thinking and comprehension of complicated issues. This situation has brought a new light to Olanna. By sheer chance of insight she has got herself into the illuminating space she has created, as a result, she now sees more clearly than Odenigbo does. That he already has lost all hope of winning the war. She mourns this condition, as the narrator explains: “Olanna said nothing for a while”.

The concept of heteroglossia enables Adichie to take her reader through different dialogic events. Through the eyes of the narrators the reader understands the surprise that

beats the novelist's imagination when lecturers have joined students and become unreasonably excited with Ojukwu's inciting speech, asking him for weapon:

"I came to ask you a question", he said. What shall we do? Shall we keep silent and let them force us back into Nigeria? Shall we ignore the thousands of our brothers and sisters killed in the North.?"

"No! No!" The students were filling the wide yard. Many lecturers had parked their cars on the road and joined the crowd. "Power! Power!" Ojukwu raised his hands again and the chanting stopped. "If they declare war", he said. "I want to tell you now that it may become a long-drawn-out war. A long-drawn-out war. Are you prepared? Are we prepared?" Yes! Yes! Ojukwu, nye anyi egbe! Give us guns! Iwe di anyi n'obi! There is anger in our hearts!" (P.171).

Adichie sees the involvement of the lecturers / the intellectuals in the request of guns as a risible one. So, the picture she paints here is to ridicule their aberrant behaviour. They have shifted from their usual noble expectation and become enthused in going to war. Remember that war bears the meaning of destruction. Therefore, like the gun that shatters and kills, they become excited in the destruction of the nation. It is this uncouth, raw manner of the intellectuals that has occupied the novelist's mind. She seems to ask the question, why should such noble and rarefied people become so wild and rash? as she speaks in her own voice:

The chanting was constant now - give us guns, there is anger in our hearts, give us guns. The rhythm was heady. Richard glanced across at Phyllis, thrusting a fist in the air as she shouted, and he looked around for a little while at every one else, intense and intent in the moment, before he too began to wave and chant. "Ojukwu, give us guns! Ojukwu, nye anyi egbe!" (P.171).

Similarly, the novelist seems to guess that in a moment such as this, even the white intellectual elite would likely fail in his social responsibility if he is not reasonable enough. Richard is a white intellectual now in Nigeria, claiming a citizen of the dreamland of

Biafra which affects his bias against Nigeria. He is a career journalist, hence qualifies as a member of the class of elites I am concerned about in this study. Richard is co-opted, or circumstances have co-opted him to the cause of Biafra. One could see through the events of the story that the main object of these circumstances is his intensified motivation to marry Kainene who is a Biafran. Based on this reason, he unfortunately misses the purpose of his coming to Nigeria. As an adventurous journalist, he comes to explore the African art – the Igbo-kwu art, but fails to accomplish this as he decides to seize the Civil War opportunity to unite forces with Biafrans in order to wreck the Nigeria nation. To draw a clear picture of his involvement and his unnecessary excitement over the issue of secession, the narrator informs, thus:

The day the secession was announced, he stood with Kainene on the Veranda and listened to Ojukwu's voice on the radio and afterward took her in his arms.

“Happy independence”, he told her.

“Independence”, she said, before she added, “Happy independence”.

He wanted to ask her to marry him. This was a new start, a new country, their new country.

He would be Biafran ... He would belong.

He said, marry me, Kainene in his head many times but did not say it aloud (P.168.).

Amongst these intellectuals is Professor Okeoma, a failed poet, who later longs for the army. Adichie uses the dramatic appearance of identity to leave Ugwu with much wonder on why a poet, a philosopher should come so low to become a half-baked soldier. He writes poetry, and is one of those respected intellectual elites in Nsukka University.

Remarkably, his unimaginable change from what he is known for calls Ugwu's attention as he is roused from his day-dream and blissful wishes:

It was Okeoma's appearance, back at the house, that brought Ugwu out of his imagined world. Okeoma looked nothing like Ugwu remembered: the untidy hair and rumpled shirt of the poet were gone. His smart-fitting army uniform made him look straight, leaner, and the sleeve had a skull-and-bones image next to the half of the yellow sun (P. 201).

Through the possibility of fiction, one can see that Adichie is reminding her reader of something crucial, or teaching him/her of it. She leaves the reader with no doubt, but to see that the professor no longer trusts his intellectual energy, but his fists, as he is found in army uniform — a war attire. Perhaps it is a creative coincidence, perhaps it is purposeful, citing the story of one Okigbo — a poet, and Adichie has therefore used this reference point to rebuke the shameful act of the intellectuals who ruin their heads in war by taking up arms. Odenigbo as warmonger embraces Okeoma who is no different as he is seen in army uniform: "Master and Olanna hugged him [Okeoma] many times" (P.201).

Bakhtin was quite correct to see dialogism as a reliable means by which discourse can be analyzed both in literature and in live conversation. The unconscious desire or repressed feeling is revealed when a victim of repression is engaged in a dialogic language. Adichie has explored this concept which allows the reader to understand with ease the minds of her characters by means of what they say. She does this by making the characters engage themselves in speech action so that reader can see their feelings and the differences consciousnesses embedded in these feelings. It is this idea, capable of reproducing the inhibited feeling that informed Foucault to see language as an instrument of state

repression. It is a psychological problem that cannot easily be handled by any means except through a synchronized dialogic therapy.

Adichie presents Professor Ekwenugo as a failed intellectual who has joined the Biafran Science Group in order to produce weapon of mass destruction such as Ogbunigwe, grenades and armoured cars. One sees, and is disappointed as Professor Ekwenugo speaks:

“We launched it this afternoon, this very afternoon”,he said caressing his nail. “Our own home-made rocket. My people, we are on our way.”

“We are a country of geniuses!” Special Julius said to nobody in particular. “Biafra is the land of genius”!

“The land of genius”, Olanna repeated, her face in that delicate phase between smiling and laughing (p.198).

This dialogue reveals a salient desire that is been repressed. That is the state of conscious quest for involvement in the war. Ekwenugo states an objective truth of their group effort which other Biafrans including Special Julius and Olanna have waited for so long as it has come now while they cheer their encouragement. Despite their knowledge of this development, Ekwenugo still announces it to them. It is the reason why Voloshinov/Bakhtin said that even a speaker who seems to particularly be talking about an objective subject-matter can always be looking sideways at a potential addressee. To this end, language is intrinsically dialogic. Based on this dialogic attribute of language, as Bakhtin argued, no greater stress of importance is given to a particular voice. Only that each of the voices is given equal opportunity of expression with reference to conflicting opinions as a result. That is no speaker in literary dialogue or elsewhere dominates the

other or provides a superior encompassing point of view, but competes at an equal level of difference.

Half of a Yellow Sun becomes one of the contemporary novels in which Bakhtin's argument concerning the effect of dialogism is at work. Heteroglossia, therefore, remains the dialogic style in which no singular viewpoint of character is considered ultimate. Bakhtin, according to Imenyi (2002:69) acknowledged the presence of heteroglossia; he however believed that it cannot express the individual viewpoints of ordinary people. The novel is a literary narrative that discusses the social, spiritual, etc lives of these ordinary people. Therefore, one agrees that the novel prose has a long tradition of dealing with those social issues bordering on the lives of common people in the society. Nnolim (2009) captures this when he says that "a novelist usually deals with ordinary men and women projected on a realistic literary canvas". Consequently, Bakhtin's position as regards heteroglossia is that multiple voices of ordinary men and women are held in the novel and that they express various ideas. As Ekwenugo disengages himself from academic matters and parades his intellectual muscle in manufacturing war gadgets and suddenly receives a blow of mishap, one hears voices of these ordinary men and women, especially when master (Odenigbo) sympathizes with him:

"Dianyi, what happened to you?" Master asked.

"Just a little burn". Professor Ekwenugo stared at his bandaged hands as if he had only just realized that they meant he no longer had a long nail to stroke.

"We are putting together something very big".

"Is it our first Biafran-built bomber jet?" Olanna teased.

"Something very big that will reveal itself with time", Professor Ekwenugo said, with a mysterious smile.

“It should be a saboteur-detecting machine” Master said. “Yes! Bloody saboteur.” Special Julius made the sound of spitting. “They sold Enugu out. How can you leave civilians to defend our capital with mere machetes? This is the same way they lost Nsukka, by pulling back for no reason. Doesn’t one of the commanding officers have a Hausa wife? She has put medicine in his food” (P.285).

Re-examining *Half of a yellow sun* with the concept of heteroglossia my aim is indeed to show how competing, interacting and intersecting voices are placed side by side in the novel. It is said earlier that a novelist deals with social problems of the ordinary people in an actualized manner. Therefore, Adichie’s novel has been a representative of the kind of interacting voices that emerged during the Nigerian/Biafra Civil War as it shows through a dialogic use of language how some prominent intellectuals abandoned their noble task and shamefully pursued a failed end. Therefore, it is so clear to see that language or words remain the embodiment of thought as well as the means by which one can understand this very thought. A.P. Herbert, quoted in Aitchison (2003:1) is interested in this power of language when he advises his listener to:

Worry about words, Bobby. Your grandmother is right. For, whatever else you may do, you will be using words always. All day, and everyday, words matter. Though you live in a barrel and speak to nobody but yourself, words matter. For words are the tools for thought.

Evidence is that words in dialogue amongst the characters are expressive medium of thought. And the interacting voices in the novel are quite some other evidences that heteroglossia is a dialogic chain where each voice expresses his/her thought and perhaps ideology or perspective on certain issues. It is in this view that one could understand the dialectic power of narrative fiction. This situation in dialogue starts when characters clash with ideas in order to arrive at a possible reality. Thus, Bakhtin maintained that so long as dialogism is concerned, there will never be arrival of reality or truth since no singular voice

is bestowed with authority over the other. Following this development, he said: “there is no merging of voices into a final, authoritative voice as in the Hegelian absolute”.

Indeed, as there is no authority at the disposal of one sacred voice, to overrule any truth or what seems to be it by another voice, discourse allows consciousness to operate on a par with another, and constantly shifting ground in other to enact its differential presence in a relation. In such a discourse relation, there is always a common background of shared understanding between speakers; as a result, whatever that is being said by one speaker is always in response to a previous speech by another. To justify this, Bakhtin in Harland (1999) tried to show that the ideas of those who consciously engage in dialogue are always contradicting each other; as each such speakers, at a given instance expects opposite critical response from the other:

Consciousness never gravitates towards itself but is always found in intense relationship with another consciousness, every experience, every thought of a character is internally dialogic, adorned with polemic, filled with struggle... it is accompanied by a continual sideways glance at another person (Harland,p:159).

Adichie uses this dialogic information creatively well so as to represent the unmerging voices of the intellectual elites which contribute to their failure in the narrative.

The narrator relates that:

Miss Adebayo launched into the French ambassador issue again. She did not think the French should have tested atomic weapons in Algeria, of course, but she did not understand why it mattered enough for Balewa to break off diplomatic relations with France. She sounded puzzled, which was unusual.

“It’s quite clear Balewa did it because he wants to take away attention from his defense pact with the British”, Odenigbo said. “And he knows that slighting the French will always please his masters the British. He’s their stooge. They put him there, and they

tell him what to do and he does it, Westminster parliament model indeed”.

“No Westminster model today”, Dr Patel said. “Okeoma promised to read us a poem”.

“I have told you that Balewa simply did it because he wants the North Africans to like him”. Professor Ezeka said.

“North Africans to like him? You think he cares much for other Africans? The white man is the only master Balewa, knows,” Odenigbo said. “Didn’t he say that Africans are not ready to rule themselves in Rhodesia? If the British tell him to call himself a castrated monkey, he will”.

“Oh, rubbish”, professor Ezeka said.
“You are digressing”.

“You refuse to see things as they truly are!” Odenigbo shifted on his seat. “We are living in a time of great white evil. They are dehumanizing black in South African and Rhodesia, they fermented what happened in the Congo, they won’t let the American blacks vote, they won’t let the Australian Aborigines vote, but the worst of all is what they are doing here. This defence pact is worse than apartheid and segregation, but we don’t realize it. They are controlling us from behind drawn curtains. It is very dangerous!” (P. 110).

As this dialogue arises, one can appreciate the feasibility of the theory in this study. To that effect, heteroglossia has been the parameter placed forward to re-examine *Half of a yellow sun* as it has helped to prove in this study the intellectual elites’ failure which Adichie is worried about.

In accordance with Adichie’s imagination, I have earlier, in some way suggested that this failure resulted from lack of focus or the dereliction of duty to the quest for secession via the diversion of academic energy to war mongering. Therefore, as I have argued in respect to heteroglossia, one can see from the dialogue above, the multivoiced nature of language thronged with internal differences. This becomes possible through the discourse by the characters whose voices never reach any agreement or synthesized. In it

the sentences of individual speaker as the exchange opens express different perspectives. These different perspectives are as a result of individual experiences and subjective ideologies of the world — the real. So, sequence of these sentences or utterances are consciously explore to the advantage of individual's conception of the world. Based on this background of discourse, Iser conceptualizes that “sequence sentences act upon one another”. Hence in a narrative, such as *Half ...*, these sentences never correspond to any “objective reality outside themselves”. As such, the world presented in narrative will possibly be interpreted after what Ingarden, quoted in Lodge, (1972) called “intentionale satzkorrelate” (intentional sentences correlatives), that:

Sentences link up in different ways to form more complex units of meaning that reveal a very varied structure giving rise to such entities as a short story, a novel, a dialogue, a drama, a scientific theory. In the final analysis, there arises a particular world, with component parts determined in this way or that, and with all the variations that may occur within these parts – all this as a purely intentional correlative of a complex of sentences.

To explain further, Ingarden's notion of “intentional sentence correlatives” could be traced to another linguistic level. Accordingly, this level is likely to approximate the poststructuralist's view of expression, where the ideas of a word in sentence both in live dialogue and in story contradict one another. It is what Bakhtin saw when he said that dialogic voices always criticize themselves no end. Bakhtin examined this kind of dialogue in order to see its significance in social life through the process of social interaction, which finally leads to interaction of different social values being articulated in an effort to reaccentuate the utterance of the others in a dialogic chain. One sees Miss Adebayo and her intellectual mates in dialogue; and in the process one also sees how the conceptual ideal or value of a speaker differs from another's. And these differences of value interact. The

narrator says, for instance, that Miss Adebayo is wondering over the subject of the dialogue. Odenigbo takes a pejorative stand against Balewa; Dr Patel shifts ground and draws their attention to expect Okeoma's poem. Professor Ezeka sees differently. For him Balewa's action is only for personal aggrandizement.

From this dialogic interpretation, what I have tried to show is how dialogic language registers the disagreement or conflict between social groups of people. Therefore, Adichie uses *Half of a yellow sun* to demonstrate how dialogic exchange between the secessionists leads to their disagreement, and which, besides a failure from their intellectual responsibility, have also not succeeded in the war. Adichie goes further to reveal that harrowing experience and the indelible impression left by the carnage seem to have thrown Odenigbo off balance and seize his emotion, creating another dialogic episode for voices to intersect and interact, mutually illuminating their ideological structures, potentialities, biases and limitations. The narrator reveals that:

He was not surprised to hear Master's raised voice from the living room.

Master was always short tempered on-days like this.

"And what about our university colleagues in Ibadan and Zaria and Lagos? Who is speaking out about this? They kept silent while white expatriates encouraged the rioters to kill Igbo people. You would be one of them if you didn't happen to be in Igboland! How much sympathy can you have?" Master shouted.

"Don't you dare say I have no sympathy! To say that secession is not the only way to security does not mean I don't have sympathy!" It was Miss Adebayo.

"Did your cousins die? Did your uncle die? You're going back to your people in Lagos next week and nobody will harass you for being Yoruba. Is it not your own people who are killing the Igbo in Lagos? Didn't a group of your chiefs go to the North to thank the

emirs for sparing Yoruba people? So what are you saying? How is your opinion relevant?"

"You insult me, Odenigbo"

"The truth has become an insult".

Miss Adebayo had left. Ugwu stood up when he heard Olanna's voice. "This is unacceptable, Odenigbo! You owe her an apology!"

"It is not a question of whether or not I owe her an apology. It is a question of whether or not I spoke the truth", Master said. Olanna said something Ugwu did not hear and then Master spoke in a calmer tone, "All right, nkem, I will" (p.174-5).

With a close attention, one realizes from the dialogue that the intersecting and interacting voices which mutually illuminate their different emotional statements show heteroglossia as a further manifestation of what Bakhtin called "speech genres". That is, a speech event or situation in which a speaker can move from one situation to another, depending on the factors of age, mood, profession, geographical region, etc. I have shown in the intercourse above where in *Half ...* these speech genres occur between Master (Odenigbo) and Miss Adebayo. As the dialogue opens, one sees Odenigbo in a speech situation where he at first speaks angrily to Miss Adebayo. And after Olanna's intervention, he moves from the speech genre of anger to that of reconciliation by agreeing to apologize to Miss Adebayo. From this situation, I have observed that even as the dialogue progresses, the characters have not been constant with words or language, rather, they have been in a continual shifting of one manner of expression to another. This situation gives rise to Voloshinov's observation that "each word [or expression] is a little arena for the clash and crisscrossing of differently oriented social accents". To buttress his point, in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, he criticized the Saussurean conception of a homogeneous *langue* where all speakers follow a specific form of expression, patterned by the linguistic rules and regulations of that language. Contrary to this, he maintained that in dialogue or discourse speakers are influenced by many factors of

age, class, profession, etc, which could break the strict rules of *langue*. Therefore, having borne these factors in mind, speakers are liable to shift from one language situation to another, hence in a dialogue such as this above, several speech genres of heteroglossia are possible.

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CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Introduction

With *Purple Hibiscus* in this chapter, Adichie proves herself a radical dissenter. She does this by creating characters such as Jaja, Kambili and Auntie Ifeoma whom she arms with witty repartee as a tool for keeping a check on a harsh ideology of Puritanism in order to negotiate an unblemished life of freedom through the destabilization of the unitary or official value, which that ideology signifies. Very keen to the possibilities of the carnivalesque, Adichie harnesses its image-borne strategies to set the unofficial act against its official counterpart, the ideology of Puritanism, for instance, as I have re-examined here through ambivalent laughter as well as the grotesque. To that effect, the re-examination is carried under the engaging topic of “The Carnavalesque as a Means of Liberation in *Purple Hibiscus*”.

Adichie’s acute imagination reveals the inner logic of *Purple Hibiscus* as a process of breaking down the rigid, hierarchical postulate of the ruling or official class in Africa, as Bakhtin had done in Russia. Therefore, both of them could aptly be said of having the same imaginative aim of liberating ordinary men and women through a popular life style. This life style goes beyond the limit of official boundary to unravel the thorny and risible structure of its values via humour, parody and travesty.

3.1 The Carnavalesque as a Means of Liberation in *Purple Hibiscus*

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie focuses on the breakdown of a unitary ideology in this postcolonial era and the emergence of diverse reasoning process and ideological relations. She sets in view the atmosphere of freedom in which people live and work collectively as

orchestrated by the rhythm of nature, with no fear of hierarchical repression. The novelist imagines this symbiotic life as possible only in the sphere of popular tradition or culture as opposed to the limit-setting order of official culture. She achieves this by adopting the possibilities of the “Bakhtinian carnival or polyphony [which] come [s] to mean nothing more than a liberating licentiousness...”(Holquist,1991:108) where characters are full of boisterous life, engaging in an unconditional dialogue which, therefore, bears polyphonic voices.

Purple Hibiscus (2003) is Adichie’s first novel, whose story revolves within three major points of view or perspectives. These three major perspectives are: Eugene (Papa), Auntie Ifeoma, and Kambili who eventually becomes the autodiegetic narrator — the narrator who also participates in the events she tells. Also, as the story unfolds, there are other aspects of action by other characters that enable those events to make a complete sense via the perspectives of the major three. The unitary ideology the novelist presents as a falling system is Puritanism which leads to male chauvinism as well as patriarchal violence in the story. To understand this story, one must place it within the orbit of the contending “subjects” who are involved in the narrative. These are characters identified as subjects in their own rights. Thus, it is the game of this ideology that I have used to trace the relationship of these subjects. I shall return to the definition of what I mean by subjects here.

Semantically, the word ideology is interpreted as an even collection of ideas intellectually planned based on a single view. In another dimension, Udumukwu quotes Terry Eagleton as saying that “ideology is a convenient way of categorizing under a single heading a whole lot of different things we do with signs”. Consequently, the issue of

subjects here will be better approached through the consideration of ideology given by Louis Althusser, from his structuralist revision of Marxism. Althusser sees ideology, according to Onyemaechi Udumukwu (2007:148)

As a representation of the relationship between individuals who function as subjects. As such ideology established a link between a subject, who is a free subjectively, a centre of initiative and power, and another subject who is the subjected being that submits to a higher authority.

Therefore “the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of “constituting” concrete individuals as subjects”. So, from this backdrop, one can see that subjection in ideology is remarked by a conscious alert of interpellation or hailing. As such, “ideology hails or interpellates individual as subjects” (ibid, p.148).

Another way of understanding the subjection is from the issue of self-image which blossoms into the ideology by the subject. Eugene as the subject wields the ideology while Jaja and Kambili remain the victims of subjection. The awareness of their precarious condition leaves them with no choice but to find relief in carnivalesque. To them carnival realism is the only means by which to challenge the ideology of Puritanism breeding into male chauvinism and patriarchal violence. They launch this challenge via the power of humour. It is the consistent power of humour, not a counter-violence, that can neutralize the strength of the ideology and translates to change. Change for freedom. Therefore, change, in the spirit of the carnival, becomes the undeniable debt time must pay. Self-image as I have argued is the logic that encourages this aspect of ideology in the story. Eugene, who is addressed as Papa by the autodiegetic narrator (Kambili) has self-image of himself. And this image finds expression in his dominance and authority over his

household. Meanwhile, by self-image I simply refer to the personal characteristics of aggrandizement characterized by ego which the individual has thought up of himself or herself. In other words, it is the pictorial composition which the individual has put up for himself or herself, expecting people around him or her to respond exactly to it.

In the first part of the story, two of the characters, namely, Kambili and Father Benedict confirm this self-image. And in presenting their views about this image of Eugene, they maintain a social distance in the manner of honorific which spells out in detail their relationship with him. Father Benedict finds his relationship with him on the basis of Christianity and shares the common ideal of brotherhood; therefore, he calls him brother: “Look at Brother Eugene. He could have chosen to be like other Big men in this country. But no, he used the standard to speak the truth ...” (p.13).

What is called the “Standard” here is a news paper owns by Eugene, with Ade Coker as the editor.

For Kambili who is the narrator, at the same time a participant in the events, the relationship between her and Eugene is on the basis of family. Kambili is the daughter of Eugene , hence, she addresses him as Papa:

Papa, wearing a long gray robe like the rest of the oblates, helped distribute ash every year. His line moved the slowest because he pressed hard on each forehead to make a perfect cross with his ash-covered thumb ... (p. 11).

Further more, his self-image is overblown. He sees himself as one of the gods, who is in charge of the spiritual-cum-metaphysical realm. Here one sees what he thinks of himself, and how Father Benedict has responded to it, through the eyes of the narrator:

“During his sermons, Father Benedict usually referred to the Pope, Papa, and Jesus – in that order. He used Papa to illustrate the gospels” (p.12).

Now, let me state clearly what I have previously referred to as “subject,” as it will help with the understanding of the rise of the ideology and who is at the receiving end of it. *Purple Hibiscus* is narrated with two contesting and value-creating forces in focus. The one is overbearing and dominating, while the other is reactive. Where the first uses all instruments of official ideology to create hierarchy and subject the second to dogmatism and fear, the second, in opposite terms, becomes reactive by turning every official tendency of the first into laughter that liberates and destroys all forms of dogmatism and fear. This relationship between these two forces defines the subject and the subjected. To that effect, subject, as it is known and understood in the words of Udumukwu: “can be those who wield ideology and language within a power structure for their own good also be the subjected in ideology” (Udumukwu, 2007: 151).

In this connection, Eugene is the subject who poses the ideology of Puritanism. And Jaja, and Kambili, as well as Beatrice, their mother, who they fondly call Mama, are the subjected who must submit to Eugene’s ideology.

Lest one gets lost, therefore, there is the need to reiterate that the basic line of argument is to see how Adichie has used her characters to deconstruct the harsh ideology in question via carnival realism. Of course the subjected in any ideology will always look for means with which to relieve themselves. In the story of *Purple* ... the available means becomes carnival laughter, which, given that opportunity to liberty, “it becomes possible for the subjected in ideology [of Puritanism] to deconstruct their situation and emerge as

potential subjects” (Udumukwu). The Carnavalesque, as a literary discourse is the brain-child of Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin. It is a radical aggregation of image-borne tactics mounted to destabilize the ideology or the official world view of the upper class. Carnival is the bearer of satire that is also applied to distort official discourse. In one of his latest published articles forwarded to be included in the Soviet *Literaturnia entsikpediia* (Literary Encyclopaedia) in 1940, Bakhtin defined satirical actions as the “image-borne negation” of contemporary actuality as inadequacy, which contains with itself a positive moment in which an improved actuality is affirmed. What Bakhtin meant by “improved actuality” is simply the emergence of new discourse in a more liberalized and popular atmosphere as opposed to a strict and dogmatic ambiance.

Certainly, in a narrative tradition as in *Purple Hibiscus*, the disenchanted characters, Jaja and Kambili, for instance, who are subjected in ideology, begin to chant a new orientation full of carnival laughter in order to neutralize and break through from, at the same time revealing this ideological structure lurking behind surface appearances. And their orientation to these false appearances manifests in humour, which turns every conceptual, official ideal in their garb into “flesh” through parody and travesty. By parody, I mean a systematic form of deriding a figure — human or concept by imitating its pattern and style in a degrading and humorous fashion. Travesty, on the other hand, “mocks a particular work [or ideology] by treating its lofty subject in a grotesquely undignified manner and style” (M.H Abrams).

In the first part of *Purple Hibiscus*, one indeed sees a perfect use of travesty as Papa and Jaja are engaged in a dialogue:

“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” [Jaja said]. I stared at Jaja. Had something come loose in his head?

Papa insisted we call it the host because “host” came close to capture the essence, the sacredness, of Christ’s body. “Wafer” was too secular (p.14).

What Adichie has done here is the application of travesty which is embedded in carnival laughter to return what is considered sacred to flesh. That is to return it to its material and ordinary level. The target of this is to demystify the “host” which Papa considers as holy as the body of Christ. So, Jaja’s trenchant declaration of the host as wafer is a stark blasphemy and profanation. What is at work here is a rupture with the host which in that very context does not only represent the holy body of Christ, as Papa would say, rather has an abstract idiom which is hidden in the garb of Papa’s ideology of Puritanism.

One learns further that even though Papa tries to persuade Jaja that the host is interpreted along-side the sacred body of Christ which a Christian should accept, Jaja still disagrees with him. As a result Jaja sees the host in its ordinary and popular sense — “wafer”, meaning a biscuit eaten with ice-cream. This unofficial, unreligious interpretation of the host sets the situation wry. Importantly, Jaja uses the mediation of language as in the dialogue below to set himself free from the fear of myth Papa has created. This myth is wrapped in the host as he says:

“It is the body of our Lord” Papa’s voice was low, very low.
You cannot stop receiving the body of our Lord.
It is death, you know that”.
“Then I will die”.
... but he looked Papa in the face now.
“Then I will die, Papa” (P. 15).

The dialogue has spurred Jaja to stare at Papa's face in a combative temper. Jaja's seriousness has now displaced Papa's idea of the host and the fear associated with it. In fact, Jaja's action has freed him. "Fear is the extreme expression of narrow-minded and stupid seriousness, which is defeated by laughter. Complete liberty is possible only in the completely fearless world" (Bakhtin, 1965: 47). As Bakhtin had reasoned, the fearlessness in Jaja has liberated him from the shackles of being subjected in ideology. The fearlessness does not end there as it leads to a point where Papa is now caricatured: "his face looked swollen already, with pustipped rashes (sic) spread across every inch, but it seemed to be swelling even more" (p. 14).

Similarly, Papa's ego that comes with his pride of authority is offended via a ridiculous gesture and a violation of decorum by Jaja. One sees this as Papa with his family is dining, while Sisi, their house maid brings for them a Cashew juice — a local drink that is produced in one of Papa's factories. Before now, whenever a drink was presented as a new product from one of these factories, they would drink, complimenting Papa and his new product. This compliment connoted the recognition and submission to Papa's dominance. Nevertheless, things have changed. Everything has changed with the course of time. This change becomes eloquent in the life of Jaja. It developes from the activities of carnival truth and indeed:

Discloses the potentiality of an entirely different world, of another order, another way of life. It leads men [Jaja] out of the confines of the apparent (false) unity, of the indisputable and stable (Bakhtin, p. 48).

Placing the life and character of Jaja in the history of the Middle Ages one may recollect an earlier statement made by Bakhtin. That in the Middle Ages a man lived two

lives. The first was the official life, characterized with submission to authority, and fear of the sacred. The second, was the general life of the carnival square, free and unrestricted, full of blasphemy and disregard for the sacred, with liberalizing contact with everybody and thing. Therefore, as I re-examine the story of *Purple Hibiscus* in relation to the ideology of Puritanism, the second life of Jaja, the life of the carnival square is considered relevant here. As a result, the reader will indeed understand that it is the very life that encourages Jaja's action of redirecting the meaning of whatever sign that represents Papa and his ideology. This action has given him the fearless opportunity to come to terms with freedom. I have stated earlier that this life of carnival consciousness manifests in Jaja after his trip to Nsukka. Kambili, the narrator, tells:

Until Nsukka. Nsukka started it all; Jaja's defiance seemed to me now like Aunty Ifeoma's experimental Purple Hibiscus: rare, fragment with the undertones of freedom, a different kind of freedom from the one the crowds waving green leaves chanted at Government Square after the coup. A freedom to be, to do (p. 24).

Consequently, Jaja obtains this freedom by means of the carnivalesque laughter to what is high and official. This ludicrous power of the carnivalesque leads Jaja to intentionally violate decorum at dinner by refusing to follow the family's routine behaviour that esteems and deifies Papa's dominance and ownership. One sees this as they are sharing the new Cashew juice where Papa tries in vain to persuade Jaja to accept his dominance as natural and submit to his ownership. The meaning of his ownership finds expression in his inclination to make members of his household accept the new Cashew drink as a sign of his perfection in everything. As a result, the drink is not there only for itself but it does symbolize the abstract code of Papa's dominance which he wants to spread by means of praise. Interestingly, Jaja contradicts his expectation by saying that he

has no words to praise his unreasonable authority in the guise of the drink. Having perceived Jaja's unyielding attitude he asks angrily as the narrator introduces his countenance thus:

Papa was staring pointedly at Jaja. [Then he asked him]

“Jaja, have you not shared a drink with us, gbo?”

“Have you no words in your mouth?”

“Have you nothing to say, gbo, Jaja?”

Of course Jaja has responded with witty repartee. His response is undeniably captured in double actions. First, is the action of refusing to praise the drink as he says: “mba, there are no words in my mouth. I have nothing to say”

Second, besides frustrating Papa's expectation, Jaja has already got a choice of walking out on them: “Jaja pushed his chair back. He was also doing what we never did: he was leaving the table before Papa has said the prayer after meals” (p. 21-22).

As I have argued that his responses are two. That the first being his verbal declaration “mba, there are no words in my mouth”, simply underscores his refusal to yield to Eugene's code of dominance and ownership. “Mba” also means a ridiculous game of grunt, indicating the absence of his willingness to submit his thinking to the blandness of a mere act of repetition. A Repetition of those words of praise from Mama and Kambili which he does not consider sensible for Papa. Second, that his overt action of leaving the dining-table earlier than necessary suggests breaking of decorum. It is a contravention of decorum since he does not follow the social practice at table instituted by Eugene — the practice of saying the grace together after every meal. To this end, the narrator says that:

“he was also doing what we never did: he was leaving the table before Papa has said the prayer after meals” (p. 22). I argue further that the life of carnival has elevated Jaja to liberty and to unrestricted access to the ambiguity of life, of which, to him, his father(Eugene) alone does not have all the answers.

With his ideology of Puritanism, Eugene wants his children to be spotless and perfect in everything they do. In his romanticist imagination anything less than perfection is sin. He transfers this mentality to his children who are in school, expecting them to always beat their mates and emerge first in class, since to him it is a mark of fulfilling the basic condition for perfection. One sees this in his inflammatory question when Kambili comes home from school with her report-card indicating a second position in class; she is already beaten by Chinwe Jideze:

“Why did you let her come first?”

“Why do you think I work so hard to give you and Jaja the best? You have to do something with all these privileges. Because God has given you much. He expects perfection” (p. 55).

The picture Adichie paints here shows Eugene as avatar — a god to his children. No wonder he equates his care for them as those of God. One hears him thus: “I work so hard to give you ... God has given you much”

In other words, he sees himself as the God who has given his children so much, but in contrast to God, he desires reciprocation. To this end, Kambili reports his unbecoming attitude which creates fear to her as she says in her voice: “I did not, could not look at Papa’s face when he spoke” (p. 48). Nevertheless, she ridicules this attitude in him and makes caricature of it when he asks her to meet him upstairs:

“ Kambili, come upstairs” [Papa said].
I followed him. As he claimed the stairs...
his buttocks quivered and shook like Akamu,
properly made Akamu, jelly like (p.49).

With this caricature Kambili has used a pictorial description which is indicative of a sardonic vision and contempt. It is an invective, unofficial manner of describing or addressing what is high or official in order to degrade it.

The Carnavalesque, as I have explained it here has opened up a space of critical reflection and to a great deal has given a prospect for freedom. As such, another aspect of this freedom or liberty that deserves attention is in Kambili’s reminiscent time at Mama Joe’s hair dressing shed in Ogige market where she tries to interpret her claustrophobic life in the life of one particular snail that is struggling to slither away from Mama Joe’s basket full of snails. From this incident she likens Eugene’s domineering attitude over her life, their lives, to that of Mama Joe over some snails encased in a basket. However, like the ideology of Puritanism in her own case with Eugene, she sees the basket as a power relation between Mama Joe and the snail; as one assumes the owner of the basket (the true subject), while the other is temporarily imprisoned in it (the subjected). Mama Joe is a hair stylist; she also sells snails.

By claustrophobic life I mean a time in which a person’s possibilities for exploring the world is ruled by fear of being encased within a social space. To understand the logic of this fear and the deprivation of freedom, one must relate *Purple Hibiscus* to its “story time” which refers to those events and actions presented. And its “narrated time” which also means the manner of presentation of those events and actions.

In relation to “story time” one is informed that what are common in the narrative are hostility and humiliation. The military dominates the environment with aggressive action towards the citizenry as one learns from the background of the story:

The first week after the coup, I saw a man kneeling on the road beside his Peugeot 504, with his hands raised high in the air (p.35-6). Look what this military tyrant is doing to our country (p.84). Soldiers shot Nwankiti Ogechi in a bush in Minna (p. 207).

Therefore, in terms of its Narrated Time, Adichie presents the events and actions to reflect the social milieu that pervaded Nigeria in the 1960’s and 70s. So, connotatively in her narration she suggests that Eugene, with his power-drunk life, strict approach to issues, and love for order becomes an heir to the military dispensation, as Kambili tells: “Papa liked order” (p. 31). By extension his household becomes the microcosm of the country where he is the Head of State. Similarly, she suggests that Mama Joe inherited the same attitude of oppression as she imprisons her innocent snails. In spite of the imprisonment, the reader is informed of an attempt by the particular snail to free itself from the hands of its oppressor but to no avail:

The covered basket at the entrance of Mama Joe’s shed moved. A brown spiraled shell crawled out ... the basket was full of live snails that Mama Joe sold. She stood up and retrieved the snail and put it back in (p. 242).

Inside the basket, the snail is conscious of the fact that the control of its life does not rest with it. For this reason, it glides across the basket to seek the reality of freedom outside of it, but unfortunately its tormentor has interrupted its movement again:

She picked up [again] an enterprising snail that was crawling out; she threw it back in... I wondered if it was the same snail, crawling out, being thrown back in, and then crawling out again. Determined. I wanted to buy the whole basket and set that one snail free (p. 243).

Like Eugene to Kambili, Mama Joe's unfeeling treatment to the snail is actively expressed in these phrases: "retrieved", "put back in", "threw it back in" which imply boundary, cage and imprisonment. Sympathetically, in a passive reference to her life with Eugene, Kambili worries about this aggressive condition between unequal forces in which the weaker one has a very little hope of victory. Interestingly, in her statement of "wish", which enlarges her perception in her ability to liberate, to set free, she says: "I wanted to buy the whole basket and set that one snail free" (p. 243). In her perception she understands that the whole basket especially as it is being expressed in the subjunctive verb — "wanted", signifies an intense abstract desire as substitute for her freedom; for the freedom of the snail, of course as she will eventually set it free. This consciousness enlivens in no small measure her hope of victory as she interprets that the way to liberty which the tyrants seem to have seized is already a false attempt, therefore, an object of humour. Following this development, one quickly realizes that the juxtaposition of Kambili's subjugated life to her father's wishes with that of the snail which only has a freelance value in the hands of Mama Joe, reveals a ridiculous insight as both Kambili and the snail are struggling for freedom. Adichie becomes a satirist who uses humour to penetrate into the world of tyranny in order to unveil what is offensive to human freedom.

Another notable impression Bakhtin made in the carnival is grotesque realism, used to interpret the dynamic pattern of the bodily excess. For clarity, therefore, bodily excess refers to the human material body or flesh with its contents. So, in grotesque realism, the material body with its contents is given a strange interpretation to arouse a new outlook. Bakhtin (1968) observed:

In the grotesque all that was for us familiar and friendly, suddenly becomes hostile. The grotesque discloses the potentiality of an entirely different world, of another order, another way of life. It leads men out of the confines of the apparent (false) unity, of the indisputable and stable. The relative nature of all that exists is always gay; it is the joy of change (*Rabelais*, p. 48).

Moreover, the striking celebration or representations of this bodily excess is further explained in Bakhtin's "Upward" and "Downward" concepts. To him, the two concepts are given topographical and universal meaning, such that upward refers to heaven, while downward is earth. Earth is an element that devours, swallows up (the grave, the womb). And it is also an element of birth, of renascence (the material breasts). In their ordinary sense of interpretation, continued Bakhtin, which does not have much difference from the universal ones, "the upper part is the face or the head and the lower part is the genital organs, the belly, and the buttocks". This is the Medieval and the Renaissance interpretation of the grotesque which is:

Filled with the spirit of carnival, liberates the world from all that is dark and terrifying; it takes away all fears and is therefore completely gay and bright. All that was frightening in ordinary life is turned into amusing or ludicrous monstrosities (ibid, p. 47).

In a similar dimension to Medieval and Renaissance interpretation of the grotesque, emerges the more recent, modernist one. It is introduced by Wolfgang Kayser, in his work entitled *The Grottesque in Painting and Poetry*. He says that the world of the grotesque is full of gloomy and terrifying tone which the novelist utilizes in his/her imagination. And he continues thus: "In reality, gloom is completely alien to the development of this world; [certainly] the essential trait of grotesque is "something hostile, alien, and inhuman" quoted (in *Rabelais*).

His argument is based on the fundamental principle of alienation. And what he has in mind as alien to human life is the “id”. Therefore, in his Modernist view, the grotesque is used to interpellate the id as a strange power governing men and their society. Although in his case, the interpretation of the id is not in parallel with Freudian conceptual domain, whose insight is based on the primary, instinctive energy that is so raw, with unchecked desires in man. Contrary to Freudian, the id here becomes “an alien, inhuman power, governing the world, men, their life and behavior”, and leaving them with no rights to, or freedom, save breath (emphasis is mine). He concludes that many cases of the grotesque are explained in a close association with this strange power, the theme of madness, for instance. In his idea it is possible for a sane person to see something alien or strange in a madman. This very something transforms a madman to appear in a particular form that shows that some “inhuman spirit of irony has entered his soul”. Therefore, as regards his idea of the grotesque, however, the case of madness is creatively used as a means of escaping the false — the fixed truth of this world. So, the victim can be as free as possible to see the truth of the world with eyes so different from the ordinary. Consequently, one can agree with Kayser on the grounds of his Modernist interpretation of the grotesque to explain in a narrative where the id has already overpowered a character.

In *Purple Hibiscus* this very element or force shows up as madness to disengage the victim from the false — the fixed truth of the world of the narrative. The very element of this madness manifests in the character of Mama, who, as a result, keeps a distance between the pedestrian reality of the world and herself. The reality or truth which is characterized with exuberance and noise. Based on this reason, she seeks the new truth of the world in silence and only shakes her head if she is persuaded to talk:

Mama shakes her head, and her scarf starts to slip off. She has been different ever since Jaja was locked up. Celestine once suggested to me that we take Mama to a dibia in his hometown, a man who is an expert in “these things” ... he was suggesting that Mama was mad, (p. 299-300).

Obviously, Mama desires quietness. She already comprehends the fact that the truth of the world does not lie in too much noise. No wonder Kambili fails in her effort to engage her (Mama) in the pleasure of music by asking Celestine to play a record in the car radio:

“Please put in the Fela tape, Celestine.” The brash voice soon fills the car. I turn to see if Mama Minds, but she is looking straight ahead at the front seat; I doubt that she can hear anything. Most times, her answers are nods and shakes of the head, and I wonder if she really heard. I used to ask Sisi to talk to her, because she would sit with Sisi in the living room for long hours, but she said Mama would not reply to her, that Mama simply sat and stared (p. 301-2).

Again, this id manifests in Eugene’s house, where he becomes the archetype of the id in question. In his house, what one observes is a dramatic scene of brutality. Eugene, now the actor, demonstrates and emits this life threatening force against his family. The reader is informed about the situation that leads to his brutish act. The day is Sunday, and the family is preparing to attend the mandatory Eucharist fast, and as such no food is expected to be eaten by any of the faithful. Unfortunately, Kambili starts to bleed, as she rises up from bed and discovers thus: “There was a red stain on my bed, wide as an open notebook. “Your period”, Mama said. “Did you bring pads?” (p. 108).

Not long, her condition escalates to cramps in the stomach. And to be relieved of this pain, the alternative is to take panadol. But her stomach is also empty, nothing to hold the drug, because they are already in a fast. As a result, Mama suggests she eats first, as one sees below:

“Eat a little corn flakes, quickly”, Mama said, almost in a whisper. “You need something in your stomach to hold the panadol”. Jaja poured the cereal, scooped in powdered milk and sugar and added water. “Papa is with visitors, we will hear him as he comes up”, he said. I started to wolf the cereal down,.. and I was almost done eating it when the door opened and Papa came in. “What are you doing Kambili?” I swallowed hard. “I...I...” “You are eating ten minutes before mass? Ten minutes before mass?” “Her period started and she has cramps — Mama said. Jaja cut her short. “I told her to eat corn flaks before she took panadol, Papa. I made it for her”. “Has the devil asked you all to go on errands for him?” “Has the devil built a tent in my house.?” He turned to Mama. “You sit there and watch her desecrate the Eucharistic fast?”

What one sees is the brutish action as the narrator reports:

He unbuckled his belt slowly. It landed on Jaja first, across his shoulder. Then Mama... I put the bowl down just as the belt landed on my back (p. 109-10).

The dialogue above involving many people, with their different voices, however, each voice starting to say something in relation to, and from where the other has left off, is what Bakhtin referred to as polyphonic form of dialogue or polyglossia. In other words, this dialogic form is categorized by the multi-accented voices of the novelistic genre.

There is a comic vision from what one has seen so far in Eugene’s house. Adichie uses “period” – the emission of biological fluids that makes a woman unholy before any Christian rite to clash with the Eucharistic fast. This is the time when the Christian faithful eat little or no food to purify their body in order to commune with God to capture this vision. And the ridiculous object or target of this vision is Eugene, his action. Amusingly as it may be, nevertheless, the intention behind this very vision is to correct the violent action not by counter-violence but by ridiculing it. This corrective influence of laughter or

satire is supported by Harry Blamires when he has commented on an earlier essay by George Meredith, entitled “An Essay on Comedy” (in 1897), that:

Satire lays about people with a rod to make them writhe and shriek. Irony stings under a semi-caress. Humour laughs all round its objects, tumbles him, rolls him about, smacks him and drops a tear of fellow-feeling on him. The comic is the governing spirit behind all this ... (Blamires, 1991: 287).

As Adichie has set the images of period and Eucharistic fast in stiff opposition, one must remember also that Bakhtin’s main idea of the carnival rests so much on the clash between the holy and the unholy things. Bakhtin praised the unification of stiff opposites in carnival, so as to generate change. To bring about this change is, amongst other things the top priority in Kambili’s mind. Consequently, her period comes in time for her to realize it — the change in her father’s behaviour, the change of mass time; as she informs that: “We went to the later mass. But first we changed our clothes, even Papa, and washed our faces” (p. 111).

Interestingly, there is yet another ridiculous dimension which “clothes” and “washing of faces” point to. It will be recalled that Eugene’s ideology of Puritanism is fixed, and he expects that nothing should thwart or challenge it. But it becomes so unfortunate that his ideology finds expression in his action, hence Kambili confronts it. Kambili, with her physical breakdown, compels Eugene to participate in the process of change which breaks the fixity of his deified ideology. Besides using her physical breakdown as another ideological weapon of freedom to thwart Eugene’s order of time to mass, she has also determined the time they went to the mass, and most importantly before that, compelling all of them to participate in the system of change she has initiated. So determined, she tells

in the next sentence beginning with the conjunction “but” to establish her strong and ardent desire, thus: “But first we changed ... even Papa...”

The issue of change is the climax here. Apparently, in the imagination of Kambili, there is no better option than to create this change of which she has no intention of negotiating with Papa. Thus, she remains indefatigable in the situation and does not compromise her interest. As a result, change becomes the first condition before the family can do any other thing including going to mass.

Symbolically, “clothes” and “washing of faces” as I have argued earlier from that dramatic scene, point to the fact that as Kambili’s period is oozing away, so everything that is not naturally permanent on their bodies, and that does not agree with the rhythm of their social life, is as well reducing in degree or running away and leaving the sufferer free. Connotatively, it is Eugene’s strange ideology, the id that is running away in the guise of her daughter’s period. Accordingly, the irony of the action on the part of Eugene, and the inaction, that is being passive, on the part of Kambili is brought to laughter. The id, as Kayser has it, which Eugene becomes the archetype and which Kambili has eventually demystified, is what she has now bracketed in laughter in order to free herself. By implication, therefore, this freedom comes via a social turn around. A freedom that means to Kambili an opportunity to conceptualize herself as “subject” or agent of social change. The conception of herself as this very subject is so clear at the event on that Sunday, the Eucharistic fast day. To protect herself as the subject in question, she uses laughter as an avenue to interrogate Eugene’s character, revealing the subtlety of his overblown image and action. From her protective perspective, and contrary to Eugene’s perception of his image as subject, Kambili sees the other side of subjection, which underscores the sarcasm

concerning the difference between them in terms of who acts, and who is being acted upon. What I mean by sarcasm in this context is an action which implies the opposite of what it appears to mean, and as such, upsets or mocks the initiator. In every aspect across the story, Eugene sees himself as the subject who acts upon others. But Kambili has tried to deconstruct him as she eventually sees him as rather the “object” not the subject of the social circumstance from which he has acted. It is indeed obvious that one could trace Kambili’s deconstructive insight into the “Marxist Poetics” of Bertolt Brecht which negates the Hegelian concept of the subject in action by proposing that the character in any circumstance is not the “absolute subject” rather he or she is the object of the economic or social forces which influence him or her to act. On this demoralizing assumption or reverse insight by Kambili, I have opined that she becomes the force (or creates it) that leads to the character of Eugene. Hence, she is considered in that context as the subject, while Eugene, being influenced by this force, becomes the object — this very object, in point of fact, is defined by time.

Above, I have so far attempted to follow Kayser’s theory of the grotesque within the concept of the carnivalesque as a form of expressing the id which itself is an alien force dominating the world of men. Therefore, Eugene and his ideology of Puritanism could hardly be understood by a reader who passes up the very idea of placing him as the archetype of the id. The reason is that the same id gives him the impression of himself as overblown image of being “larger than life” and at same time it makes him to assume dominance over the other. Quite so, especially as regards his misguided self consciousness, Eugene strives to the use of violence. His choice of violence is aimed, to the greatest degree, at controlling the entire life of his household, their dos and dons despite their

preferences. Like Eugene, it is always the curiosity of a schemer to achieve the highest result of his plan that Aristotle in a similar instance declares:

The art of healing aims at producing unlimited health and every other art [violence for instance] aims at its own end without limit, wishing to secure that to the highest possible degree (Aristotle 384 - 322 BC, *The Politics*, p. 44).

In both the Medieval and the Renaissance Ages, the grotesque indicated the celebration of bodily excess. This is the system of giving a strange description to the human body contents in order to redirect their natural meanings. Although, the two Ages approached the interpretation of the grotesque differently, they however had a common agreement that interpreted it as a strange phenomenon. Their common agreement in the light of the grotesque in relation to the carnivalesque is indeed present in the Modernist view as one learns from Kayser. In the Modernist view, according to Kayser, the grotesque is an unfamiliar image in the world of discourse. Nevertheless, the outstanding agreement between the two Ages of Medieval and Renaissance is implicated on their concepts of upward and downward of which Bakhtin was the proponent, while the Modernist view is through the id, and was introduced by Kayser.

Having re-examined the id affected characters, vis-à-vis Eugene's ideology in *Purple Hibiscus*, I also deem it worthy to follow the concepts of upward and downward through the same text. It is in relation to the carnivalesque that Bakhtin developed the two concepts. His intention was to describe the features of bodily contents in a manner that was exotic and erotic. This manner gives the bodily contents a new but bizarre interpretation beyond the ordinary. Bakhtin was very interested in giving the natural contours of the human body – the breast, for instance, a strange signification. In a very

unusual play, one sees Aunty Ifeoma, reaching out to Kambili's breast in order to reveal its grotesque signification, as they exchange greetings in Eugene's house: "You have grown so much. Look at you, look at you". She reached out and pulled my left breast. "Look how fast these are growing!" (p. 80).

Representatively, the play is predicated on corporeal life, that is, images of the breast (sex, babies' feed, etc), giving it an ambivalent connotation. Ordinarily, "breast" means meat for a baby. But in this context, it signifies a different thing. It points to an aggressive presence, opposition, resistance.

Already, it is clear that Aunty Ifeoma stands in opposition to whatever ideology Eugene represents. Aunty Ifeoma is a blood sister to Eugene. She is a widow with three children at the University of Nsukka as a career lecturer. In two immediate instances where the family meet in December to celebrate Christmas, Kambili informs the reader about Aunty Ifeoma's attitude of fearlessness to Eugene any time she speaks to him:

Every time Aunty Ifeoma spoke to Papa, my heart stopped, then started again in a hurry. It was the flippant tone; she did not seem to recognize that it was Papa, that he was different, special. I wanted to reach out and press her lips shut and get some of that shiny bronze lipstick on my fingers (p.85).

It is remarkable to note that her fearlessness is spurred by her attack. Here, the attack is not particularly on Eugene, but on his Puritanism which already deters Kambili and Jaja from participating in some specific outing; in spite of this, she demands their going out with her:

“Eugene,” Aunty Ifeoma called out. “I was saying that Jaja and Kambili should spend some time with me and the children tomorrow”.

Papa grunted and kept walking to the door. “Eugene!” [she repeats disdainfully]

“Where do you want to take them?” Papa asked, standing by the door.

“Just to look around”.

“Sightseeing?” Papa said.

“Eugene, let the children come out with us!” Aunty Ifeoma sounded irritated; her voice was slightly raised. “Is it not Christmas that we are celebrating, eh? ...” (p. 85).

Another instance manifests when Aunty Ifeoma decries the uncaring attitude of Eugene as a sheer religious prejudice against their aged, octogenarian father, which he himself testifies:

“Look at me. My son owns that house that can fit in every man in Aba, and yet many times I have nothing to put on my plate. I should not have let him follow those missionaries” (p. 91).

And Aunty Ifeoma continues to air her intrepid grievance or tirade:

“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, gbo? Yet Eugene will not let him into this 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 our ancestors, then let God do the judging, not Eugene”(p. 103-4).

Now, this dialogic representation will give an insight into the crux of the matter concerning the breast and its images vis-à-vis grotesque as Bakhtin conceived it. Having shown earlier the images as aggressive presence, opposition and resistance, it therefore follows that Aunty Ifeoma’s action to the breast is not just an ordinary one; rather it is an initiating act. Indeed initiating Kambili into the women logical argot of resistance.

Consciously, this action is put up headlong to awaken Kambili's aggressive presence, suggesting that she is one amongst indefatigable women, therefore, should be ready to resist the challenges against her femininity. That deep down the "breast" is the power of resistance and opposition to shoo out the undesirable.

On a more realistic, critical ground, her raised hand to the breast seems to demonstrate further the eloquence of prejudgement: "Eugene's ideology of Puritanism up there is undesirable, bring it down!". This statement is embedded in carnival life- a radical process of moving from "top" to "bottom" or the unofficial act of bringing what is high, low or down, degradation. Accordingly, it becomes the testimony of Bakhtinian concepts of upward (heaven/high/top/up) and downward (earth/bottom /low).

As regards the concept of downward, one sees two significant elements (belly, blood) in a passage where Eugene unleashes a corporal punishment on his pregnant wife. The narrator breaks the news from the perspective of the victim:

"You know that small table where we keep the family Bible, nne? Your father broke it on my belly".

"My blood finished on the floor even before he took me to St. Agnes [hospital]

My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it" (p. 253).

Interestingly, there is the need to understand the underlying connotation of belly and blood. Consequently "belly" evokes womb, the abode of upcoming children. It also evokes *grave* that is full of mystery, and could swallow up something. Therefore, from the text it is clear that Eugene acts aggressively to enforce his ideology. In his imagination, his wife's protruding belly is no mere pregnancy, rather a grave that can destroy and swallow up his ideology. Eugene, maddens by fear of losing his image, his ideology, therefore, strikes the

belly to denude it of whatever monster that may have lodged there as his anxiety has created already. So, the point is, braking his wife's belly is to exert control and protect his ideology of Puritanism. In other words, his action is geared towards the degradation of the awesome mystery (belly) to the earth, as his humiliated wife testifies: "My blood finished on that floor." To this end, it is obvious that:

Degradation here means coming down to earth. To degrade is to bury, and to kill simultaneously, [although it] does imply merely hurling it into the void of non existence, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place (Bakhtin 1968:21).

Following Bakhtin's interpretation of degradation it therefore points to the fact that Eugene's violent action of breaking the belly, does not only destroy its content or what it signifies, but also facilitates its regeneration. The action makes the belly to bring forth new thing. What of course has emerged as the very new thing is blood which becomes the abstract statement to allay his fear of the mystery, the unknown, the belly connotes. Blood, in connection to the unknown, symbolizes an unborn child whose sex and character Eugene cannot predict of bringing under his authority. So, as Eugene sees himself as larger than life, his action of total domination and as to induct anybody in his house into his ideology unarguably awaits whatever child that is to be born from the blood. Already Mama is expecting a child. To Eugene this child must not live a different life but like others must strictly abide by his order. As a result, Kambili and Jaja become apprehensive of what may also be the condition, perhaps a precarious one, of their expected baby in the iron hands of Papa. Kambili is even more troubled now as she tries to make out something of her dialogue with Jaja in her room:

"Mama is pregnant," I said.

“She told you?”

“Yes. She’s due in October”.

“We will take care of the baby;
we will protect him”.

I knew that Jaja meant from Papa ...

I pushed my textbook aside, looked up,

And stared at my daily schedule,

Pasted on the wall above me. Kambili was written in bold letters on top of the white 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. Papa liked order. It showed even in the schedule themselves (p. 31).

Again, amongst these interpretations of the grotesque is Cervantes’. He raised the issues of gay laughter and the individual concentration on private life. His major argument is a situation where the individual is so concerned for the goal of egotistic lust and possession. This unreasonable concern for self or narcissism is, in his idea, to ridicule a rigid ideology or official life style that sees itself as the ultimate. For instance in the Seventeenth Century, Cervantes wrote in *Don Quixote* to satirize and debase the life and ideology of the Chivalry by presenting the eponymous character — Don Quixote of La Mancha in a manner he imitates the official life style of the Chivalry. The character assumes a Knight-errant, and in the course of his adventure becomes as interested in fame and exaltation as he soliloquizes:

“O happy era, happy age wherein my famous deeds shall be revealed to the world, deeds worthy to be engraved in bronze, sculptured in marble and painted in pictures for future record. O thou wise enchanter, whosoever thou mayest be, whose duty it will be to chronicle this strange history, do not, I beseech thee, forget my good horse Rozinante, the everlasting companion of my wanderings” (Cervantes1957: 20).

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie creatively works with them as satirizing elements mediating between her story and the picture she paints. During a conversation, for example, between Papa-Nnukwu and his grandchildren as they are travelling by Auntie Ifeoma's Peugeot 504, the old man tells them how he once confronted the missionaries with doubt about the ontology of the god they worship:

“I remember the first one that came to Aba, the one they called Fada John. His face was red like palm oil; ... he had a helper, in the afternoon they gathered the children under the Ukwa tree in the mission and taught them their religion. I did not join them, but I went sometimes to see what they were doing. One day I said to them, where is this God you worship? They said he was like Chukwu, that he was in the sky. I asked then, who is the person that was killed, the person that hangs on the wood outside the mission? They said he was the son, but that the son and the father are equal. It was then that I knew that the white man was mad. The father and the son are equal? Tufia! Do you not see? That is why Eugene can disregard me, because he thinks we are equal (p. 92).

This emotional remark — “that is why Eugene can disregard me, because he thinks we are equal” causes a gay laughter, as the narrator informs: “My cousins chuckled. So did Auntie Ifeoma” (P. 92). Indeed, Adichie paints the situation so clear to attract a wry image. Consequently, Papa-Nnukwu imagines the situation as serious and blasphemous. He associates it with the missionaries' flimsy understanding of the Father and the Son as a mere profane harmonization of two people of unequal statuses. He mocks this breach of respect, and at the same time recalls the reason why Eugene has disregarded him. Perhaps, the reason for Eugene's judgement against his father is the misleading missionary teaching that himself too, and his father, Papa-Nnukwu are equal. However, Cervantes' argument of the individual's want to struggle for the goal of egotistic lust and possession manifests through the dreamy eyes of Kambili. Kambili is a teenage girl with a frequent day-dream of exploring her femininity in terms of a man. Her private, lustful desire opens up in her

encounter with Father Amadi, a young priest in St. Peters Catholic Chaplaincy, University of Nigeria. She admires this good- looking priest who is also not strict with ministerial issues like the rest of them in other Chaplaincies.

Adichie as a satirist uses this as a corrective measure by ridiculing the purist's ideology exemplified by Eugene. The ideology that keeps a woman from public view or associating freely with her male counterpart. Kambili who suffers this condition under the heat of her father's strict control goes gaga at the slightest opportunity of meeting Father Amadi in Auntie Ifeoma's house in Nsukka. She is further motivated to express her long inhibited or repressed urge of familiar contact with everyone in order to harness her sexuality with the shortest possible means. And as a teenager, this urge is aroused out of the egotistic lust aimed at the exploration of her libido. Therefore, as one sees her with Father Amadi at the football stadium, one understands her mind as Father Amadi drinks water:

I wish I were the water, going into him, to be with him, one with him. I had never envied water so much before. His eyes caught mine..., [and I was] wondering if he had seen the longing in my eyes (P. 231).

Significantly, her personal action of want does no more than acts as a stimulating agent for the realization of her consciousness of freedom which has been long inhibited. At the end, this consciousness has as well come to celebrate her name — Kambili — which translates to “I too may live freely”.

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CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Introduction

Apart from some of their general features under the heading of “prose fiction,” the short story and the novel differ in terms of dialogical voices. The characters in them do not follow the same pattern of dialogue as a result of the narrative simplicity or straightforwardness of the one and the complication of the other. The short story has a brief narrative convention of blending no dynamic or polyphonic issues together like the novel, which makes it to have a straightforward dialogue — a direct use of language. To Bakhtin, a dialogue which is straightforward and which does not encounter opposing voices is a unidirectional form of discourse, and therefore authoritative and represents the ruling class. For this reason, I have applied the principles of monologism to re-examine *The Thing Around Your Neck* in this chapter whose topic is conceived as “The Monologic Control of Discourse in *The Thing Around Your Neck*”; consequently, I have argued that the short story, because of its direct control of dialogue by a narrator, is dominated by a single voice as the poetry. Discourse, being the perspective in which language is used, has, in the analysis here, influenced a unidirectional oriented structure of dialogue to stress the conceptual and contextual foundation of monologism, as one sees in the topic.

4.1 The Monologic Control of Discourse in *The Thing Around Your Neck*

Following Bakhtin’s argument of monologic discourse which I have adopted here, it is therefore necessary I differentiate it from monologue, the term which some readers have grossly mistaken for the former. To this end it is due one reminds such readers that the two are not the same neither are they used interchangeably.

Monologue has its origin from drama, and means a long speech by one person, especially in a play. As such monologism or monologic form of dialogue is not by any means monologue. Rather it describes a form of dialogue or discourse pattern whose subject or topic is oriented towards a monopolistic closure or view. In other words, it has an obvious closed-off truth, which represents the ruling class. Although, according to Bakhtin, this dialogic pattern does not at all suggest that the “other(s)” who are involved in a conversation have a tied-down tongue, or do not participate, but only that in the exchange, they never argue to deviate from the authoritative and controlling scheme of the author or narrator as his speech, according to Voloshinov (1973:176) must have a “direct referential denotation”. To this particular other, the outcome of a dialogic exchange is always acknowledged as a given. No doubt, this dialogic style stifles participants’ (addressees’) independent reasoning and renders them gullible to the advantage of the author or narrator who then sees himself/herself as a panoptic narrator, to use the words of Y. A. Nasidi “as the spokesman of a higher truth or vision” (Nasidi, 2002: 57).

To illustrate this point further, Bakhtin carried his argument forward to Leo Tolstoy’s narrative where he maintained that, although there are several voices in the work of Tolstoy equally as they are found in Dostoevsky’s, but Tolstoy’s characters “lack ultimate independence [of voice or vision] vis-à-vis the author”. In *War and Peace* one agrees with Bakhtin on the presence of the monologic form of dialogue emanating from the control of the subject of discussion by the narrator; most especially in volume ii, Book vii, chapter viii where one encounters the subject of discussion as match-making. A mother, a Countess is making effort to match-make his son, Nicholas and Julie Karagina, a rich heiress. And as the Countess advises Nicholas to marry Julie, she says that “she could

lie down in her grave peacefully if that were accomplished, that her only hope of getting their affairs, now lay in his marrying Julie Karagina”

Between these two, one sees a dialogue, very much in the authoritative vision of the narrator, as below:

“But Mama, suppose I loved a girl who has no fortune, would you expect me to sacrifice my feeling and my honour for the sake of money?” he asked his mother.

“No, you have not understood me”, said his mother.

“You have not understood me, Nikoleka, it is your happiness I wish for,” she added, she began to cry.

“Mama, don’t cry. Only tell me that you wish it, and you know I will give my life, anything, to put you at ease, said Nicholas.

I would sacrifice anything for you — even my feelings”
(P. 421).

What one makes out from this scene in *War and Peace* is how Bakhtin’s argument matches with the fixed postulation of the narrator as his characters are put in dialogue.

Having referred to *War and Peace*, it is time to turn from Bakhtin’s experiment with Tolstoy’s narrative to the main issue of the monologic control of discourse under analysis in *The Thing Around Your Neck*. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that a full discussion of Bakhtinian monologic form of dialogue as above will give a quick insight into, and understanding of the study which has been a cinderella until now.

Adichie’s short stories are very rich and engaging in narrative style such that one understands monologic form of dialogue with bold enthusiasm. In “Cell One”, Adichie engages the reader with the theme of teenage delinquency which the teenagers copy from

watching Video Cassette Recorder (VCR). This worries her as her panoptic narrator states her concern thus:

Eighteen-year-olds who had mastered the swagger of American rap videos were undergoing secret and strange initiations that some times left one or two of them dead on Odum Hill (p. 7).

Nnamabia is the embodiment of this teenage delinquency as he has become a thief. The behaviour he has copied through the watching of videos, and also through the influence of peers who are professor sons as he, living with their parents in the university residential quarters. In his professor father's house, Nnamabia, like his peers has watched Westernized film thronged with crime, stealing, for example, and eventually, he begins to demonstrate this crime. The narrator reports why he does it: "He did it,... because other sons of professors were doing it" (p. 5). Besides the external influence, Adichie attributes his thieving attitude to his mother, whose name is not revealed, though. From several occasions throughout the story, one has discovered that Nnamabia has demonstrated the tendency of stealing earlier, and his mother, rather than gives him a talking-to, to deter him from subsequent act, fails to do it as she becomes so protective of him. As a result, the brat grows up with this embarrassing behaviour. Nevertheless, the narrator becomes so concerned about this indignity and the unperturbed gesture of his mother as she says:

When, at eleven, Nnamabia broke the window of his classroom with a stone, my mother gave him the money to replace it and did not tell my father. When he lost some library books in class two, she told his form-mistress that our house boy has stolen them. When, in class three, he left early every day to attend catechism and it turned out he never once went and so could not receive Holy Communion, she told the other parents that he had malaria on the examination day. When he took the key of my father's car and pressed it into a piece of soap that my father found before Nnamabia could take it to a locksmith, she made vague sounds about how he was just experimenting and it didn't mean a thing. When he stole the exam

questions from the study and sold them to my father's students, she shouted at him but then told my father that Nnamabia was sixteen, after all, and really should be given more pocket money (p. 6-7).

The author's attitude here is rather a warning vision, no less. First, she is shocked, like some reasonable few who are opportuned to have a professor parent as well as a lout as brother of such disgusting embarrassment to this parent. Second, is her direct reprimand for Nnamabia's mother's inept handling of her son, pampering him with exaggerated care and clemency. On a general outlook, the author seems yet to share her shock with women readers, mothers, warning of the danger which may befall them if they follow their sons' bad attitude with brittle morality, laissez faire approach, where these children do what they want with their mothers gesticulating approval or silent concern.

So far I have tried to attend to the issue of theme in the story as the basis of the theoretical concept of monologism on which the argument will be understood. Indeed, the monologic style of discourse here does not occur in a vacuum as the theme of the story becomes the motivating principle behind such style. What I mean by dialogic pattern is simply the level of discourse sets in action, whereas the motivating principle is the underling force or canon that controls the discourse with a particular actuality in view, regardless of the many intersecting voices of characters there are.

Monologism, in Bakhtin terms is a form of dialogue in which the voice of the author/narrator supersedes other voices in a discourse. To him, the narrator is a panoptic one, who uses a direct language (language or idea that cannot be opposed) to achieve his aim, undermining what preference his listener may have. It is a direct opposite of heteroglossia and polyglossia which usually feature in a long narrative like the novel where

characters are charged with a democratic spirit of debate, inspired by a certain level of irrepressible urge to argue with the narrator or author of an idea and express their different opinions outright. As one can see in "Cell One" that the panoptic narrator centres the discourse on her imaginative, authoritative control, thereby subjecting the voices of all the other characters to comply, rather than argue. The motivating principle of this discourse style remains that the narrator wants the truth she presents to be understood on its holistic constitution, rather than be distorted.

The truth that is so presented is the theme of teenage delinquency. Nnamabia is a teenage thief; he is also a suspected member of a cult and has been arrested with other cult boys at a bar where they are also presumed to have been committing a tavern crime after an outbreak of a terrible fracas which leaves three people dead in the university premises. Not long one sees the psychological embarrassment Nnamabia's parents have passed through in their attempt to bail him out from the cell in Enugu police station. First, his father meets the superintendent of police in Nsukka station, pleading with him for a bailing note to Enugu. Second, the narrator tells that her mother goes crazy as she hears that there is a complication concerning Nnamabia's release. Adichie's narrator says in her own voice, thus:

My parent gave him the note from the superintendent. The policeman did not look at it. he knew about the release order, he told my father, ... there was a complication with the boy. My mother began to shout (P. 17-18).

From this scene, therefore, the dialogue that follows, has thrown more light on the concept of monologism as it is patterned on a single background:

“The boy? What do you mean? Where is my son?” [The mother shouted] the policeman got up. “I will call my senior to explain to you”.

My mother rushed at him... “Where is my son? Where is our son?” my father asked in a voice so quiet, so steely, that the policeman stopped.

“They took him away, sir,” he said (P. 18).

In this exchange, Adichie has just called attention to one significant, yet a different thing. That in spite of the mothers inflammatory questions of Nnamabia’s whereabouts, the policeman remains insouciant to give a sensible response. His attitude to her questions goes further to suggest that the woman does not deserve his answer, as he has already perceived with disgust her corrupt inducing eyes, being responsible for her son’s insufferable act. Consequently, the situation remains the same until her husband has broached it with a respect-commanding tone. No doubt, Adichie reminds her reader of the obvious, though in a new creative order, that the woman is very temperamental and quick to bounce at a circumstance yet without positive result, while the man is always calm and collected, and still generates the desired result.

As the dialogue continues, a senior police officer who has more information about the complication and the subsequent delay of Nnamabia’s release comes forward to talk with his parents. The inside narrator reports his presence before them:

The senior policeman came out and I searched his completely blank face for an expression.

“Good day, sir”, he said to my father.

“Where is our son?” my father asked.

“No problem, sir. It is just that we transferred him. I will take you there right away”.

“Transferred him?”

“We got the release order this morning, but he had already been transferred. We don’t have petrol, so I was waiting for you to come so that we go together to where he is”.

“Why was he transferred?”

“I was not here, sir. They said he misbehaved yesterday and they took him to Cell One ...”

“He misbehaved? What do you mean?”

“I was not here, sir”

My mother spoke then in a broken voice

“Take me to my son right now!” (P. 19).

Not quite long the bailing party move in Nnamabia’s father’s car to the other site of the station where he is locked up. And the policeman goes in and comes back with Nnamabia, his left arm and nose are already covered with dried blood:

“Nna-Boy, why did they beat you like this?”

My mother asked him. She turned to the policeman.

“Why did you people do this to my son?”

Now, the policeman feels insulted, irritated as well, and can hardly wait to tell this maladroit of a woman off:

“You cannot raise your children well, all of you people who feel important because you work in the university. When your children misbehave, you think they should not be punished. You are lucky, madam, very lucky that they released him (P. 20).

Nnamabia’s insufferable act has hurt his professor father’s sense of dignity and social pride as he thinks now that he could have done something earlier to deter him. This worries him no end as the reader can see his mind from his rueful denouement: “this is

what I should have done when he broke into the house. I should have had him locked up in a cell” [My father said] (P. 11).

Throughout the dialogue as I have earlier argued, Adichie’s narrator sets the pace by which the discourse runs. This enables her to authoritatively control with no other voice of rivalry, the predetermined truth or theme of teenage delinquency.

In the “Ghosts” Adichie paints a very serious picture to trace the question of man’s existence in his attempt to come to terms with the meaning of his beingness on the face of the unfriendly earth. Denotatively, the story captures the psychological condition of the individual who tries to respond to the reality of existence in terms of the distance between his psyche and such social aberration as bereavement. Professor James Nwoye is a widower and university retiree. He is the narrator as well as the chief character of the story, struggling to overcome the terrible ordeal of the death of his wife, Ebere and other social odds such as hardship and loneliness.

However, Adichie reveals a cultural condition, calling attention to what is not, or rather to what is myth. The word myth is used in two senses here. First, it functions as a sign regarding a firm belief of a people that their dead relatives reappear to visit them. Based on this background, the theme of the story is undeniably clear as séance. Séance, in this particular instance, has a credible interpretation in cultural hermeneutics as the narrator who, like others of his kind submits to this mythical persuasion tells of his experiences as he communicates with Ebere, his dead wife:

I was alone, when I heard the door downstairs close and open and close again, I thought nothing of it. The evening winds always did that. But there was no rustle of leaves outside my bedroom window, no Swish-Swish of the neem and cashew trees. There was no wind

outside. Yet the door downstairs was opening and closing. In retrospect, I doubt that I was as scared as I should have been. I heard the feet on the stairs, in much the same pattern as Ebere walked, heavier on each third step. I lay still in the darkness of our room. Then I felt my bed cover pulled back, the gently massaging hands on my arms and legs and chest, the soothing creaminess of the lotion, and a pleasant drowsiness overcame me — a drowsiness that I am still unable to fight off whenever she visits. I woke up, as I still do after her visits, with my skin supple and thick with the scent of Nivea (P. 67).

The second use links the chief character's quest for his pension with the history of the Public Civil Service Pension Board. I have said that the first use dwells with its sign in the cultural life of the people. Consequently, the second use is more thorough and defines the boundaries of the first, because in its general sense, Adichie seems to declare in the story that: a retiree's longing for a stable survival with pension is an illusion.

In the light of the history of the Public Civil Service Pension Board, Adichie uses the motif of the ghost to emphasize a psychological debate between man and his plight of retirement from public service. To retirees, she seems to ask: how then do you live your life, especially in this country of ours where government pays I don't care-attention to your pension entitlement? Indeed, this issue has become a lingering malaise even eating down the economy of a nation like Nigeria as there are suspicions of head of financial bureau and his crew carting away the money due to pensioners. Adichie has anchored her story on the opportunity given by the controversy around the ill disbursement of pension. She does this to criticize the government of African nations, Nigeria, for example, of unjust treatment of the aged retirees who keep banging on their doors (sometimes to no avail) for their entitlement.

Following her perspicacious interpretation of the situation, Adichie assumes that when once you retire from the so called pensionable job, you automatically become rather a sheer ghost whose name would hardly be remembered for pension. Professor James Nwoye is a retired university teacher of Mathematics who now seeks without success the payment of his pension that is long overdue. Thoughtfully, in the imagination of people like Professor James Nwoye, a hope in life long enjoyment of pension is quite an illusion. As the theme follows the theoretical argument, one can however, see a perfect monologic closure of dialogue with Vincent, his fellow retiree who has once worked as a driver in the same university:

“No pension for three years Prof” he said. “This is why people retire and die”.

“O joka” [it is terrible, Prof. said] (p. 58).

So, as Bakhtin had previously argued about monologism, one in fact simply notices a dialogic form which does not go beyond the subject- matter as the narrator authoritatively wishes in the story. In other words, the discourse is monopolized directly to the theme. The sequence further opens up as one spots the protagonist in a real conversation with Ikenna whom he, on a prima-facie recollection, thinks was dead in the war, but had left the country during the unrest for a lecturing job in Sweden:

“How is life in Sweden? I asked.

“I retired last year. I decided to come back and see”.

“What about your family?” I asked

“I never remarried”.

“Oh”, I said.

“And how is your wife doing? Nnenna, isn’t it?”

Ikenna asked

“Ebere”.

“Oh, yes, of course, Ebere. Lovely woman”.

“Ebere is no longer with us; it has been three years”, I said.

“I’m so sorry”, he said. “So sorry”.

“It’s all right”. I said. “She visits”.
“What?” he asked with a perplexed look.
“She visits. She visits me”.
“I see,” Ikenna said ... (p. 66).

In some other stories of the anthology, Adichie assumes the feminist route. Her interest is been encouraged by her unrepentant commitment in the movement which is even more amplified in her bold statement:

My attitude to feminism is this: I am a happy feminist. I think all fair-minded people should be ... while men and women have their biological differences, those differences should not be used as a reason for any political, economic or social disadvantaging of women. — Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Onukaogu & Onyerionwu. 2010:193).

Her feminist attitude is more profound in “Imitation” where her female character Nkem becomes the protagonist as Ujunwa in “Jumping Monkey Hill”. Akunna in “The Thing Around your Neck” and Nwamgba, Grace and Ayaju in “The Headstrong Historian”. What Adichie has presented here is to distinguish between “the legendary good woman and the real woman in post colonial Africa” (Udumukwu, 2007:3). According to Udumukwu, the “good” woman is one who bears silently, even passively the crushing agony of oppression and neglect; where in contrast the “real” woman is that woman who refuses to be silent in the face of tyranny but stands head-to-head to face challenges.

Adichie’s invented characters here are no different from the real African woman. In “The Headstrong Historian” for instance, female characters are given the chance to manifest as people of worth, capable of generating social changes for meaningful development within the possible space of history. No wonder, Jacques Derrida described them in his phrase “a-venire”, which means that women are understood towards their

future possibilities. For Adichie, these future possibilities are anchored on their mental and spiritual strength to be, with a graceful vision, economically independent.

The theoretical concept of monologic control of discourse proves in the story how this major message of feminist thought is sent across without discursive distortion, because the narrator's point of view is supreme. For instance, in Leo Tolstoy's novel as in other narratives with similar features, for example the short story, Bakhtin argued:

The author [narrator] neither argues with his hero nor agrees with him. He speaks not with him, but about him. The final word belongs to the author, and that word-based on something the hero does not see and does not understand, on something located outside the hero's consciousness- can never encounter the hero's words on a single dialogical plane (Harland, 1999:160).

So, according to Bakhtin's insight into the history of narratology, it is therefore true that in every short story the narrator projects a single dialogical plane. That is, it is only the narrator, who has the truth of the state of being (in relation to the character involves), a situation which Nasidi would prefer to call "a higher truth or vision". To Bakhtin, this "higher truth or vision" is poetic, or closed-off, hence represents a specific argot of the ruling class. As such, the higher truth manifests in the story through the feminist perspective. Adichie sets the woman as exceptionally strong, self-reliant and ambitious. Ayaju is quite an epitome of self-reliance here by venturing into itinerant business, and becomes a wealthy trader, afterwards. Any keen reader may be impressed to know that although Ayaju is of slave descent but was not discourage to beat that odd and remains exceptional in the midst of the free born. This oddness of birth would have been something to (particularly in the patriarchal idiom or word game of perceiving the real humanbeing on the basis of sex and of noble birth) deter her from asserting her dignity. However, she

asserted her dignity first as an individual most comparable with any other in the globe. Second, as a woman endowed with unique physical and mental forces to breach, in the befitting parlance of Onukaogu et al, “both her man-made (her slave descent) and natural (her being a woman) limitations” in order to justify her exceptional womanhood and command maximum respect in the society.

As itinerant trader, Ayaju has acquired enormous knowledge about the world and people far away from her immediate community. This alone sets her aside as a distinct personality amongst equals, and as a result she speaks boldly with wisdom and authority in the Women Council meeting:

Ayaju’s long-limbed, quick-moving body spoke of her many trading journeys; she has traveled even beyond Onicha. It was she who had first brought tales of the strange customs of the Igala and Edo traders, she who first told of the white Skinned men who arrived in Onicha with mirrors and fabrics and the biggest guns the people of those parts had ever seen. This cosmopolitanism earned her respect, and she was the only person of slave descent who talked loudly at the Women Council, the only person who had answers for everything (P. 201).

Again, she, like her friend Nwamgba, maintains the vision of sending one of her sons, Azuka, to the white man school, “to learn the ways of these foreigners, since people ruled over others not because they were better people but because they had better guns” (P. 205).

Nwamgba, full of the visionary power of the white man’s language (English), has thought it wise as the only recourse through which her son, Anikwenwa can redeem their properties from the covetous hands of her husband’s cousins. Besides the aim of her determination to send her son to school, Nwamgba is also impressed to hear Iroegbunam, an abductee who is rescued and trained in the mission school by a white missionary speak

the English effortlessly and, she wishes her son could do the same. The narrator introduces her confession of desire:

She [Nwamgba] was struck ... by how Iroegbunam lapsed into the white man's language from time to time.

She was suddenly determined that Anikwenwa would speak it well enough to go to the white men's court with Obierika's cousins and defeat them (P. 207).

With such motivation, she goes to the school in order to register her son for the new learning; but soon, her expectation is challenged, or rather frustrated as one learns that:

What dissuaded her completely about the school, however, was that the instruction was done in Igbo.

Nwamgba turned to leave.

She had come in search of English, and so she went to the Catholic Mission (P. 208).

Nwamgba goes to the Catholic Mission to see Father Shanahan, the priest who tells her immediately that before her son will be admitted into the mission school, he must change his heathen name to a Christian one. Although, Nwamgba does not like the priest's suggestion, she never bothers. "All that mattered was that he learn [sic] enough of the language to fight his father's cousins" (P. 208).

Nwamgaba's vision here is further spurred by her ardent quest for the protection of their possession against the unknown, since she has learned about the shocking:

story of two people who took a land case to the white men's court, the first man was lying but could speak the white men's language, while the second man, the rightful owner of the land, could not, and so he lost his case, was beaten and locked up and ordered to give up his land (P. 206).

Indeed, the object of her vision here is the locutionary power of the language, the ability to use the language, not just intelligibly, but also cleverly to achieve a desire. “Language is a mechanism to be manipulated and bent, to serve the particular purpose we desire at a particular time” (Nkem Okoh, 1995:59). For Nwamgba, this purpose is no other, but the redemption of her late husband’s properties in the white men’s court as soon as her son — Anikwenwa gains proficiency in the language (English).

Another outstanding character of the same feminist spirit Adichie has made specific comments about the gamut of her self-assertion is Grace, the granddaughter of Nwamgba. Her self-assertion manifests yet in a different ambition: a fervent desire to go to school, graduate and become a teacher. This picture of Grace becomes clearer through monologic form of discourse where Grace does not speak of herself or encounter the words of the authoritative voice of the narrator who speaks about her, sees her mind. Nevertheless, it is not to be said that Grace does not entirely participate in the dialogue with the narrator, but one major point is obvious: she participates within the limit of what is called interior monologue. Therefore, she never encounters the words of the narrator who has a direct insight into her mind and speaks of her fervent desire:

It was Grace who, after graduating from secondary school, would teach elementary school in Agueke. It was Grace who, as one of the few women at the University College in Ibadan in 1950, would change her degree from Chemistry to history (P. 216).

Undoubtedly, with the several illustrations as regards the concept of monoglossia, the reader can now be familiar with Bakhtin’s conclusion in that instance. That the subject of discussion in this dialogic style does not envisage a doubly-oriented reference but has a centralpetal claim. As a result it is interpreted on the basis of a hierarchical relation

between discourses which promotes and regulates the hegemonic relation of unequal contending voices. Finally, that no matter how many contradictions and insoluble conflicts within these voices in the process of approaching the subject, at the end the subject is always illumined by one unitary and indisputable discourse that signifies the ruling class.

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CHPATER FIVE

5.0 Introduction

A study, such as this, is not complete without a few conclusive lines serving as a reiteration of the conceptual argument it has raised. For this reason, I am, with my preferred theory, inclined to conclude in this chapter that very argument as dialogism.

5.1 Conclusion

With a newer insight into the prose fiction of Adichie, this study has supported and made adequate use of the Bakhtinian theory of the novel. As such, I have interrogated Adichie's creative use of "The Dialogic Imagination", raising arguments – some corroborating with the Bakhtinian postulation, while few others question the wisdom of the dialogic aesthetics – all in an attempt to throw new light in theory and practice in African literature. To reach this feat, I have got my data of argument from *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Purple Hibiscus* and *The Thing Around Your Neck*. Agreeably, the crux of the problem of this study, as I have shown earlier, is predicated upon the dialogic function of linguistic activities, and its transfer into literary production. Consequently, it has concluded that the novel has a tradition of multi-differential-system of voices, as the mind of the individual character constructs its version of the meaning of the subject of discussion. Similarly, it has argued that these differences are akin to personal interpretation of the world of nature as to such subject in which language becomes the source through which different experiences are mediated. And even though the study has recognized this dialogic role of language, it has also ended that there is an aspect of it which expresses the authority of a voice that cannot negotiate with the other voice(s) involved.

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THESES CONSULTED

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