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**Representation and Resistance in Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* (1976)  
and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) a Comparative  
Study.**

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**Dedication :**

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this work to my beloved parents.  
My thank and appreciations to my brothers and sisters-in-law, nephews and friends.

Cherif.

In my turn, I would like also to thank my dear parents and my sweethearts  
brothers and sisters.

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contributed in the realization of this research study.

**Abstract:**

This present dissertation is a comparative study of two literary works: Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* (1976) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). This study aims to show how the two authors liberate their female protagonists. To achieve our goal, we have relied on Alice Walker's *Womanism*, developed in her collection of essays *In Search of Our Mothers Garden: Womanist Prose* (1983). Our dissertation first focus on how the black women are subjugated to many injustices in the Nigerian communities. The discussion section, initiates with an analysis of how the power of traditions has a great impact on the black women's lives and it examines women's solidarity in both works. Then, it studies the relevant factors of how women resist the customs, norms and gender discrimination in order to impose their presence in the society. Through the analysis of Buchi Emecheta's and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's works, our work concludes with the similarities and differences between *The Bride Price* and *Purple Hibiscus*.

**Key words:**

Womanism, liberation, subjugation, traditions, women's solidarity, customs.

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## **I.General Introduction:**

The term “African Literature” generally refers to a comprehensive, complex and creative literature of and from Africa<sup>1</sup>. It contextualizes the development of literature within the paradigm of responding to colonialism. This term is also a form of resistance to colonial domination and its ramifications. It outlines the ramifications of colonialism on African identities ;i.e identity crisis, alienation ,emasculaton of male Africans. This form of resistance was shown through writing books, essays or even articles in journals.

Among the most known novelists, we may refer to Chinua Achebe who depicted the disorientation accompanying the imposition of western customs on traditional African society. In this regard, Chinua Achebe occupies an important position. As an African Nigerian writer, he is determined to carry forward his counter-discourse against European colonial discourse in order to restore the beauty and value of the African cultural past. With the writing of his first novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), it comes to be universally acknowledged as a subversion of Western racist discourse propagated in novels like Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Even if Achebe proves the humanity of the Africans by asserting their identities and making the world hear their voices. In somehow he focuses on men’s position rather than the African women.

In African history women were allocated an inferior position. They have always been depicted by the west and male Africans themselves as primitive and far from any kind of civilization, they are oppressed and marginalized by some African authors. However, during the twentieth century, women decided to change this



women's unfair situation and it was certain that they would ultimately have to revolt. As an example of these women, who made an effort to represent the image of African female personalities like Flora Nwapa.

Flora Nwapa Nwakuche, popularly known as Flora Nwapa, is Africa's first internationally published female writer in the English and has been called the "Mother of African Female Tradition". She believes that women possess strong belief, strength and ability and she wants to strengthen them by making women positive. She was always aware about women's status in colonized and post colonized societies. Thanks to this latter, many other remarkable female writers have been emerged, such as Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

On one hand, the feminist writer Buchi Emecheta focuses on African life style and gender discrimination that not only she faced but that all African women faced. On the other hand, the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie interrogates the oppressions of women in the Nigerian patriarchal society and how women empower each other to rise above the traditional constructs.

Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* (1976) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) are two narratives, which depict the effects of the gender discrimination in both novels on two different eras. In *The Bride Price*, Buchi tells the story of the suffering of women in male domination culture caught in the clash of change as Nigeria works toward independence. In addition, she highlights retrogressive Igbo cultural norms that prevented women from participation in a wide range of activities said to be the preserve of men, she speaks out against the subjugation of Igbo women in the quest for social change.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie narrates the disintegration of a family unit and the suffering of women to find a way in a world beset with conflict due to a harsh religious regime and patriarchal domination. In addition, she shows how women in Nigeria were struggling with oppression.

Both *The Bride Price* and *Purple Hibiscus* sympathize with victimized women, they illustrate how the two female protagonists are subjected to many injustices by the male members of their community. Even if they share the same purpose which is illustrating the struggling and unequal role of the Nigerian women. However, they belong to two different generations. Buchi Emecheta belongs to the Second Generation which supports the independence movement and depicts the existing social problems as injustice, marriage, family and polygamy. Whereas, Adichie distinguishes herself from the predecessors namely the First and the Second Generation by exploring more diverse themes and taking increasing interest in place, exile and identity.

In order to better understand our issue, we have decided to rely on Alice Walker's Theory of *Womanism* which denotes women's emancipation as a neglected and a doubly marginalized; on one hand Black women are oppressed by the African black men themselves, on the other hand they are also oppressed by the western world.

### **1-1: Review of the literature:**

After the publication of their two novels, Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* (1976) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), the two writers received a large bulk of criticism. On the one hand, Emecheta's novel "*The Bride Price*" has been studied by many thinkers and scholars from many perspectives. For

instance, Osayim wense Osa in her work “*The Bride Price: a masterpiece of African Youth Literature*”, depicts the protagonist Aku-nna’s growth from childhood to juvenility by reflecting the various levels that she passes through. Osa accurately notices that “her development is plagued early by two traumatic experiences- the death of her father and her subsequent relocation from cosmopolitan Lagos into a conservative, traditional Ibuza... Aku-nna’s plight in Okonkwo’s home, [...]”<sup>2</sup>

In yet another work, the Nigerian researcher and political activist Catherine Obianuju Acholunu traces the history of the bondage of the female in Emecheta’s work *The Bride Price*. She concludes that the author points to the fact “that at every point in a woman’s life she is always somebody’s property”<sup>3</sup>. She focuses on the fact that the inferior positions of women, can be linked to the activities of other women who continue to accept the inferior positions through their oppressive activities.

On the other hand, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie belongs to the Third Generation of African writers. In fact her works have received much consideration and criticism. To start with, Heather Hewett reviews the new generation of Nigerian writers who are rejecting the long silence imposed by dictatorial regimes. In her review titled, “*Finding Her Voice*”, she notes that *Purple Hibiscus* is the coming of age of the trauma that leads to chaos in a family<sup>4</sup>. This is because a father who seeks to dominate and subject his family to much violence sends the family into a period of trauma in which he dies, his son goes to jail and his daughter and wife have to find a way to path the wounds that will not heal because the father sought to dominate according his own desires. Hewett sees *Purple Hibiscus* as a life story of Kambili, the restrictions she faces under a patriarch of a father and the new ways of life she discovers in her Aunt’s home. Kambili finds strength to tell of her

experiences at home which mirrors the state of the Nigerian society; a society governed by patriarchs.

As still another critic, Ogaga Okuyade's article "*Changing Borders and Creating Voices: Silence as Character in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus*" focuses on the role of patriarch father, Eugene Achike. In this article, Okuyade portrays Kambili's father as a religious maverick whose "bigotry and belief are anchored on the theological standards of Catholicism"<sup>5</sup>. His life of a rosary and crossing makes him carry himself with a superiority attitude. It is true that Kambili's father works hard but the home they live in is capacious yet stifling, the bedrooms are roomy yet stuffy emphasizing the deep sense of restrictions in the home as a result of the patriarchal tendencies of the father.

## **1-2: Issue and Working hypothesis:**

It is true that *The Bride Price* and *Purple Hibiscus* have been subjected to many critics. However, these studies do not put stress on the self assertion of black women in the face of the hegemonic and patriarchal restrictions. Hence, this research shall be a comparative study that will deal with the two works from a womanist perspective. Its fundamental issue is to depict the struggles led by women protagonists to achieve their self autonomy. Our second assumption concerns how the two writers liberate the Nigerian women through the development of their female characters in order to give another path and hope for African women to be what they truly want to be.

In fact, the pattern exists in the difference between the two writers in terms of their tensions and reactions to their protagonists' particular confrontations with

patriarchy and African traditions. This indicates that the two writers approach women's liberation and resistance differently. Our task is to identify the source of this difference.

Through our analysis, we operate within the theoretical assumption: *Womanism* developed in *In Search of Our Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose* (1983) by Alice Walker, which puts forward the unique experiences of the black women especially those of the rural south (America) as a doubly marginalized minority in the world.

In the light of Alice Walker's *Womanism* as theory for the history of women's conditions from a feminist perception, this study explores women's sufferance from the subjectivities performed by male exploitation. Thus, a general overview about the literatures of the two novels will highlight how the two authors portray the female characters and treat same issues. This dissertation, therefore, justifies our attempt to explore women's subjugation.

In order to prove the relevance of our issue in *The Bride Price* and *Purple Hibiscus*, we suggest that analysis shall rely on *Womanism* as an appropriate theory to this study. From our perspective, the selection of this theory as relevant method to the study of the two novels is due to the fact that its component fit the aim of our comparison.

### ***1-3: Methodological Outline:***

At the methodological outline level, the dissertation will follow the IMRAD method. We have started with the introduction in which we gave a general overview about the topic, and followed with the review of some works written on Buchi

Emecheta's *The Bride Price* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, then in the issue and working hypothesis section we site the purpose of our study.

In the methods section, we will try to introduce and explain the theory of *Womanism* (1983) by Alice Walker. Then, we will come to provide biographies of the authors and brief summaries of the novels cited above in the material section. In the result section, we reveal the results reached through our study.

The discussion section constitute of three chapters. The first chapter will deal with how the female characters are represented in the two novels. In the second chapter will focus on the perception of a binary opposition between tradition and modernity by demonstrating the power of traditions upon women's position. In the last one, we will show how the two authors liberate their protagonists in the two novels.

#### **Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>African Literature.docx.Introduction to African Literature, Course Hero, 7, URL.

<sup>2</sup>Rathika.E, "Autocratic Study of Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price*," *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Translation Studies* 4, no 4 (2017): 28, URL.

<sup>3</sup>Mohammed Razinatu T, "Maternal Oppression of the Girl-Child in Selected Novels by Buchi Emecheta," *African Research Review* 4, no 2 (2010): 218, URL.

<sup>4</sup>Amartey, Collins, "Articulations of Womanism in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Emecheta's *Joyce of Motherhood*," (thesis, University of Ghana, 2013), 21.

<sup>5</sup>Okuyade, Ogaga, "Changing Borders and Creating Voices: Silence as Character in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*," *English Department, College of Education Warri* 02, no 9 (2009): 247, URL.



## II-Methods and Materials:

### 1.Method: *Alice Walker's Womanism (1983):*

This section aims to highlight the theoretical basis of our work. In fact and for the purpose of relevance to the issue treated in our work, we intend to borrow Alice Walker's *Womanism* Theory as expanded in her collection of essays "*In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose*" (1983). The African American writer Alice Walker puts forward the experiences of the women of color particularly those of the rural south (America) as totally victimized in the country; and conceptualizes a new feminist theory she calls *Womanism*. It is appropriated with the black women affirmation as colored. Yet, this newly coined concept does not deny its connection with some aspects of feminism. In this point of view, *Womanism* existed just because sexism and racism prevailed.

*Womanism*, denotes women's emancipation as a neglected and a doubly marginalized minority in the western world. The concept is derived from womanist (opposite of girlish), according to Walker's own definition:

The black folk of mothers to female children, "you acting womanish", i.e, like a woman [...] usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous, or willful behavior. Wanting more and in a greater death than is considered "good" for me ... [a womanist is also] a woman who loves another woman sexually and non-sexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture [...] and women's strength [...] committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female, not a separatist [...] womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.<sup>6</sup>

Alice Walker introduces the concept to refer to black feminists the one who are capable, courageous and independent. It is used to illustrate that black women's struggle is in contradiction to the white feminism. Thus, *Womanism* brings new



dimensions that differ from the western; it aims to deliver the social inequality, race, gender oppression and social injustice. Then, Alice Walker attempts to reconstruct the negative images associated to colored women; she maintains creativity, the desire of learning and the pursuit of knowledge as a part of black female's activities, and as a tool by which they could build a better future.

In fact, Alice Walker highlights women's sufferance from the subjectivities performed by male exploitation. Black women are doubly marginalized, they suffer from sexual oppression since they are male's opposite, and as an African, is the opposite of white, they suffer from racial oppression. Gender issue makes them marginalized socially, culturally and sexually. Alice Walker quests for women's strength of women, liberation and self-realization. Thus, *womanism* rescue and protect women from being victims of male submission, from forms of sexism and violence, and then empowers them to achieve equality through education and employment to get better perspective. Alice Walker states:

“I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival, the whole survival of my people. But beyond that, I am committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties and the triumphs of black women.”<sup>7</sup>

We rely on the theoretical guideline of Alice Walker theory of *Womanism* developed in her collection of essays entitled “*In Search of Our Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose*” (1983), because it fits the condition of both authors. In the sense that they are both African women who embrace African culture. However, through their two respective works we notice that

these female authors are veritable womanists, because they deal with a lot of African issues and try hard to redefine black women's position.

## **2- Materials:**

This part of our work contains the summaries of Emecheta's *The Bride Price* and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, and the biographies of the two novelists with regard to the issue under study.

### ***a. Buchi Emecheta's Biographical Background:***

Buchi Emecheta is an Igbo Nigerian woman who was born on 21 July 1944 in Lagos. Since 1962, she moved with her husband and children to live in London where she worked as a librarian. Because of poverty and the harshness of living as a single parent and as a black woman living in Britain, she decided to work hard. In 1970, she joined the University of London where she got a high degree in sociology. She then became an influential writer, focusing on the role of women in traditional African cultures.

Many African writers rejected her writings as they thought that she shares the same feminist view of the westerners. In fact, Emecheta states that she refused to be called a feminist writer and her type of feminism as an African feminism called *Womanism*. Buchi Emecheta once said that she does not consider herself a feminist, saying, "I work toward the liberation of women but I'm not feminist. "I'm just a woman"<sup>8</sup>. Her master piece document *The Bride Price* (1976) highlights gender discrimination and women struggling within the Igbo patriarchal society.

Buchi Emecheta other important novels are: *In The Ditch* (1972), *The Slave Girl* (1977), *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), *The Wrestling Match* (1980), *The Moonlight Bride* (1980), *The Family* (1990), *Second Class Citizen* (1994), and *Kehinde* (1994). Emecheta wrote also a number of children's books *The Nowhere to Play* (1980), *The Moonlight Bride* (1980), therefore, she published a volume of autobiography. *Head above Water* in 1986. Her television play was first screened by BBC in 1976. In 1983, she was selected as one of the twenty 'Best of Young British Writers'. She then became a lecturer at the United States University. In 1980, she returned to her motherhood country where she became a member of the Home Secretary's Advisory Council on race.

#### ***b. Synopsis of The Bride Price:***

*The Bride Price* (1976) is a semi-autobiographical love story, it tells the story of an Igbo girl Aku-nna and her brother Nna-nndo, bid farewell by their father Ezekiel who says he is going to the hospital for few hours, their mother, Ma-Blackie is back to home in Ibuza, performing fertility rites. It becomes apparent that he is much sicker than he let his children know and he dies three weeks later. They have the funeral the day before Ma-Blackie arrives, she takes them back to Ibuza with her, as she now becomes the wife of Ezekiel's brother.

The family is problematic in Ibuza, Ma-Blackie has some of her own money and her children receive much more schooling than other children in the village , particularly the children of her new husband's other wives .

Aku-nna is blossoming, though she is thin and passive and starts to attract the attention of young men in the neighborhood, though she has not yet started to

menstruate. Her step father, Okonkwo, who has ambitious of being made a chief, begins to anticipate a large bride price for her.

Meanwhile, she has begun to fall for her teacher Chike, who in turn has developed a passion for her. Chike is a the descendant of slaves, when colonization started, the Igbo often send their to the missionary schools so they could please the missionaries without disrupting Igbo life and now the descendants of those slaves hold most of the privileged positions in the region.

Chike's inferior background means it is unlikely that Okonkwo will agree to let him marry Aku-nna, although his family is wealthy enough to offer a generous bride price. When Aku-nna begins menstruating the signs that she is now older enough to get married, she at first conceals it in order to stay off the inevitable confrontation. Where she finally reveals that she has her period, young men come to court her and Okonkwo receives several offers. One night after she find out that she has passed her school examination, she and the other young woman of her age groups are participating a dance for the opening Christmas celebrations when men burst in and kidnap her. The family of an arrogant suitor with a limp, Okoboshi has kidnapped her to be his bride In order to save her from attention of Chike, on her winding night, she lies and tells Okoboshi she is not a virgin and has slept with Chike, he refuse to touch her, the next day, word of her disgrace has already spread around the village when Chike rescues her and the two elope, fleeing to Oghellu where Chike has work the two begins a happy life together, married by her guilt over unpaid pride prize, Okonkwo, furious, refuse to accept any of the increasingly offers made by Chike father and has gone so far as to divorce Ma Blackie.

When Aku-nna feels sick, she goes home there is not sure if she will have a baby. Soon, the doctor in Chike's oil company confirm that Aku-nna will have a baby. Later on when she feels sick and screams, Chike bring her to the hospital there Aku-nna dies in childbirth, Chike christens his baby joy.

***c. Biographical background on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie:***

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born on September 15, 1977 in Tangier, Nigeria. At the age of nineteen she moved to the United states and studies communication and political science at both Drexel university and Eastern Connecticut state. Adichie graduated in 2001 and 2003 received her master's degree in creative writing from John Hopkins University. It is during her senior year at Eastern that she started working on her first novel *Purple hibiscus*, which was released in October 2003. The book has received wide critical acclaim it was shortlisted for the Orange Fiction Prize (2004) and was awarded the Commonwealth Writers Prize for best first book (2005). Adichie went on to pursue a second master's degree, this time in African studies from yale, which she completed in 2008.

Adichie works have been translated into thirty languages and have appeared in various publications, including *The New Yorker*, *Granta*, *The O-Henry prize stories*, *The financial Times* and *Zoetrope*. In addition to *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie published *Half of Yellow Sun*, which won the Orange Prize and was a National book critics Award finalist, a New York Times notable book.

The latest novel *Americanah* was published around the world in 2013 and has received numerous accolades, including winning the national book circle award for fiction and the Chicago tribune Heartland prize for fiction and being named one of

the New York times ten best books of the year, her collection of short stories, the thing around your neck was published in 2009. Chimamanda says her next major literary project will focus on the Nigerian immigrant experience in the United States. Now Adichie divides her time between Nigeria where she teaches writing workshops and the United States, she has recently awarded a 2011-2012 fellowship by the Radcliffe institute of advanced study, Harvard University.

#### ***d. Synopsis of Purple Hibiscus:***

*Purple Hibiscus* is a young Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's first novel, published in 2003, it was awarded the commonwealth writer prize and the Hurston Wright legacy award. Stunning remarkable and heartfelt represents only a few of the superlative used by the critics to qualify this novel. *Purple hibiscus* centers on the domestic life of a 15 year old Kambili, who lives in Enugu, Nigeria with her parents (Eugene and Beatrice) and an older brother Jaja.

The novel opens with a violent scene, depicting the disobedience of Jaja toward his father in psalm Sunday. Adichie writes: “things started to fall apart at home when my brother Jaja did not come to communion and papa fling his mussel across the room and broke the figurines on the etagere”<sup>9</sup>. Chimamanda Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* (condone-fourth estates, 2013). In faith, Kambili's father is known in the community as a pious and a generous man that courageously stands against despotic Nigerian regimes, however at home he is an abusive tyrant who terrorizes Kambili, her brother and her mother.

Moreover, Eugene forces his family to live by the starters of a fundamental stain Catholicism and reject the traditional African faith of his own in The novels develop we learn about the private life of these character and their attitudes towards

their father whom they currently call "papa" though their mother Beatrice, we understand that Eugene is brutal and excessively domineering his mistreating of his wife cause her several miscarriages for most of the development of the novel, Beatrice portrayed as the silent and obedient wife. In fact, event in the novel begins to take a different turn where Jaja and Kambili together with their parents braver to Abba on December holiday to celebrate Christmas. There, they meet Auntie Ifeoma, a university professor, in Nsukka together with their cousins Amaka, Obora and Chima. Auntie Ifeoma is described as a strong willed woman who breaks most of irrelevant rules her brother Eugene has imposed on his children where Nigeria begins to fall above under a military coup, Kambili's father send her and her brother away to stay with their aunt. Once in Nsukka they discovered a liberate way of life beyond the confines of their father's authority, Kambili says that "her laughter sounds strong to her ears"<sup>10</sup>.

With each return to home, the cycle of violence continues and exalted, it reaches a stage where Beatrice, Kambili's mother poisons Eugene and succeeds to kill him. Jaja claims responsibly for the crime. This he is imprisoned. The novel ends with optimism Jaja is to be released, while Ifeoma with her children migrated to America, Beatrice descended to psychological breakdown. Kambili develops confidence and Hope for a better future.

### **Endnotes:**

<sup>6</sup>Walker, Alice, "*In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*," San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, (1983), P.xii.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., P.xii.

<sup>8</sup>Baraza, Alphonse, "Biography of Buchi Emecheta," South African History Online, (2017).

<sup>9</sup>Adichie, Chimamanda, "*Purple Hibiscus*," (London: Fourth Estate, 2003), 3.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., P.127.

### **III- Results and discussion:**

#### **Results:**

Our comparative study of the two novels *The Bride Price* (1976) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), written by the two Nigerian female writers Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, has demonstrated that both works are involved the same study of women's liberation. In many similar ways, Emecheta and Adichie found in their duty to give voice to the silenced and marginalized women. Both writers are considered womanists writers in constant search of different forms of resistance in their writings, in fact, what ties the works of these writers is their feminine language which provides them with an opportunity to challenge the masculine bias and patriarchal society. In order to reach our purpose which is comparing this two works from a womanist perspective, we have relied on the theory of Womanism, developed in Alice Walker's collection of essays *In Search of Our Mothers Garden: Womanist Prose* (1983).

Although, Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Adichie come from different generations, but both writers have dealt with the same issue which is the representation of black women. Through our analysis, we have deduced that the two authors have given a new image of women by portraying their female characters through several identities. It has revealed the ways through which these characters are in constant development seeking for their own voice. Then, in the second chapter we have deduced the fact that no matter what women's contribution for their self independence from tradition authority, however, they still carry the additional burden of being the gardens of tradition, because this latter itself made more important than women.



The ultimate chapter is devoted to “Alienation versus Liberation”, the main theme of our dissertation. It has treated how the two authors lament the domination of men that is mainly caused by the patriarchal institutions and the African traditions and its customs, in fact, the two Nigerian authors, resort this act as an act of revolt and liberation that sustains their protagonists distress against patriarchal domination, which becomes a site of resistance for women in African societies. Thus, the two writers have approached women’s liberation differently.



## **IV- Discussion:**

### **Chapter One: *The Representation of Female characters in Both Novels:***

In this part of our work, we will shed light on the representation of black women especially in Nigerian society in both novels *The Bride Price* and *Purple Hibiscus*. Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie reveal the conditions under which black women conduct their lives in their conservative societies. Additionally, both writers give a new image of women as womanist, brave women, educated women, in other words an image that is completely different from the previous one; as male writers used to portray women as passive and submissive.

#### ***1-1: The Representation of Black Women in the Bride Price:***

Buchi Emecheta represents the Nigerian women's identities and their status through her novel and her female characters. In this chapter, we are going to deal with the representation of Nigerian women who struggle against their conservative society and the unfair patriarchal restrictions in order to achieve a sort of independence and to fulfill their dreams and ideals for their recognition as complete individuals.

##### ***1-1-1: Aku-nna: As an Educated and Alienated Woman:***

At the beginning of the novel, Buchi Emecheta describes the thirteen years old Aku-nna as an intelligent young woman who knows, without being told directly, that she is "too insignificant" in the eyes of her parents. She is, after all, only a girl who lives in the Nigerian city Lagos where the story opens. She is also thin and at times

very susceptible to disease. Her parents refer to her as an “Ogbanje”- a living dead, regardless to her physical appearance, Aku-nna is an intelligent and educated woman.

The meaning of Aku-nna’s name makes it clear that a daughter is treated as a commodity. Her father named her Aku’nná which means father’s wealth. Her existence is accepted because she brings bride price to the family. Aku-nna’s thinking is also shaped by patriarchal ideology to some extent that she imagines marrying a rich man who would be able to afford an expensive bride price. Aku-nna’s speech after the death of her father highlights gender biasness and second class status of women in a family. As it is mentioned in Emecheta’s *The Bride Price*:

It has always been like that in Nigeria. When you have lost your father, you have lost everything. Your mother is only a woman [...] a fatherless family is a family without a head<sup>11</sup>.

As the story progresses, we notice that Aku-nna has many questions about her family, her culture, and her role in society. She thinks about these questions, but she never voices them because in her culture it is considered worse than bad manners to ask them, especially coming from a girl. But it is these questions that drive Aku-nna throughout this story. As it is described in the first chapter of *The Bride Price*:

[...] if she had been a grown-up she would have scolded him, saying, “but you scared us so! Standing there as if you have seen a ghost.” However in Nigeria you are not allowed to speak in that way to an adult, especially your father, that is against the dictates of culture<sup>12</sup>.

Meanwhile, the protagonist Aku-nna understands from her terrifying tradition and society that women must be submissive and obedient to the rules and regulations set by males. Relief is out of the subject for African women as their

responsibility becomes clear which is taking care of their children and their husbands, in addition to working hard to survive. It is a desperate and boring way with which African women want to live their lives, just like machines, they do exactly what they are told. However, Aku-nna protested differently by breaking the social norms of her traditions to create her own destiny. This is perfectly shown in Alice Walker's collection of essays, *"In Search of Our Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose"* (1983), the term "womanist" reflects the main character Aku-nnaas "outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior"<sup>13</sup>.

### ***1-1-2: Ma-Blackie: The Invisible Woman:***

Ma-Blackie, Aku-nna's mother, emerges as a living example of motherhood in the novel. She is a tall, dark-skinned woman. As is typical for an African woman, she is held responsible for not having given her husband, Ezekiel, more than two children, only one of which is a son. The novel begins with Ma-Blackie, the mother of Aku-nna and Nna-nndo, leaving her family. She has gone back to her native village, Ibuza, to strengthen her fertility.

After her husband's death, Ma-Blackie is adopted by her deceased husband's older brother and must take her children back to Ibuza. Ma-Blackie is not the only wife of this brother, but she gratefully takes her place in his family, eventually becoming pregnant with the brother's child.

Moreover, she is a clever businesswoman, and with some of the money her husband has left her, she is able to save herself from the more physical chores required of other village women. She is also considered as one of the village's elites because she can afford to send her children to school. Despite her status and being organized, she fails to give an important feeling of love and affection to her daughter

Aku-nna. A daughter needs to feel secure and protected more than she needs all the material things that the whole world can offer.

## **2-1: The Representation of Black Women in *Purple Hibiscus*:**

*Purple Hibiscus* is a novel written by the Nigerian female womanist writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. In her work, she depicts the nightmare of the Nigerian women in their battle against gender inequality, patriarchy and their conservative society. Women in the novel are represented differently from the traditional perspective of the patriarchal society because they are given the chance to be who they truly want to be. That is, independent and self-reliant human beings.

### **2-1-1: Kambili Achike: From a Painfully Shy Girl into Self-assured Woman:**

In Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, the protagonist Kambili is depicted as a very quiet, shy and inhibited girl, who lives under her father's harsh regime and domination in the family. Kambili's world is centered entirely on her education and family life where rules and order are crucial leading stars:

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 the room [...] Papa liked order. It showed even in the schedules themselves, the way his meticulously drawn lines, in black ink, cut across each day, separating study from siesta, siesta from family time, family time from eating, eating from prayer, prayer from sleep<sup>14</sup>.

The above cited quotation significantly depicts the rigid schedules that turn Kambili's home into a prison where her father Eugene is the self-appointed executive and his family members his obedient subjects. Growing up in such a home with the anxiety of anticipated violence makes Kambili lose her ability to speak out.

Adichie portrays the protagonist Kambili as a brilliant, obedient student who receives her education at the best missionary school for girls and studies hard just to please and be perfect in her father's eyes. However, it goes out of her attent in which she fails in taking the first place at school unlike her brother Jaja. This failure involves penalties and humiliations from her father Eugene. As it is mentioned in the novel:

How many heads do you have, gbo? Papa asked, speaking Igbo for the first time. "one". The girl has one head, too, she does not have two. So why did you let her come first ?<sup>15</sup>.

In the novel, Kambili does everything to please her father. Besides being completely devoted to religion, Kambili's goal in life is to make her father proud of her, it is nearly an obsession. She is obsessed with the idea that her father is doing well, therefore, it is her duty to behave well and to excel in her studies. In other words, not being good enough is synonym of failure both for her and her father Eugene.

In addition, Adichie illustrates Kambili as a very attentive girl. That is, she gives attention to the smallest details. She is highly intuitive, which explains her extreme intelligence: "Kambili is intelligent beyond her years quiet and responsible"<sup>16</sup>, Kambili is quiet and discreet. She does not speak a lot and she is very introvert due to the way she was brought up. Indeed Kambili's education keeps her as a vulgar subject. Everything in her life is already dictated by her father, which means that she is not allowed to express or to think unconventionally from what is imposed on her.

### **2-1-2: Aunty Ifeoma: The Real Example of a Womanist:**

As another female character, Kambili's aunt Ifeoma, who works as a teacher at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka, stands as a powerful, brave, audacious and remarkable woman contrary to Beatrice. She is an intellectual who questions and challenges patriarchal authority and domination within Achike's home and in the country as a whole. When Kambili gets to know her aunt Ifeoma, she is impressed by her confidence and determination. She makes the following careful observation:

She walked fast, like one who knew just where she was going and what she was going to do there. And she spoke the way she walked, as if to get as many words out of her mouth as she could in the shortest time<sup>17</sup>.

Ifeoma is also depicted as a woman who is not afraid to stand up for her rights and to speak the truth despite the taboos and the circumstances; she is extremely intelligent and does not let anyone play her. Inevitably, Ifeoma is a fearless woman who represents something that goes beyond the status that was already given to Igbo women. She is extremely sincere and honest and does not allow injustice. For example, Ifeoma personality is shown in the fact that she is not afraid of losing her job, and more importantly she refuses to be intimidated by those people who try to keep her quiet. "I am not paid to be loyal. When I speak the truth, it becomes disloyalty."<sup>18</sup>.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Ifeoma embodies a woman who is aware of her capacities. Moreover, she does not overestimate the position of men, simply because she does not see any difference between the two genders. As an illustration, Ifeoma judges that women should not accept to be guided either by their husbands or by any other man. She tries to make them open their eyes on the fact that women should take



their own decisions and that they need to reach their own happiness with or without a husband.

To conclude, both Nigerian authors Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie converge on the idea that Nigerian women are not born free or independent, but are rather expected to carry society's burden and to fit their families' expectations. The protagonists of both novels represent, in a way or another, the reality of Nigerian women in surmounting the obstacles of their society, and going beyond their traditional roles, particularly in the Igbo community.

#### **Endnotes:**

<sup>11</sup>Emecheta, Buchi, "*The Bride Price*," (Britain: Alison and Busby, 1976), 12.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., P.11.

<sup>13</sup>Walker, Alice, "*In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*," San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, (1983), P.xi.

<sup>14</sup>Adichie, Chimamanda, "*Purple Hibiscus*," (London: Fourth Estate, 2003),23-24.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., P.47.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., P.39.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., P.71.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., P.222.

## ***Chapter Two: Tradition Vs Modernity:***

Through the historical context, it is viewed that Africa is the most traditionalist continent. However, this latter over centuries had been colonized by external powers and this led to the division of the African communities in terms of perceptions. That is, some Africans do not accept change and keep traditions as a way of living even after the decolonization, whereas others mixed between modernity and tradition.

In relationship to our work, we are going to analyze the duality between tradition and modernity in Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, whose novels deal largely with difficulties of assimilation or rejection of the tradition and modernity, and how women caught between two worlds, conservatism tradition stands in the protagonist's way toward liberation.

### ***2-1: Power of Traditions in The Bride Price:***

Buchi Emecheta, as a womanist writer, writes about the cultural conflicts experienced by black women in Africa. In her novel *The Bride Price*, she focuses on the perception of a binary opposition between modernity and tradition. From this, she captures every detail of the traditional customs that makes womankind a victim.

At the beginning of the novel, Emecheta highlights retrogressive Igbo cultural customs and norms that prevented woman from participation in a wide range of activities, whereas men are given all the liberty to practice any activity they desire. For instance, the practice of polygamy in which African man like Okonkwo who is Ma-Blackie's husband, appears in the novel as symbolic representation of male

hegemony which leaves the African woman like Ma-Blackie and Aku-nna with no voice of their own. As it is illustrated in the novel:

We'll be like sisters-especially if your mother comes to live with my father. 'why should my mother live with your father?' asked Aku-nna, puzzled. Ogugua laughed. 'you're almost fourteen and you still don't know our customs! Your mother will become my father's wife. My father has inherited everything your father owned, and he has "inherited" your mother too<sup>19</sup>.

Beside, in most African cultures women are viewed as the property of their husbands. As well as the malpractices of cutting of lock of hair of the women and declaring them as wives. As Emecheta pointed out:

Some youth who had no money to pay for a bride might sneak out of the bush to cut a curl from a girl's head so that she would belong to him for life and never be able to return to her parents; because he had given her the everlasting haircut, he would be able to treat her as he liked, and no other man would ever touch her<sup>20</sup>.

A very important impact of the traditional African culture is marriage. Obviously, marriage in the traditional patriarchal society of Africa is performed with great importance and dignity. The bride and the groom marry for further lineage of the groom's family. The duties of the newlywed wife and husband are to procreate and provide for the family. But with this social practice of marriage comes with other traditional customs which are very much indispensable in the African society without which the marriage is incomplete. Bride price is one of the widely practiced social customs of Africa within the marriage institution wherein the prospective groom has to pay in terms of money or properties to the bride's family, especially when a girl is educated the bride price is getting higher in the case of the protagonist Aku-nna. The title itself holds significance within the context of the story. However,

if a girl marries without the bride price it is assumed that she is not a virgin or she is not worth marrying, in this case a girl becomes a property on her family. Therefore, big bride price is a great honor to the bride in Igbo society.

Emecheta has raised significant notion of shame in women if they make a mistake before marriage. “The blame usually went to the girls. A girl who had had adventures before marriage was never respected in her new home, everybody in the village would know about her past, especially if she was unfortunate enough to be married to an egocentric man.”<sup>21</sup>.

Buchi Emecheta goes on analyzing the theme of virginity and sets the signs of Aku-nna’s position, when she is kidnapped by Okoboshi; a boy from a neighboring village, who tries to devirgin her on their so-called wedding night. He is stronger than she is, but she outsmarts him by her lies to Okoboshi stating that she has already lost virginity to someone else. This scene between Okoboshi and Aku-nna, demonstrates that the protagonist Aku-nna is being depicted as audacious, courageous. This expression imply the meaning of “outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior”<sup>22</sup> to indicate a mature and grown attitude. It is the first time that Aku-nna takes a very strong position in defending herself, using everything in her power to claim the life she desires, as opposed to the life that her culture has attempted to force on her. Okoboshi, in this respect, represents everything that Aku-nna finds repugnant about her traditionally male-dominated culture.

It is clear that in the African tradition, only virgin women are preferable and as a result, Okoboshi leaves Aku-nna because this would bring shame and would never be acceptable by any of his family members bearing terrible consequences once

people hear about it. It is as if devirginising a woman would be an honor for the whole family as they celebrate it as a real virtue.

The knowledge of disvirginity after the first night with her suppose husband was receive with a great scoff from her mother, who instantly “spat at her and pointed without words at the water gourd”<sup>23</sup>, she became the talk of the village, pushed outside, with eager eyes of her fellow girls to see her, some to mock her, others to pity her or to repeat the accusing description of her an empty shell, “why did you do it? one or two daring girls asked, it will kill your mother, another said”<sup>24</sup>. Aku-nna was subjected to an extreme oppression, mocking, even physical beating, just to humiliate her to have committed an heinous act, only when she got to the stream it got done on her the amount of beating she has receive from her people. Although, Chike and Aku-nna continue their serious and strong relations that eventually leads to their marriage.

In addition, Nigerian society believes that the consequences if the bride price is not paid, the bride will die when she bears her first child, that is the consequences if someone resists the customary marriage that will happen if the marriage spouses do that.

In the sight of Nigerians, the birth of a female child is viewed as a means to fetch a good bride price. As it is reflected through the traditional superstition in the lives of Aku-nna and her beloved teacher Chike, the young lovers who try to defy the customs which are noticeable obstacle of their relationship, since Chike’s slavery descendance, according to Igbo culture Chike and other slaves are considered inferior to other social classes without attention to their knowledge and behaviors. Regarding to the people’s standpoint the chief mistake of Chike was his love on

Aku-nna, he should not have become into a girl who were not a slave, thanks to it, Aku-nna's step-father never accepted the bride price given by Chike's family after their escape from the city of good. The reaction of Okonkwo, Aku-nna's step-father confirms it,

At home in Ibuza, Okonkwo was again approached with the bride price, but he still refused to consent to give his daughter to a slave. When somebody-no one knew who-took away the doll that looked like Aku-nna from in front of his chi, he thundered and reged like an animal and was determined to make another one. The new one he made was at a very expensive cost, for its aim was to call Aku-nna back from Ughelli through the wind<sup>25</sup>.

Every girl belonging to Ibuza city, whether born there or elsewhere was brought up with the old taboos of the land. Aku-nna, born far away Lagos was not only expected to follow the customs of her community but even her name was a constant reminder of what she owed to her father, Emecheta writes:

He (her father) had named her Aku-nna, meaning literally "father's wealth", knowing that the only consolation he could count on from her would be her bride price. To him this was something to look forward to. Aku-nna on her part was determined not to let her father down. She was going to marry well, a rich man of whom her father would approve and who would be able to afford an expensive bride price<sup>26</sup>.

The quotation noted above, demonstrates Aku-nna's name literal meaning "father's wealth". This refers the bride price to be received by her father at time of her marriage. Aku-nna, since thirteen knew the meaning of her name in parallel her role in her society. She would bring in wealth to her family in the form of a good bride price. Then she would bring wealth to her husband's family in the form of children, preferably all males.

Obviously, from the men's position, a man is ready to marry and the society claims he must pay the bride price. Actually, marriage is seen as a symbol of the man's ability to live separately with his family, it is also evidence to a man has a responsibility in society and has enough money to pay for his bride price, therefore, there is equality if we see the tradition thoughts of gender, customs, and norms in Ibo society toward women not only give negative effects for women but also it becomes kindness for women and their families. However, with the arrival of colonizers they bring a wave of modernity and add new voices to the traditional society that is in favor of its own wholeness in the sense that the system functions as a unit and is not looking for something new.

Buchi Emecheta in *The Bride Price*, depicts the clash between the traditional customs of a small Igbo village in Nigeria and the growing influence of Africa's European colonizers, as seen through the eyes of a young girl, Aku-nna. European colonization has been a complicated matter for Africa. While it has dealt with the political autonomy on the continent, it has also brought modernization which in itself has proven to be as equally problematic, particularly when the issues of traditional African values come into play. Yet the complexity of these issues is not fully addressed until is dealt with the subject of female subordination within traditional African society.

Emecheta looks at the conflicts that arise when modernization clashes with traditions from a feminist perspective, addressing particularly how modernization has opened up new options for African women through the western education, but at the same time created crack between those new models and old ones. This, creates a kind of dilemma, the conflict here occurs between the traditional tribal generations who do not accept change and those young people, such as Aku-nna and Chike, who

are exposed to the 'colonizers' new discourse. They tend to reject the African traditional culture because of their western education.

From this, Aku-nna tends to break the Nigerians taboos by escaping and marrying with her lover Chike. Therefore, she rebels against some social norms and calls for a change, but maybe she is not supported by the other parts of the society, because the whole society has still its traditions and looks for its own totality. The traditional tribal society does not like to be decentralized by the invasion of modernity.

Aku-nna is between two powers and even is confused to choose and support which of them. From one side, she remembers her father and mother's proverbs, stories, rituals and taboos that now accumulate in her mind as a great and implacable subconscious. On the other side, as a modern, educated woman, she rails against the hypocrisy and injustice to women inherent in tradition. But, she cannot fight the strength of her Igbo customs; she can neither root them out from her own heart and mind nor from the hearts and minds of her people, however, Aku-nna decides to go beyond all those totalities and make a free play of the structure. She tends to create a new discourse that rejects the fundamental immobility of African traditional society.

At the end of the story, Aku-nna and Chike live together outside of the village. Meanwhile, Aku-nna is pregnant. Despite their happiness though, not all is well in their lives. But her step-father Okonkwo refuses to accept the bride price offered by Chike's father, despite his several attempts, all generous. This, according to tribal tradition, means that Aku-nna will be cursed and die in childbirth. As the language of the novel's ending suggests:



Si it was that Chike and Aku-nna substantiated the traditional superstition they had unknowingly set out to eradicate. Every girl born in Ibuza after Aku-nna's death was told her story, to reinforce the old taboos of the land<sup>27</sup>.

By this ultimate fact, the death of Aku-nna is a symbol of the victory of tradition, because she does not have the ability for existing modern thoughts in a traditional society without the society support.

All in all, modernity place higher values on individualism, free will, and self-determination. While modernity does not eliminate traditional models of female behavior, it does offer more flexibility in options of self-definitions, whereas, in traditional models, identity is defined in relation to that is necessary for the community.

## ***2-2: Power of Traditions in Purple Hibiscus:***

Adiche in this novel, chiefly features the cross cultural tensions between those who invite and embody Western ideologies and a number of Nigerians who seek to maintain and practice their own indigenous African traditions.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili's aunty, Ifeoma, though well-educated and trained by the missionaries like her brother, Eugene, upholds the customs and traditions of her people; that is why she still values her father, Papa-Nnukwu, who is traditionalist. She compliments the Mmuo Masquerade (colorful customs that are meant to invoke ancestral spirits) which Eugene detests. Therefore, she is an embodiment of the Igbo cultural expression; that is why the narrator describes her entrance into Eugene's house thus:

Aunty Ifeoma drove into the compound just as we finished breakfast. When she barged into the dinning room upstairs, I imagined a proud ancient forebear, walking miles to fetch water in homemade clay pots, nursing babies until they walked and talked, fighting wars with machetes sharpened on sun-warmed stone. She filled a room<sup>28</sup>.

Adichie depicts Aunty Ifeoma in the image of the traditional Igbo women, in which she raises her children to have faith in the African culture and be proud of it; she teaches them African values. Moreover, she provides a comfortable environment where girls are not discriminated from boys and domestic chores are shared equally regardless of gender.

Additionally, Ifeoma expresses her cultural heritage by teaching her children to speak Igbo and allowing them to speak it freely, unlike Eugene who does not allow his children to speak Igbo in public places because he feels his children are uncivilized, implying that those who speak Igbo in public are not civilized. This proves that he is not proud of his cultural heritage.

As another crucial point that proves Ifeoma's standing is the fact that she loves her father and his traditional practices till he dies, and give Papa-Nnukwu the type of burial that will give his spirit rest. She totally rejects Eugene's suggesting that their father be buried by the Catholic Church, because that will mean going against the wish of her father who died as a traditionalist. From this, Ifeoma is able take up the challenge of caring for her abandoned father as a result of the colonial education which she receives which has empowered her economically.

Similarly, Amaka follows the footsteps of her mother in upholding the cultural heritage of her people by refusing to accept an English name during her confirmation. She values her Igbo name and reject all the English names suggested

to her. She notes “when the missionaries first came, they didn’t think Igbo names were good enough. They insisted that people take English names to be baptized. Shouldn’t we be moving ahead?”<sup>29</sup>. Moving ahead to Amaka means reclaiming the useful elements of Igbo culture that the missionaries have destroyed. As a result of her rejection of an English name, she is not confirmed, but she is not bothered because the important thing is that she has maintained her Igbo identity and cultural assertiveness. Indeed, Amaka’s position represent Africa’s position against cultural exploitation since Africans still compliment their cultures, traditions, norms, values and way of life.

Papa-Nnukwu represents indigenous culture specifically that of Igbo land. He is the father of Eugene and Ifeoma, he is not Roman Catholic, as his son Eugene, but instead follows the traditional Igbo religion. For Papa-Nnukwu, he embodies the native culture and he is a product of ancestor worship. Papa-Nnukwu stands as the paradigm, in which he represents all the traditions, culture and religion.

In addition to this, Papa-Nnukwu has been abandoned by his son just because he is a traditionalist and according to him, Eugene’s attitude towards him the results of his interaction with the missionaries. He attributes the equality of the trinity of Eugene’s God to the reason Eugene despises him.

Eugene by contrast, represents modernity in *Purple Hibiscus*. He supports modernity over traditional values through valuing Catholicism over Igbo religious traditions. He gives Western education a first priority over the native African languages. His modernism is also seen where he changes his speaking to a British accent: “Papa changed his accent when he spoke, sounding British, just as he did when he spoke to Father Benedict.”<sup>30</sup>.

In addition, he forbids his children from speaking Igbo in public and forces them to speak English. In other words, Eugene wants his children to embrace modernity by speaking English and assimilate the colonizers culture. As it is illustrated in the novel:

He hardly spoke Igbo, and although Jaja and I spoke it with Mama at home, he did not like us to speak it in public. We had to sound civilized in public, he told us; we had to speak English. Papa's sister, Auntie Ifeoma, said once that Papa was too much of a colonial product<sup>31</sup>.

Eugene despises his father because he is a traditionalist, and anybody who doesn't follow Eugene's kind of religion is an enemy. He describes Papa-Nnukwu religion as "Idol-worshipping"<sup>32</sup>. He despises his father to the extent that he limits his children's visit to Papa-Nnukwu and does not greet him. For this reason, Kambili and Jaja are forbidden from visiting their grandfather without the express permission of Eugene, and then for only fifteen minutes at a time. When they do visit, they are forbidden from eating or drinking in his home. The Igbo are noted for their respect for elders. Eugene is an aberration of an average Igbo man who is expected to respect his elders, specially his father. Eugene's disregard for his father is misinterpreted by Papa-Nnukwu.

Indeed, Eugene's method is to completely eradicate the indigenous identity of his father, even in death, where Papa-Nnukwu cannot refuse him. By forcing Catholic ceremony onto Papa-Nnukwu's death, Eugene is attempting to remove cultural memory as well as the culture itself. However, Ifeoma refuses to comply with Eugene's wishes:

Auntie Ifeoma got up and started to shout. Her voice was unsteady. 'I will put my dead husband's grave up for sale, Eugene, before I give our father a Catholic funeral. Do you hear me? I said I will sell Ifediora's grave first! Was our father a Catholic? I ask you, Eugene, was he a Catholic? Uchu gbadi!' Auntie Ifeoma snapped her fingers at Papa; she was throwing a curse at him. Tears rolled down her cheeks.'<sup>33</sup>.

Ironically, Eugene disrespects his own father whom he constantly refers to as a "heathen, pagan", according to him, it is sinful to keep the sublimities with Papa-Nnukwu who is unlike him full of sins. This is evident in his speech to the children "I don't like to send you to the home of a heathen, but god will protect you"<sup>34</sup>.

To a great degree, the character of Eugene is used to criticize and satirize the present situation of Nigeria. Through the ambivalent roles Eugene takes in the story as both a pro-democracy advocator, and as a family controller, we can easily understand that what appears in the surface is not necessarily evident in the private spheres. Furthermore, the notion of democracy is strongly attacked by Adichie who intends to show the other face of the imperialists and the essence behind their policies. Africans therefore should be aware about the dangers of the colonial past and think critically about their roles in life and how they can challenge the present to ameliorate the future.

Resultantly, Nigeria has witnessed many changes after the missionaries come to the country. These changes are at the personal and as well the societal level in which the structure of the coming generations is going to be modified. Thus, Kambili and her brother Jaja are stuck between a traditional past symbolized by their

grandfather who wishes to revive it and between their father who subverts to the missionaries' civilization, and shows a serious need to leave the past behind.

The impact of tradition is not only a heavy burden for the modernists themselves but also for the traditionalists. This is perfectly shown in the novel by Kambili, who at the beginning was completely confused, because she was unable to understand the intolerance of her father towards the traditionalists, but after long stay in Nsukka she learned to accept and to appreciate the difference of her community. That is, Igbo community is a mixture of different beliefs and perceptions.

To conclude, Adichie interrogates her Africanness through cultural expression. Ifeoma, though a Christian still upholds the traditional belief of her people through her love and devotion to her father who is a traditionalist. Papa-Nnukwu also forfeits the good things of life promised by his son Eugene because of his belief in the tradition and culture of his ancestors. However, the expression of one's belief comes with tribulations; Papa-Nnukwu faces abandonment and neglect in his quest for cultural expression. Amaka also forfeits her confirmation sacrament in the Catholic Church because she sticks to her African name which gives her cultural identity.

### **2-3: Women's Solidarity:**

As far as this section is concerned, we will focus on Women's Solidarity in both *The Bride Price* and *Purple Hibiscus*. Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie depict how women behave toward their culture; on one hand, there are women who support and perpetuate the African traditions and defend patriarchy, on the other hand, there are who try to struggle against traditions to free themselves.

### **2-3-1: Women as Oppressors in *The Bride Price*:**

In this novel, women are not only oppressed by the other gender but also are mistreated by women themselves. This is shown in the case of Ma-Blackie toward her daughter Aku-nna; these two female characters maintain toxic relationship with one another. Besides, in *The Bride Price*, Emecheta concentrates on the lack of bond between mother and daughter and systematically, she makes the girl child realize the lack of bond between her and her mother thus “Aku-nna knew that there was a kind of bond between her and her father which did not exist between her and her mother”<sup>35</sup>. This lack of bond between mother and daughter is the consequent result of all the oppressions that the girl child suffers at the hands of her mother in the home.

Similarly, this lack of bond between mother and daughter graduates into a situation of betrayal. Aku-nna’s father having died, she, her brother and their mother move from Lagos to Ibadan where the mother is quickly inherited by their father’s elder brother, Okonkwo. Ma Blackie betrays Aku-nna who falls in love with an Oso man called Chike. She sides with the entire household to reject Chike as an outcast even though she knows that her daughter’s happiness depends on her marrying Chike. This shows that Ma-Blackie gives much importance to the traditional customs rather than her daughter’s feelings. Moreover, instead of supporting her daughter and giving her a shoulder to cry on, she curses and humiliates her in front of her family.

This kind of betrayal push Aku-nna to start hating her mother thus: “[...] she was beginning to hate her mother for being so passive about it all”<sup>36</sup>. The girl is disappointed in the mother because she, her brother and her mother used Chike’s little presents of beverages and cans of milk and other sanitary gifts. So it surprises her that her mother could suddenly join in the condemnation of Chike to the extent that “Ma Blackie cried and cursed her fortune in being saddled with such a daughter”<sup>37</sup> to all present to hear. This outcry truly devastated Aku-nna and she doubts that one’s mother could ever be one’s best friend. In addition, she wonders if her mother has “encouraged her to accept Chike’s friendship in order to just use him like a convenient tool, to ferry them through a difficult period of adjustment?”<sup>38</sup>.

This realization brought to Aku-nna great bitterness, which is said to have gone beyond tears. Maternal oppression therefore is an important aspect of a girl child’s developmental life because as she grows up in the home with her mother or other women, she gets to feel her first pinch of bitterness from the activities of the mother or whoever it is that plays the role of a mother to her.

### **2-3-2: Women Liberate Other Women in *Purple Hibiscus*:**

In *Purple Hibiscus*, women join together to counteract all forms of oppressive forces. Adichie encourages female bonding and solidarity of women, in the novel, to get rid of the male oppressive forces. According to her, women should come together to work for their emancipation and empowerment as well as for their society. Her female characters maintain healthy relationships with one another in order to tackle the challenges of male domination. According to Alice Walker in her collection of essays entitled *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*, published in 1983 she claims that:



A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or non-sexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female<sup>39</sup>.

In this novel, it is obvious that female characters join together to struggle against the negative effects of patriarchy. Aunty Ifeoma, Eugene's younger sister, and Beatrice have a strong and healthy relationship. Ifeoma works as the lecturer at the University of Nigeria. She is well-informed and wise. She is modern, rebellious, resolute and assertive. After her husband's death, she single-handedly raises her three children. Ifeoma usually addresses her sister-in-law as "My wife"<sup>40</sup>.

Ifeoma tries to save Mama Beatrice from her abusive life. She even tells her to quit it. Mama is under the misconception that domestic abuse is quite common in conjugal lives. Ifeoma clarifies her that her husband never beat her when he was alive. When Kambili is beaten severely by Papa Eugene, she rebukes Beatrice for her inability to save her children from the tyranny of her husband. She blames her for simply being the submissive and passive observer of the violent incidents.

Ifeoma advises her that "when the house is on fire, you run out before the roof collapses on your head"<sup>41</sup>. Ifeoma again comes to save Beatrice when Eugene breaks a table at her pregnant belly. She provides moral support to Beatrice. Ifeoma's persuasion is, perhaps, one of the reasons for the change of Beatrice's mind in putting to end to Eugene's life in order to subvert patriarchy. Hence, she shows a sense of resistance and tries to liberate herself and her family from the impact of patriarchy.

When Beatrice suffers the last miscarriage as a result of the inhuman attitude of Eugene, she leaves for Auntie Ifeoma's home without her husband's permission. Back home, she gradually ingests rat poison in small changes into her husband's tea and kills him. Thus, Beatrice liberates herself from the years of physical torture and psychological enslavement. It is an unconventional way of seeking freedom from the forces of oppression.

As a matter of fact, Ifeoma contributes in Kambili's self-development, in other words every change that occurs in the life of Kambili is instigated by Ifeoma's liberalism and fierce character. Therefore, Kambili acquires two weapons to stand against her father's ill treatment; the spirit to speak out and be free and the hope she must have in God in the midst of her traumatic experiences. As it is illustrated in *Purple Hibiscus*:

Perhaps it was what we wanted to happen, Jaja and I, without being aware of it. Perhaps we all changed after Nsukka- even Papa- and things were destined to not be the same, to not be in their original order<sup>42</sup>.

To sum up, by introducing Ifeoma as the character that supports Beatrice and challenges her to assume agency of her destiny and those of her children, Adichie reads a different meaning to women supporting other women; that solidarity may come from other sources apart from a woman's immediate family, a point Adichie might be making since she leaves out detailed reference to Beatrice's family background.

To conclude, Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Adichie through their novels depict the relationship between women differently. One exemplifies the belief that a woman's worst enemy is a woman, because women perpetuate traditions which this

protagonist Aku-nna struggle against, whereas the second shows women from a different angle. That is, women can sometimes be the reason behind a woman's desire to reach and to proclaim her freedom.

#### **Endnotes:**

<sup>19</sup>Emecheta, Buchi, "The Bride Price," (Britain: Alison and Busby, 1976), 23.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., P.103.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., P.84.

<sup>22</sup>Walker, Alice, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose," San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, (1983), P.xii.

<sup>23</sup>Emecheta, Buchi, "The Bride Price," (Britain: Alison and Busby, 1976), 23.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., P.141.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., P.162.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., P.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., P.168.

<sup>28</sup>Adichie, Chimamanda, "Purple Hibiscus," (London: Fourth Estate, 2003), 80.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., P.271-272.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., P.46.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., P.13.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., P.47.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., P.189.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., P.62.

<sup>35</sup>Emecheta, Buchi, "The Bride Price," (Britain: Alison and Busby, 1976), 12.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., P.120.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., P.121.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., P.122.

<sup>39</sup>Walker, Alice, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose," San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, (1983), P.xi.

<sup>40</sup>Adichie, Chimamanda, "Purple Hibiscus," (London: Fourth Estate, 2003), 73.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., P.213.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., P.209.

### ***Chapter Three: Alienation Vs Liberation:***

In this part, we will shed light on Black women's Alienation or Liberation in both *The Bride Price* and *Purple Hibiscus*. Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie reveal the conditions under which the blacks conduct their lives, which are characterized by gender discrimination, alienation and subjugation. The two authors focus on the Black women and their struggle and how social change affects the lives of the female characters. However, these two authors have not only shed light on women's discrimination but through the depiction of their major female characters; we learn that black women are truly resistant because they challenge patriarchy, family and society. The two novels give another path for black women to proclaim themselves as independent and fearless human beings.

#### ***3-1: Alienation in The Bride Price:***

Buchi Emecheta represents African women writing at its very best representing as it does women's determination effort to liberate themselves. Emecheta's women, however, rage against their lot and pass through a rebellious phase. This progression leads them to emancipation in course of time. Through the story, Aku-nna being more educated makes a valiant bid for freedom. Yet, by being too close to the binding effect of pre-colonial hegemony, they figure as martyrs to the cause of women's liberation.

Emecheta, consequently, tends to give voice to the silent and neglected women by male figures, and assimilate liberation from cultural tradition's pressure, this former also sympathizes with victimized women, and she illustrates how Aku-nna is subjected to many injustices by the male members of her community.

### **3-1-1: *Aku-nna*:**

At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist Aku-nna witnesses a tough period when she loses her father Ezekiel Odia. By moving to Ibuza with her family, Aku-nna's life becomes more complicated regarding her conservative society. She is observing her surroundings without pronouncing any word.

The shift from urban Lagos city to rural Ibuza reduces Aku-nna to a state of loneliness. There, she has experienced many changes throughout her life, she feels as if she is trapped between two opposite cultural strands. Moreover, she is often criticized by her physical appearance and her modesty. As it is expressed in the novel:

[...] Aku-nna wondered why girls along this road never bothered to cover the tops of their bodies, and mostly wore nothing except some colored loin cloth, of course the traders composed lyrics about girls with mosquito legs, girls with breasts like pumpkins, girls with hair on their chests<sup>43</sup>.

While living in rural Ibuza, she is put in inferior position in which she finds herself rejected by the entire society. Therefore, she is considered among the African women with no voice of their own, she is represented as the "second sex". According to Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, writes:

The man considers his body as if he were an independent being who communicates with the world free and submissive communication that he does not want. While the woman's body is full of restrictions that impede the movement of its owner. Did Plato not say: "a female is a female because of a lack of qualities" humanity in a man's custom is a masculine thing, as he considers himself to represent the true human race, as for the woman, she represents the "other" gender<sup>44</sup>.

Even though, she is mistreated by her surroundings, but she feels comfortable with her teacher Chike, who comes from an Oshu family, a slave family. With whom she falls in love, a relationship that is strictly forbidden.

By the time Aku-nna turns fifteen, she begins to menstruate which means she is a fully woman, from this point Emecheta presents shocking portrayals of Igbo customs. Aku-nna becoming a complete woman is celebrated as a great event. Young boys visit her house and have fun with her body. It is not an achievement but a punishment. She is molested by one of the visitors, Okoboshi. He humiliates her by squeezing her breasts. It is shocking to note that her mother scolds her for unexpected behavior. As it is portrayed in *The Bride Price*:

[...] Okoboshi walked up to Aku-nna and seized her roughly at the back of her shoulder; he grabbed at both her breasts and started to squeeze and hurt her [...] I will kill you if you bring shame and dishonor on us. How can he hurt you with all these others watching?, Ma Blackie said<sup>45</sup>.

Aku-nna continues to possess a feeling of oppression when she is kidnapped and forced to marry a man of her uncle's choice. Okoboshi forces her to be his wife, but she makes a false story of her physical relation with her teacher Chike. The shocked and frustrated Okoboshi leaves her in bridal bed after beating her with all his strength. As it is expressed in the novel: "you dirty animal!" he shouted. "Do you think I want to touch you now?." <sup>46</sup>.

Little by little, Aku-nna feels psychological pressure. On the one hand, she exhibits the courage to elope with her lover, but on the other hand she feels guilt and allows herself to surrender before Igbo beliefs. People believe that if the bride price of a girl is not paid, the girl would not survive after the birth of her first child. From this perspective, it shows how social norms are used to make women both physically

and mentally slave. Aku-nna's death shows that education cannot erase the fear of social taboos from mind, and reveals a clash between societal force and individual's strength of assertion. The end of the novel illustrates how Aku-nna gets punishment for her attempt of rebellion. Despite her education and bravery in defying her family and village, and despite the sustaining power of the love of Chike, Aku-nna is ultimately destroyed by traditional society.

According to our findings, the central message of the novel that Emecheta tries to convey is that Aku-nna's various roles: as a daughter, as a bride and as a wife reflect victimization, subjugation, marginalization of a woman in African society. From this, we conclude that women can not escape these traditions.

### ***3-2: Liberation in Purple Hibiscus:***

Every human being has a right to freedom. If this freedom is, however, circumscribed or denied, there is every tendency for one to revolt. And if one revolts, one takes a strong or violent action against one's offenders. In *Purple Hibiscus*, women relentlessly struggle to achieve the much desired freedom from the clutches of tradition, from socio-political disempowerment as well as from male oppression. In the Nigerian society which Adichie's novel realistically portray, more and more women are banding together in order to put an end to many years of deep rooted oppression and senseless subjugation of women.

*Purple Hibiscus* is set in postcolonial Nigeria, at a time when colonialism's heirs corruption, political strife, and religious dogmatism strain family and community. In this novel, Adichie writes about the embodied experience of female

characters and their struggling towards independence, as it is narrated through the protagonist Kambili Achike.

### ***3-2-1: Kambili Achike:***

As the story begins, the protagonist Kambili is shown as the victim of patriarchal hegemony. Kambili, who is fifteen years old girl, is quite intelligent, and observant. However, she is shy, voiceless, submissive and fearful. She and her mother always live in the grip of fear within the dominant patriarchal authority. Kambili never dares to speak freely at home. She usually murmurs or mumbles.

Throughout the story, Kambili experiences several cruel beatings and humiliations led by her fanatic father, Eugene. On one occasion, Kambili is humiliated in front of her classmates for coming the second in her class. This incident shows the status of women is put in inferior position vis à vis the other gender.

Thereby, to overcome her own challenge. Kambili regains her first position in class and escapes from her father's public ridiculousness. Meanwhile, she sleeps well that night, and dreams of her father's voice telling her of how proud of her he was. She travels with her family to Abba region for Christmas full of hope and encounters a womanist triumph by meeting her inspiration, Aunty Ifeoma.

Kambili's visit to Nsukka marks an important phase in the evolution of her life. The process towards finding out her real strength and voice begins after she visits Aunty Ifeoma's family in Nsukka. Kambili's first impression of her Aunty Ifeoma is more in tune with the womanist vision of audaciousness, outrageousness and willful behavior. Therefore, during her first visit to Nsukka has opened Jaja and



Kambili's eyes towards a world where love and creativity fill their company after being accompanied the whole time by fear and silence. There, Kambili cooks and spends a pleasant time in the kitchen with her cousin Amaka and she teaches her to peel potatoes along with other entertaining house chores. All these factors have contributed in the evolving of Kambili both physically and as well psychologically. Besides having Amaka, the outspoken cousin who since the beginning comments about how Kambili whispers instead of speaking out loudly. All these, dramatically changes the life of Kambili in which she starts discovering herself as opposed to who she has been socialized to be.

That period of transition, witnesses a trajectory transformation of Kambili's life from the "timid, girlish and voiceless" sixteen year old to a vocal and enthusiastic girl-woman. According to Okuyade in his article "*Changing Borders and Creating Voices: Silence as Character in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus*," explores:

The growth process of the protagonist, Kambili, as she struggles to make her mouth function within the totalitarian temperament of her father's home, and he adds "the protagonist is involved in a crisis with religious and domestic stakes at the beginning of the narrative; she seems to be a mere observer and victim, but as the novel drags towards its denouncement, she realizes her voices and role in the home after her awakening."<sup>47</sup>.

Additionally, Kambili befriends a priest called Father Amadi and she certainly falls in his love. Before, she has never admired a person except her father who is perfect in her eyes. Later on, during her stay in Nsukka, she is able to extend her thoughts and be out of her father's customized shell; thus, she starts gradually longing for Father Amadi's invitation by which he takes her outside her Aunt's

homestead to enjoy his company. Actually there is a mutual affection between Kambili and Father Amadi though the two has never expressed it to each other. As for Amadi, his admiration is clear when he tells Amaka that “[Kambili] does not waste her energy in picking never-ending arguments. But there is a lot going on in her mind. I can tell”<sup>48</sup>. Father Amadi thinks of Kambili as an intelligent, sage girl who hides a lot between her silent lips.

Obviously, Kambili’s metamorphosis is at all the levels be it psychological, physical or even emotional through which the teenager gains a strong voice that put an end to her long term passiveness and silence. From listening to music, to laughing, to loving a priest, Kambili is now fully independent and mature and most importantly conscious about herself and as well about her surroundings.

To conclude, Adichie portrays her protagonist Kambili as a symbol of womanist freedom, who thrives in the dictatorial Nigerian society based on Achike’s accumulation of wealth. It is within this access to money and power that Adichie places Kambili who will now inspire womanist change in other young girls like her to have the “freedom to be, to do.”<sup>49</sup>.

### ***3-2-2: Aunty Ifeoma:***

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Ifeoma is the complete opposite of Beatrice. She is an intellectual who works as a teacher at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka. In the novel, Ifeoma is noticeable due to her strong personality, her character incorporates courage, strength and independence. For instance, Ifeoma does not consider marriage as a supreme institution.

Besides, her courage and fearless, she contributes to demystify the patriarchal and utilitarian establishment she is a part of. Adichie gives Ifeoma a remarkable image of an independent and free-minded woman, who gathers all the qualities; she laughs, she speaks and she loves with an intensity that embraces not only her children, but similarly Kambili and Jaja. Through these qualities cited above, Aunt Ifeoma has a great impact in Kambili's self-development, in which Ifeoma gives Kambili the space and time she needs to open up to new experiences.

The modesty of her Aunt's house and the simple conditions of her cousins' lives makes Kambili astonished and surprised at the same time. Definitely, Nsukka is the best place for moderating Kambili and Jaja's psychology where they can finally be surrounded by people who laugh all the time. As opposed to Kambili's house where silence covers every inch of the rooms, Aunt Ifeoma's compound is vivid and laughter inevitably overwhelms the family members. In this respect, Kambili describes the overwhelming joy in her Aunt's house:

Laughter rang out in aunt Ifeoma's house, and no matter where the laughter came from it bounced around all the walls, all the rooms [...] morning and night prayers were always peppered with songs, Igbo praise songs that usually called for hand clapping. Food had little meat. Each person's piece the width of two fingers pressed close together and the length of half a finger, the flat always sparkled<sup>50</sup>.

From this, Kambili deduces how valuable she is in terms of just being Kambili, not necessarily in terms of being dutiful and obedient. Just like her aunt Ifeoma who stand as a womanist; a woman who believes in herself and her own abilities regardless of the boundaries of gender.

Ifeoma, has a great impact in Jaja's state of mind, significantly, she strengthens Jaja psychologically and changes his way of thinking especially when she informs him about the defiant king who is put in jail for challenging the colonizer. According to his Aunt, that king was also named Jaja of Opobo and he successfully defended his territory against the British Colonizer. Respectively, she lectures Jaja that "defiance is like marijuana, it is not a bad thing when it is used right"<sup>51</sup>. His sudden rejection to the family's schedule symbolizes that he gained a steady power and a new voice which surely ought to silence that of Eugene Achike afterwards.

In addition, Ifeoma does not just hold on to her position of asserting her independence as a woman but she also sympathizes with the woman who allow men to crown their lives thereby buying their independence from them, this shows that Ifeoma is not yet prepared to let her freedom go away, she does not to be controlled nor be dependent of any men. Even if, when she loses her husband, she is able to manage perfectly well on her own. Moreover, she strongly refuses to be bought out by the wealth of her brother Eugene:

Have you forgotten that Eugene offered to buy me a car even before Ifediora, my husband, died? But first he wanted us to join the knights of ST John. He wanted us to send Amaka to a convent school. He even wanted me to stop wearing make-up! I want a new car, nyunye m, and I want to use my gas cooker again and I want a new freezer and I want money so that I want have to unravel the seams of Chima's trousers when she outgrows them. But I will not ask my brother to bend over so that I can lick his buttocks to get these things<sup>52</sup>.

This shows that Ifeoma is economically independent and seems to be entirely devoted to maintain her freedom. In *The Second Sex* (1949) Simone De Beauvoir

claims: “the woman who maintained her independence through all her servitudes will ardently love her own freedom in nature.”<sup>53</sup> That is, independence is precious and a necessary thing for women specially when they get used to it.

To sum up, Ifeoma represents perfectly the liberated woman, she is spiritually, financially and mentally independent. Ifeoma is the future within which each Nigerian citizen has a voice as well as the freedoms that the polity of western society considers a birthright.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her lecture for ted talks entitled “*We Should All Be Feminists*” (2012) highlights on the fact that women should be raised differently but most importantly they should change their way of behaving as she says “what matters even more is our attitude, our mindset what we believe and what we value about gender”<sup>54</sup>, she also focuses on the fact that things can be changed as she claims: “I believe deeply in the ability of human beings to make and remake themselves for the better.”<sup>55</sup> Ifeoma’s character reflects that gender is not an obstacle in order to affirm who you are and of course, in a way or another, she challenges patriarchy.

### **3-2-3: *Beatrice:***

Adichie describes Beatrice as a bonding woman, in other words is less treated as a human being and a woman. Beatrice in many ways personifies the stereotyped image of African women as subdued and victimized without a voice of their own, according to her being Eugene’s wife seems more important to Beatrice than the sufferings the marriage implicates; even when her husband almost beats her to death

and she loses her longed-desired unborn child, Beatrice still acts as the loyal and devoted wife. As it is mentioned in the novel:

She wore the same white T-shirt with God is love written on the front. Her green wrapper hung lower than usual on her waist; it had been knotted with a lazy effort at the side. Her eyes were vacant, like the eyes of those mad people who wandered around the roadside garbage dump in town, pulling grimy, torn canvas bags with their life fragments inside. 'There was an accident, the baby is gone, she said.'<sup>56</sup>.

As a matter of fact, Beatrice's position at home and marriage makes her a woman of few words, quietly accepting the mental and physical cruelties committed by her fanatic husband, which makes her become a shadow in her own life without her own voice and opinions. Whereas, Ifeoma is an example of a woman whose role is multifaceted outside of marriage. This means she freely expresses her opinion on critical issues without asking someone's permission and rule her family as well.

Adichie has minutely illustrated Beatrice as someone who has a great friendship with Ifeoma, yet she does not want to share her ideals and values concerning equality and justice, frequently, Beatrice judges Ifeoma's talk as being too academic. For instance, the difference between the two women is easily noticeable; one claims independence and self-sufficiency, whereas the other maintains her oppression. As it is shown in the quotation below:

Nwunye m, sometimes life begins when marriage ends. You and your university talk. Is this that you tell your students? Mama was smiling. Seriously, yes. But they marry earlier and earlier these days. What is the use of the degree, they ask me, when we cannot find a job after graduation? At least somebody will take care of them when they marry<sup>57</sup>.

The conversation between the two women reflects the position and the personality of each one of them. But most importantly, it highlights how Beatrice seems to stick and cherish marriage in general, and husband in particular. She believes that marriage is much more important than education and it gives power and value to women. Furthermore, Beatrice believes that taking care of her family is a way to express herself as a woman, but unconsciously and all over again she finds herself in state of marginalization.

Regarding to Beatrice's subjugation Ifeoma has begged Beatrice to leave Eugene before it is too late: "this cannot go on, nwunye m," Aunty Ifeoma said, "when a house is on fire, you run out before the roof collapses on your head."<sup>58</sup> Despite her husband's violence against Kambili, Beatrice refuses to leave; firstly, clinging to her conviction of marriage as sacred and her only way of existence. Secondly, her economic well-being is tied to Achike's wealth therefore she is economically dependent on her husband. This makes her dwell in a marriage in which she is regarded as an unequal human being.

Explicitly, Beatrice tolerates all kinds of dishonor, her gratitude obliges her to stick to her husband even if it is a matter of death. In *Feminism is For Everybody: Passionate Politics*, the feminist and social activists Gloria Jean Walkins, better known as Bell Hooks claims: "if any female feels she needs anything beyond herself to legitimate and validate her existence, she is already given away her power to be self-defying, her agency"<sup>59</sup>. That is, any woman who does not value and perceive herself as being enough is predestined to be powerless and vulnerable. A woman should feel self-sufficient in order to be able to defend herself without associating her life with another human being.

Through the preceding discussion, the female character Beatrice is in big dilemma: it is either she decides to stay in the marriage and gets beaten until she dies or she abandons the marriage and leaves her children behind. However, Beatrice surprises us by having another alternative, silently poisoning her husband Eugene slowly to death to save herself and her children.

Adichie, therefore, seems to suggest that the poisoning of Achike by Beatrice is not the ideal situation. Beatrice chooses to end her suffering in marriage by killing her husband. She does so in order to free herself from years of battery and abuse, she also kills him to liberate herself from years of physical torture and psychological enslavement. This is not an easy choice even as she struggles to hold herself together mentally, psychologically, and emotionally as she becomes almost a mad woman who goes about telling people she killed her husband.

To conclude, in killing her husband pierces a considerable big hole in the womanist's self-embracing umbrella of hope and survival. This act also represents a challenge against patriarchal power exerted via the medium of Achike's constant violent behavior. Therefore, the various abuses suffered by women in the Nigerian society, Adichie also celebrates the enduring spirit, the resilience and the sheer determination of such women to break through into freedom.

*Purple Hibiscus* was written by Adichie to give voice to the silenced individuals in the familial grounds whose situation was parallel to the situation of post-colonial Nigeria. Both Achike's family and government work as settings which bend to oppress and control people's minds. Through her voice, Adichie enables her characters to rebel against the status quo in order to attain human being's freedom for expression and dignity.



## Endnotes:

<sup>43</sup>Emecheta, Buchi, "The Bride Price," (Britain: Alison and Busby, 1976), 60.

<sup>44</sup>Beauvoir, Simone De, "The Second Sex Quotes," Good reads.

<sup>45</sup>Emecheta, Buchi, "The Bride Price," (Britain: Alison and Busby, 1976), 120.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid,. P.138.

<sup>47</sup>Okuyade, Ogaga, "Changing Borders and Creating Voices: Silence as Character in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus," English Department, College of Education Warri 02, no.09 (2009): 247, URL.

<sup>48</sup>Adichie, Chimamanda, "Purple Hibiscus," (London: Fourth Estate, 2003),173.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid,. P.16.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid,. P.140.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid,. P.144.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid,. P.76.

<sup>53</sup>Beauvoir, Simone De, "The Second Sex," (New York: Vintage Books, 1949), 745.

<sup>54</sup>Adichie, Chimamanda, "We Should All Be Feminists," Ted Talks, (2017).

<sup>55</sup>Ibid,.

<sup>56</sup>Adichie, Chimamanda, "Purple Hibiscus," (London: Fourth Estate, 2003),34.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid,. P.76.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid,. P.213.

<sup>59</sup>Hooks, Bell, "Feminism is For Everybody: Passionate Politics," South and Press, (2000): 95.

## ***V- General Conclusion:***

Our comparative study of the two novels *The Bride Price* (1976) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), written by the two Nigerian female writers Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, has demonstrated that both works are involved the same study of women's liberation. We have relied on the theoretical guidelines of *Womanism* by Alice Walker, developed in her collection of essays *In Search of Our Mothers Garden: Womanist Prose* (1983). The study projects the image of female characters and how the two authors approach liberation in the two novels, and how one novel differs from another yet similar.

Although Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie came from two different generations; our analysis has pointed out a series of compatibilities that both works have in common. Both writers are considered as womanists in constant search of different forms of resistance in their writings. They present a collective history of oppressions that both their female characters suffer from. They, indeed, provide the reader with an insight of black women's traumas from a womanist perspective.

In the first chapter, we have dealt with the representation of black women and how they struggle from their conservative society. We have noticed through our analysis that the two Nigerians authors gave more importance to the Nigerian women in particular while describing their female protagonists. The two authors adopt their works to explore the private lives to which their protagonists are restricted, in the case of Aku-nna, Ma-Blackie, Kambili and Beatrice. Although, they were oppressed, this did not prevent the two authors to give a new image of women as brave and audacious women which is completely different from the

previous one as the male writers used to portray them as submissive, passive and silenced.

In the second chapter, we have focused on the clash between African traditions and modernity as a central issue developed by the two authors in their works. Our analysis, however, has shown that black women caught between two worlds. For instance, the protagonist Aku-nna in *The Bride Price* tried to negotiate traditional norms, customs and challenged the patriarchal restrictions and calls for change. According to Ketu Katrak in her book entitled “*Politics of The Female Body: Postcolonial Women Writers of The Third World*” adds that:

Whatever a girl or woman’s particular negotiation, speaking against, being complicit within, or resisting tradition, female protagonists experience self-exile, a sense of not belonging to themselves, and particularly not to their female bodies<sup>60</sup>.

As a matter of fact, female protagonist Aku-nna faced this institutionalized tradition by disobeying this latter and step outside the boundaries; this leads her to pay the ultimate price. Whereas the protagonist Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus*, was not complaining with traditional institutions. In other words, Kambili did not protest against the social norms and customs.

Although, education brings modern way of thinking as one of the colonial discourse, however, this made us aware of how African traditions and its customs take advantage from any kind of revolt either to limit women’s liberation or to perpetuate their submission. Hence tradition is seen as timeless, valuable and precious.

This chapter has in addition shown how the two authors exhibit different approaches in their interpretations for Women’s Solidarity. From womanist

perspective that man is the only oppressor for woman. However, in our study of *The Bride Price* by contrast, has substantiated woman as another evident source for black women's subjugation. The issue of women oppressing other women, as it is portrayed in the case of Ma-Blackie and her daughter Aku-nna. Whereas in *Purple Hibiscus*, women join together to counteract all forms of oppressive forces, as we have already mentioned, the support of Aunty Ifeoma toward her sister-in-law Beatrice and Kambili to find their own voices.

In the last chapter "Alienation versus Liberation" which is the main theme of our dissertation. We have deduced that the two authors, on one hand, they similarly tend to give voice to the silenced and marginalized women by challenging the masculine bias. But on the other hand, the two authors approach women's liberation differently. In *The Bride Price*, even if Emecheta deals with women's emancipation but she gives a tragic ending to her protagonist Aku-nna who leaves her alienated, because Buchi Emecheta values the African traditions more than women themselves, as Ketu Katrak argues in her book *"Politics of the Female Body: Postcolonial Women Writers of the Third World"* that "tradition itself is made more important than women."<sup>61</sup> By opposition, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie provides a happy ending to her protagonist Kambili where she finds her own voice and remain self reliance, because for Adichie women's rights and status come before traditions. In other words, she provides a meaningful image of the qualities of an independent woman rather than traditional institutions.

No matter how Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* are distinguishable in some features, their works examine same issues.

## **Endnotes**

<sup>60</sup>Katrak, Ketu II, "Politics of the Female Body: Postcolonial Women Writers of the Third World," (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, New Jersey, London, 2006), 158.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., P.156.

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