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**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

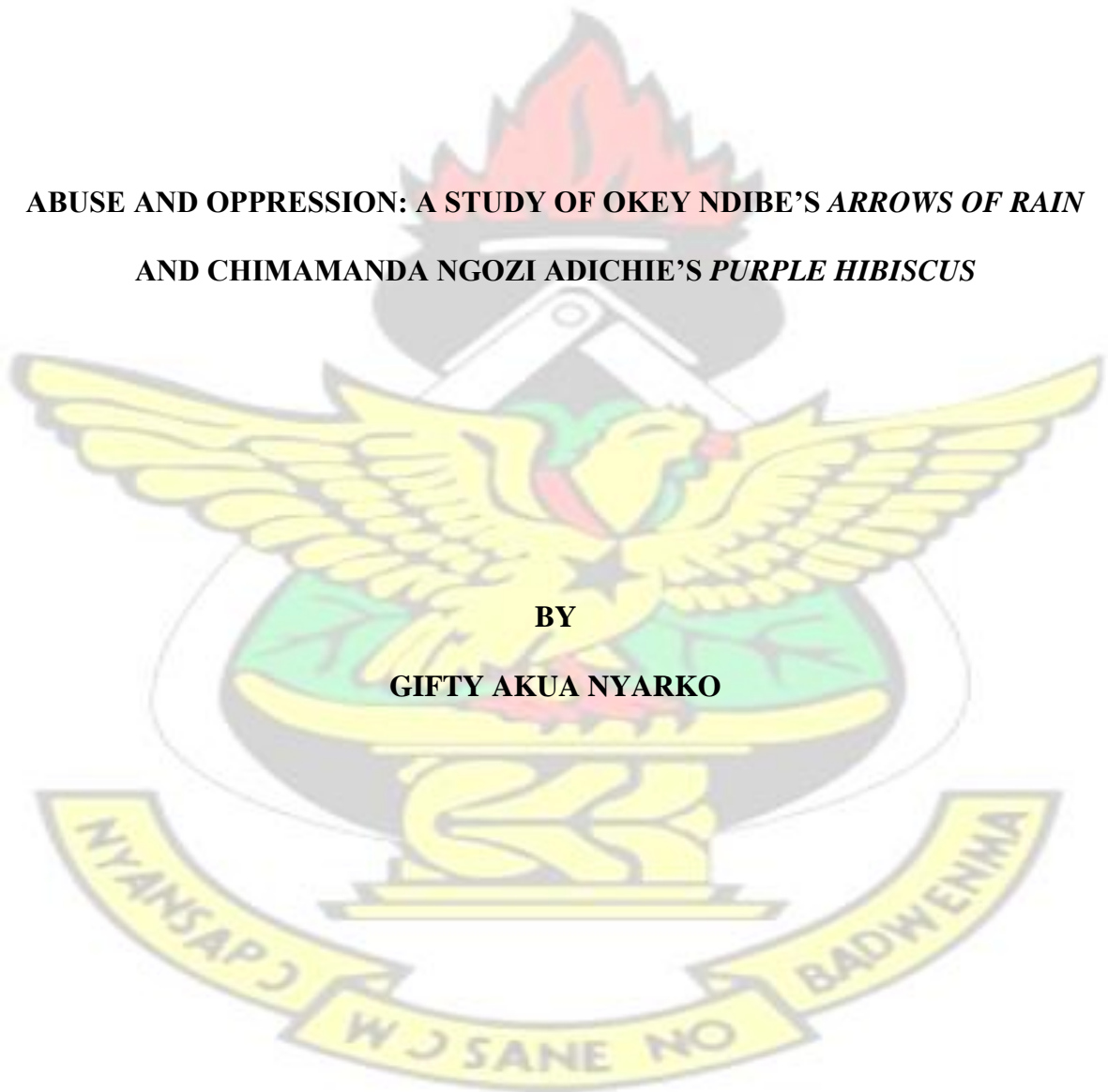
**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

KNUST

**ABUSE AND OPPRESSION: A STUDY OF OKEY NDIBE'S *ARROWS OF RAIN*  
AND CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *PURPLE HIBISCUS***

**BY**

**GIFTY AKUA NYARKO**



**MAY, 2018**

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**ABUSE AND OPPRESSION: A STUDY OF OKEY NDIBE'S *ARROWS OF RAIN***

**AND CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *PURPLE HIBISCUS***

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, KWAME  
NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, KUMASI, IN  
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH**

**BY**

**GIFTY AKUA NYARKO**

**MAY, 2018**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the M. Phil and that to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material accepted for the award of a degree by any university except where due acknowledgement has been made.

GIFTY AKUA NYARKO .....

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## DEDICATION

To Madam Salome Obuobi, my mother, the woman whose love and encouragement urged me on, I dedicate this work.



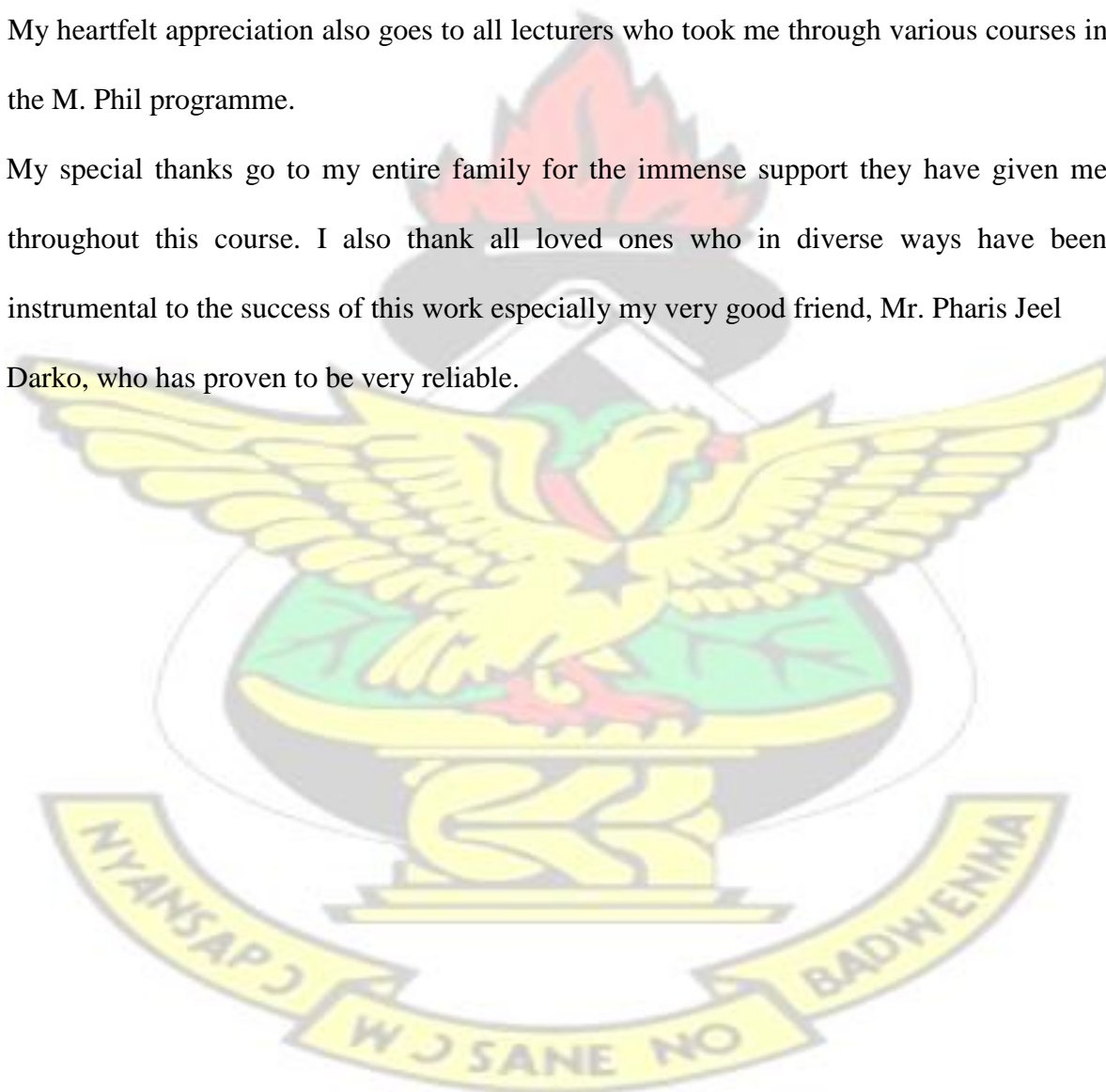
## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to God for giving me the strength and grace to complete this work successfully.

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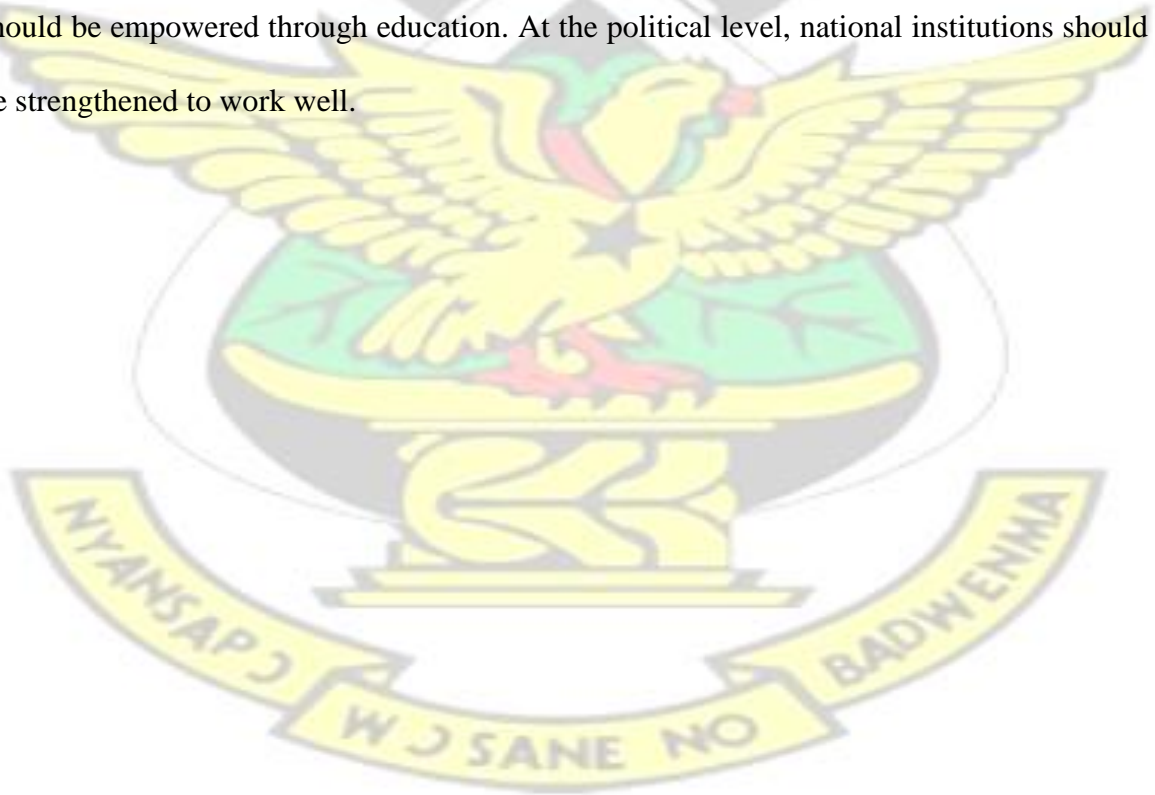


## ABSTRACT

Abuse and oppression have always been a part of society. These phenomena have been treated by many literary artists. This research examines abuse and oppression as captured by Okey Ndibe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in their respective novels *Arrows of Rain* and *Purple Hibiscus*.

The project uses the postcolonial literary theory of mimicry and hybridity and feminism to examine the causes and effects of domestic and political abuse in the two novels. The research finds that abuse and oppression are the direct off-shoots of colonialism and that those greatly affected are children, women and the vulnerable in the society.

Finally, the project recommends that to effectively resist oppression, women especially should be empowered through education. At the political level, national institutions should be strengthened to work well.



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A COMPARISON OF VICTIMS' REACTIONS TO ABUSE IN *ARROWS OF*

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY.

Abuse and oppression have become part of our society. These social cankers affect people from all sectors and at all levels. Maltreatment occurs every day: the senior student makes unrealistic demands on the junior student and forces him to obey; the teacher punishes the student over very trivial issues. We hear it every day; the cries of a woman being beaten by her husband, the pleas of a child being mistreated by his guardian, the pleas of an employee who has just been sacked for no justifiable reason, the anger of a motorist who has been wrongly arrested by the police officer who wants to extort some money from him. Such injustices range from small scale one-on-one relationships to national life. Africa, in particular, has seen a lot of oppressive and tyrannical leadership. Wikipedia reports on Idi Amin Dada, former president of Uganda thus:

Amin's rule was characterised by human rights abuses, political repression, ethnic persecution, extrajudicial killings, nepotism, corruption and gross economic mismanagement. The number of people killed as a result of his regime as estimated by international observers and human rights groups range from 100,000 to 500,000. (6)

African writers dwell on their socio-political experience in their writings, and some of such occurrences do attract them, and constitute the object of many a literary piece. Ezekiel Mphahlele notes that "every writer is committed to something beyond his art, to a statement

of value, not purely aesthetic but to a criticism of life”. (22) In other words, apart from the aesthetic value of their works they awaken the conscience of their people.

Their subject matter varies due to the various socio-political changes that have taken place in Africa. For example, in the period following colonialism, the pervading tone and mood of their works centered on the problem of failed political leadership. In the twenty-first century, writers have highlighted some evolving trends in society such as the abuse of women and children, the oppression and exploitation of the vulnerable poor, abuse of power and the role of women in the modern socio-cultural and socio-political set up. The purpose of this thesis is to examine how Okey Ndibe and Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi use language and literary techniques to highlight abuse and oppression in their novels *Arrows of Rain* and *Purple Hibiscus*.

Abuse and oppression are pressing issues which modern literary artists focus on. Though abuse was first defined with regard to children when it first received sustained attention in the 1950s, clinicians and researchers now recognize that adults suffer abuse in a number of different circumstances. In other words, everyone is prone to abuse. Donald A. Hayden explains that: “Abuse refers to harmful or injurious treatment of another human being that may include physical, sexual, verbal, psychological, emotional, intellectual or spiritual maltreatment.”(6)

Many reasons account for abusers maltreating their victims. One cause is early learning experience. Most of the time, many abusive individuals were themselves abused as children and have learned to see harmful behaviour as normal when they assume powerful positions. The character, Poison, in Amma Darko’s *Faceless* is an example of such victims. Some perpetrators of abuse also have unrealistic and higher expectations of their victims and thus

attack them if they fail to meet their expectations. Furthermore, some people in powerful positions resort to violence to silence their critics who criticize their misdeeds. Some traditional institutions also make room for perpetrators to abuse and oppress their victims. Finally, power corrupts some individuals to abuse the masses and their office.

The cost of abuse on the individual and the society is enormous. The Encyclopaedia of Mental Disorders notes that:

They include not only the direct cost of immediate medical and psychiatric treatment of abused people but also the indirect costs of learning difficulties, interrupted education, workplace absenteeism, and long-term health problems of abuse survivors.(1)

Abuse could take the form of domestic abuse, abuse of political power and the physical abuse of citizens by both civilian and military governments.

One common form of abuse that exists in the African society is the physical abuse of the masses by both civilian and military governments. Biyi Bandele-Thomas in an interview with Neil Kortenaar remarks about the abuse of power by civilian government:

we had the misfortune of being led by people devoid of any sort of integrity, people without any sense of leadership, people whose only obligation, it seems has always been to line their pockets and that's the major problem with Nigeria.(95)

The military come to power citing civilian governments for corruption, abuse of power, exploitation of the masses and mismanagement of funds. However, when they seize power

they are guiltier of the very offences they criticized. They perpetrate the very offences they attacked with oppression and human rights abuse soaring high. This is so because as

Julius Ihonvbere observes:

Generally, the Nigerian military lives and operates above the law. One would be asking for trouble to challenge a military officer who is in or out of uniform on any issue. Many Nigerians have been flogged, slapped, harassed and jailed in the private or military detention camps of military officers. Untold pain and destruction have been caused by the military during the numerous clashes with the civilians. The story of the pain the military has caused the powerless and “unconnected” in Nigeria is endless. (511)

The military end up abusing power, being more corrupt, amassing wealth and mismanaging resources while the masses become increasingly impoverished and marginalized. It is in the light of these that Obeifuna in an article titled: “How the military wrecked Nigeria” reiterates that:

Our self-appointed messiahs end up as emergency millionaires and politicians. Nigerians should not be left in doubt that the worst civilian government is better than the best military regime.(7)

Henry Babalola re-echoes the fact that “the Nigerian army have succeeded in causing irreparable havoc to the corporate existence of the country. They have become an army of occupation with no patriotic fervor.” (13) The case of the masses being worse off under military rule is also true of other West African countries.

Apart from physical and political abuse of citizens by both civilian and military governments, abuse could also take the form of domestic violence. Domestic violence is not restricted to any race, tribe or any nation. It is an international phenomenon. Naa Lamiley Bentil, in an article titled “Abused Women May Suffer Fertility Problems” quotes Dr. Clayman as saying, “Domestic violence is a serious public health, social, development, human development, human rights, political and gender issue. I always look at domestic violence as an emergency public health issue, a silent pandemic. (11) Oftentimes women and children are the victims that bear the brunt of violence and abuse. The 2008 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey found that almost 35 per cent of women have experienced some form of physical, sexual or emotional violence in the year preceding the survey. The ‘Awake’ magazine also notes that “every year in Russia, fourteen thousand women die as a result of domestic violence.”(9) These abusive and oppressive acts against women according to the United Nation (2010) and “The World Women 2010: Trends and Statistics” stem from traditional institutions. It notes that:

Violence against women throughout their life-cycle is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between women and men. It is perpetuated by traditional and customary practices that accord women lower status in the family, workplace, community and society. (2)

It is, however, noteworthy that males also suffer abuse and oppression. All forms of abuse and oppression have one purpose which is often to gain and maintain control over victims. The media abounds with reports of instances of domestic abuse and oppression. Several of these abusive and oppressive acts occur in most African countries despite the fact that most

nations are signatories to the United Nations Convention on Human Rights Act which incriminates acts of violence and abuse against fellow humans. Some of these violent acts take the form of female genital mutilation, widowhood practices, child abuse, forced marriages, sexual abuse, wife battering and spousal abuse. For example, statistics by the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service, records that in 2012 there were 15,271 cases of various forms of violence against women nationwide, an increase from 12,906 cases in 2011. Furthermore, a report released by the Human Rights Advocacy Centre (HRAC) in November 2012, recorded 53 cases of spousal murders from January 2010 to July 2012. This consisted of 42 cases of wife-killings, five cases of husband-killings and six cases of rival murders. On the rise are reports in the media that carry equally distressing headlines: “Man sets lover ablaze, ends up burning to death”; “Man beheads girlfriend”, “Woman kills Husband”, “Uncle Rapes Niece” and many more. These reports are just a few of the instances of escalating domestic abuse.

Okey Ndibe and Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi are two contemporary writers who highlight the various forms of abuse and their effects in their works. Among other issues, their novels *Arrows of Rain* and *Purple Hibiscus* address the problem of abuse and oppression and throw more light on the terrible effects of this phenomenon. Unlike earlier writers who focused on specific forms of abuse like child abuse, abuse of power and spousal abuse, Ndibe and Adichie highlight abuse and oppression in their diverse forms. They further depict the effect of these forms of abuse on the individual and the society at large and how victims react to these forms of abuse.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The issues of abuse and oppression are challenges that confront the African continent. The focus of this research is to examine how Okey Ndibe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in their novels *Arrows of Rain* and *Purple Hibiscus* respectively, use various literary techniques to bring out abuse and oppression in the domestic and national scenes.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study seeks to establish, through a literary evaluation of *Arrows of Rain* and *Purple Hibiscus*, that there are various forms of abuse and oppression in the society and that these ills have devastating effects on victims.

The research also seeks to establish, through a literary examination of *Arrows of Rain* and *Purple Hibiscus*, that colonialism contributes to abuse and oppression and their devastating effect.

## **JUSTIFICATION**

The issues of abuse and oppression keep rising at an alarming rate. Various literary works have examined the issue of abuse from different perspectives. For Ndibe and Adichie the issues of abuse and oppression still prevail and there is therefore the need for a continuous discussion on the topic. A study of their two books, *Arrows of Rain* and *Purple Hibiscus* with regard to abuse and oppression is of importance because it would inform the society about the various forms of abuse and oppression and their effects on the individual and society at large. These novels offer the opportunity to look at the issue of abuse and oppression in Nigeria and for that matter the African society at large. This research will also add to the body of research on the important issues of abuse and oppression. The situation

of Nigeria with regard to abuse and oppression highlighted in the two novels has implications for Ghana because there have been several examples of abuse and oppression in the Ghanaian society and since they have devastating effects, there is the need for measures to be taken to curb them. A study of Ndibe and Adichie's novels would help create awareness for Ghanaians.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research is a library study using Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* and Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi's *Purple Hibiscus* as primary sources. The study will use secondary materials that focus on what literary critics have written about African disillusionment, abuse and oppression. Also, materials from both the print and electronic media and internet sources that relate to Africa's post-independence challenges will also be used when necessary. Postcolonial literary theory and feminism are the theories that will be used in examining the two texts.

## **STRUCTURE OF STUDY**

The work has been divided into five main chapters. Chapter One deals with the Introduction. This part looks at the background to the study, the statement of the problem, justification of the study, the methodology and the structure of the work.

Chapter Two deals with the theoretical framework and the review of pertinent literature.

Chapter Three is a discussion of abuse of power by both civilian and military governments, abuse and oppression under military rule and the impact of tyranny on the masses in *Arrows of Rain*.

Chapter Four highlights the presentation of the causes of abuse and oppression and their devastating effects in *Purple Hibiscus*

Chapter Five examines the similarities and differences in the writers' presentation of the reactions of the victims of abuse in the two novels. Recommendations would be given as to how to curb the occurrence of abuse and oppression in the society.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Abuse and oppression on all facets on the African landscape has gained a lot of attention in literary works. For instance, abuse and oppression in Nigeria has been tackled by various literary writers. They highlight these issues from diverse angles.

One aspect of abuse that has preoccupied the attention of writers is the abuse and oppression of the masses by the military when it seizes power from civilian governments. Chinua Achebe is a writer who highlights the physical abuse and oppression of the masses by the military in his works. Commenting on Achebe's works, Ojinmah asserts that "Achebe sees the soldiers as not being any better than the civilians they ousted...They have become worse, having perfected torture, intimidation and cold blood knives as weapons to cow the opponents of their policies.(86)

Like Achebe, Ngugi's novel *Wizard of the Crow* highlights leaders who abuse and oppress the masses. Ugwuanyi Maxwell, discussing *Wizard of the Crow* posits that the novel "... reflects deeply the intricacies of the governance of the people... the draconian rule of dictatorship and oppressive regime. The weaknesses and ineffectiveness of leadership in Africa is highly exposed with the dictatorial and oppressive tendency of most African leaders showcased." (41)

Asika Ikechuwkwu Emmauel, also comments on the book thus:

We see the soul of the African continent on the altar of sacrifice surrounded by dictators and evil set of leaders with their long knives, bow, guns and arrows waiting to mob the victim to death. (46) From what Ugwuanyi and Ikechuwkwu observe, the masses become victims in

the hands of leaders who are dictators. Kanaventi Dominic also emphasizes the same point when he comments on *Wizard of the Crow*:

...for daring to speak against them, autocratic African leaders are known to remove their critics through disappearances and traffic accidents. We see corruption through the pretence and irony of these leaders and in turn the corruption and brutality of the leadership (11)

In the same vein, Ugwanyi Maxwell posits that

the ruler in *Wizard of the Crow* is a representative of life presidents. To him the ruler is a combination of Idi Amin, Mobutu Sese Seko and Pee Ubu, a larger than life figure whose Machiavellian grip on power is so absolute that his ministers trip over each other offering slavish praises (30)

In addition to the writers above, Helon Habila makes his case against the military abusing and oppressing the masses in his novel *Waiting For An Angel*. Commenting on the novel, Akingbe brings to the fore the fact that the book

underscores the reign of terror orchestrated by successive military administrations in Nigeria, especially the military regimes of Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha. This novel is a documentation of the atrocities of the military in all facets of Nigeria life between 1990 and 1998. The narrative of torture, victimization and brutality in the novel is presented. ... Habila retrospectively presents indictment of the oppression and corruption of the Abacha regime...Terror and violence are inscribed in the narrative.(1)

Habila in his afterword to the novel describes the period of military dictatorship as

a terrible time to be alive. Most intellectuals had only three options: exile, complicity or dissent. Needless to say, there was more of the first two than the last. Nobody has a right to impose himself over others in this way. It is morally wrong. (28)

Sadly the military does not care about rights and wrongs. Human rights abuse meted out by the military in fictional works is similar to what happens in the non-fictional works.

Sarpong George in an article “The State Media: From Arbitrary Detention to Physical Attacks” narrates how soldiers of Cote d’Ivoire army toppled the government of Presidents Henri Konan Bedie on Christmas eve, 1999. These military men cited the government for intolerance and human rights abuse, including harassment of journalists. Yet, six years after Bedie’s overthrow and the installation of a transitional military regime headed by General Robert Guei, former army Chief of Staff under Bedie, Jean Claude Ragaza, Associate Editor of *La Reference* has this to say when workers of his paper were brutalised by soldiers loyal to the military head after the paper had published an article criticizing Guei. He says,

During Konan Bedie’s time journalists were arrested arbitrarily and subjected to excessive fines. Under Guei, the soldiers just descend on you and physically molest you anytime you express an opinion they consider critical. It is a paradox. (12)

Like the torture experienced by the pressmen in the above quotation, Niran Malaolu reports his real life experience as a victim of torture in Nigeria during Abacha’s administration. It is reported that:

Nigerian newspaper editor Niran Malaolu was arrested on the orders of Sani Abacha in 1997. This is what happens next. They were giving me what they called the

“Shock treatment.” After minutes of it, my eyes were bleeding and there were wounds all over my body. I had been beaten with whips, belts, boots, you name it. My head ached. I tasted the blood which dropped from my mouth. I felt the ultimate fear of death. The shock treatment started again. They hung me by my ankles from the ceiling. They poured iced- cold water on me and applied electrodes to my body. The cold cut through me like a knife. (8)

From the above fictional and non fictional instances it is clear the military oppress and abuse the masses.

Apart from the physical abuse of the masses by the military, some writers also highlight abuse of power and corruption by both civilian and military governments. P.O.C. Umeh’s poem “Ambassadors of Poverty” for instance depicts leaders who abuse power by pretending to have the welfare of the people at heart when in actual fact, it is their own interest they are seeking. Commenting on the poem, Taiwo Adebulu observes:

The poem looks at the Nigerian political leaders who have plagued the country into economic devastation by their act of corruption and maladministration.

Similarly, Henry Mawanga Barlow in his poem “Building the Nation” also presents leaders who place their personal interest above that of the state and the masses. Harry G. Chikasamba notes that the poem “Building the Nation”

principally explores the lifestyles of the African bourgeoisies who come into power after colonialism and, ideally, simply replace the coloniser. ... A deeper exploration of the whole poem bears the irony of state and political affairs where leaders have nothing for the people except to satisfy their own desires even at the expense of the poor.

Edward Tedson Sesay also observes:

The poem is a grim reminder for us of the stark realities in our motherland: the unfairness, injustice and corruption in the corridors of power. While the average citizen famishes and languishes in abject poverty, our top government officials bask in opulence.

These poems on the whole present the irony of state and political affairs where leaders are greedy and satisfy their selfish desires at the expense of the poor.

Another point of view some writers take in discussing abuse of power is depicting military leaders who come to power under the pretext to correct the wrongs of civilian governments with regard to corruption but end up abusing power as well. As Akin Odeunmi observes, these writers mostly

...present a military government that carries the guise to correct the anomalies committed by past civilian regime in Nigeria but this government only ends up surpassing the civilian government in corruption and abuse of power.(78)

From the above it can be seen that the reasons why the military get rid of the civilian governments is to correct errors like abuse of power, corruption and abuse of the masses. Yet these writers think the military era in politics only worsens the problems of the nation which it claims to solve. In effect the military ends up being the same or even worse than the civilian leaders. Commenting on *Anthills of the Savannah* for example, M.S.C. Okolo states “Achebe’s *Anthills* shows that the military is equally, if not more susceptible to the corrupt influence of politics and the intoxicating effects of power.’(42) Isaac Nuokyya-Ire Mwinlaaru also notes that “*In Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe attacks inter alia, the reckless display of

power, corruption and cynicism that characterized the military regimes in Nigeria after independence.”(14) Likewise, Kofi Owusu observes that “Achebe suggests that postcolonial dictatorship has the unenviable reputation of institutionalizing abuse of power.” (6) It is these cases of abuse and oppression meted out by this military that some writers discuss in their works. Chinua Achebe’s works, for instance, are pervaded by his concern about the way power is exercised. Kofi Owusu supports this fact by observing that “with varying degrees of emphasis all of Chinua Achebe’s novels to date explore the use and abuse of power by those who wield it.” (459)

Some writers also present abuse of power with regard to misrule, corruption and tyranny. Sowande Bode is one of such writers. In his *The Night Before Election*, the character Obioma Ebe, political correspondent for *The National Spectator*, asks Alhaji Bako Idowu a question about the vision of his leadership. His answer provides a historical overview of the corruption of the military after their intervention in Nigerian politics:

Six years after our independence, the military seized power from an inept civilian leadership and its irresponsible bureaucracy whose endemic corruption had destroyed our national economy and ruined the populace. The military came in to provide the much-needed antidote. But overtime, the military had reconciled itself to malignant corruption and added on lawlessness and corrosive abuse of influence and power (145-146).

Wole Soyinka is another writer who highlights abuse of power with regard to misrule, corruption and tyranny. Adekoya notes that Soyinka’s *A Play of Giants* is a caustic satire on the despotism and abuse of power and a lasting testament of the horror of the wound inflicted on Africa by foreign and local power psychopaths.”(29) Indeed, as these writers above have hinted on the whole, African military leaders go to every length to abuse power when they

seize it. They abuse their office and lord it over the masses. By sheer greed, the corrupt rulers abuse and mismanage power which inflicts untold pain on the citizenry.

Akingbe also comments on Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* by highlighting the mismanagement and low standard of living of the masses during military rule. He notes that:

The portraiture of the military in *Waiting for an Angel* is fore-grounded in a semiotic deprivation and destruction. This can be seen in the deprivation of the downtrodden masses on Poverty Street, the urban debris of Lagos with its squalid slums, its suppurating sewers, its huge craters on the road and the mountain of filth and dirt of Egunje Road. Rot and dilapidation demarcate the landscapes of Nigeria during Abacha's reign of terror. (28)

In effect military rulers abuse power just like civilian governments and in most cases they are worse offenders.

Another aspect of abuse and oppression that has gained the attention of writers in the literary circles is domestic abuse and oppression. Amma Darko, Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa among others are writers who believe that women are oppressed due to patriarchy. Mawuli Adjei observes that in Amma Darko's works for instance

women are victims of rape, battery, betrayal, abandonment... economic exploitation and obnoxious cultural practices. This perpetrator victim relationship leaves women consigned to fear, trauma, suffering and death. (4)

In other words, Darko brings to the fore situations in which the relationship between males and females is one in which females are victims of various types of physical and

psychological abuse and oppression. In *Faceless*, for instance, women and children are sexually and physically brutalized by male characters. Mawuli Adjei, commenting on the novel posits that “Male violence, monstrosity, and depravity are refracted through the conduct of these male characters.”(4)

Another novel that highlights domestic abuse is *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*. In a review of the novel, Ogbeide O. Victor notes that the novel:

is about the role of women in traditional Namibian society steeped in patriarchy. Through issues like marriage, divorce, widowhood, reproductive rights, religion, inheritance and economic status of women, the novel critiques the traditional system that seeks to silence women and close any pattern of empowerment. (54)

Lisa Coxson also notes that:

This novel seeks to expose the patriarchal violence and injustices of traditional Namibian beliefs and practices as well as counter the devastating effects of misogyny through critiques of the social institution of marriage.

Some writers also present females who are abused and oppressed most especially through many cultural practices that are oppressive and discriminatory. The oppression of the female is so deep-rooted that even after the death of their husbands for instance, they continue to be oppressed. In Emecheta’s *The Bride Price* for instance, the narrator highlights how widows are oppressed after the death of their husbands. She notes “so testing was this period (nine months) for a widow that before it was over she herself dies and this would be treated as a clear indicator she had been responsible for her husband’s death.” (72)

Similarly, Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* depicts an oppressive system of norms and practices that foster female subordination. In the Igbo society she presents, it was customary for girls to be forced into marriage and the bride price used in sending boys to school. Ireoluwa, a critic, notes that "female children traditionally are not recognized; they are seen as assets through which they can send the male children to school, while females are not always sent to school." (23) In addition, Ireoluwa says:

Women are also seen as what can be traded for money with the bride issue in Africa. The way many parents present bride price is like they are selling off the child. For instance many people are afraid of getting married from the eastern part of Nigeria, not because there are no good girls, but because of the huge amount of money demanded as bride price by parents. (24 )

In the same vein, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* highlights traditional systems and practices that tend to oppress and discriminate against females. The female therefore has to go through extreme struggle in order to free herself from restrictions placed on her by these traditional systems. This situation is exemplified in the novel through the character Tambudzai. Cloete, commenting on the novel, says that Tambudzai:

Struggles to shake off restrictions placed on her development by elements from both white and black cultures and must identify and evaluate elements characteristic of her life as a member of a largely patriarchal society... She thus has to find a middle-way between the kind of blind adherence to traditional and often insensitive - male authority, shown by her mother, and the blatantly rebellious rejection of patriarchy, shown by Nyasha. (41)

Okey Ndibe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's works have also received critical attention with regard to abuse and oppression. Joy M. Etiowo commenting on *Arrows of Rain* observes: "In *Arrows of Rain*, female subjugation is operated through the machinery of power and through the wielding of public positions." (3) David L. Ulin also notes that the novel is "a parable of power and the humanity it strips away"(2) Furthermore, Michael Lipkin on a review of *Arrows of Rain* remarks that the novel "is a political thriller, complete with a vicious dictator, a bloody coup, the ascendance of an even more murderous dictator, and resulting in grave danger"(5) On a review of Adichie's works Azuike notes that:

Adichie remarkably dramatized in her works women's determination to survive in the face of violence, sexual assault, extreme starvation, senseless brutality and ceaseless threats to their lives and property. Through her main characters, Adichie reveals how the physical, psychological and mental abuse of women can have negative effects on their well-being. (2)

Kwame Dawes also observes that "Adichie's works incorporate themes of political and domestic violence... and the effects on the collective and on the individuals." (3)

Commenting on *Purple Hibiscus*, Mckeever Christine observes:

*Purple Hibiscus* is a story of the corruption and religious fundamentalism that grips Adichie's native country... The wave of bloody coups and the corrupt military rule that comprises Nigerian politics are touched upon in the novel. (5)

It can be seen from these critics that Ndibe and Adichie in their *Arrows of Rain* and *Purple Hibiscus* respectively discuss very sensitive and touching tale of violence, terror, and abuse operating both at the interpersonal and social levels.

As has been observed from this review, abuse and oppression have been examined by a lot of literary writers. However, these writers in their works only look at specific forms of abuse. For instance, Buchi Emecheta and Neshani Andreas mainly highlight the abuse of females. Amma Darko and Tsitsi Dangarembga also focus on domestic abuse involving females and children. Achebe and Habila also focus on various forms of political abuse. However, a critique of the two texts is necessary because Ndibe and Adichie highlight the various forms of abuse both in the domestic and political domains. They discuss the subject because it is still pertinent to Nigeria and the continent at large. In addition, their narrative styles bring another perspective to the discussion of these subjects.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This research is within the framework of postcolonial literary theory and feminism. Many astute writers have theorized about post colonial theory and postcolonial disillusionment.

Ann Dobie observes that postcolonial theory

...is concerned with what exists and happens after the end of colonial rule. The formal termination of colonial rule does not wipe out its legacy, and the culture that is left is the mixture of the colonised one and that of the colonizer, often marked by contrasts and antagonisms, resentment and blended practice. (186)

During colonialism, the colonised suffer untold hardships at the hands of the coloniser. By the end of colonial rule, the colonised are faced with an identity crisis due to the mixture of their indigenous culture with that of the colonizer. Apart from these, the colonized sometimes assumes the posture of the coloniser. Postcolonial texts also highlight the effects

of the colonial experience on colonized people. The colonial experience leaves behind serious contrasts and antagonisms in the colonized people.

Homi Bhabha, a major contributor to the postcolonial theory, propounds the theory of mimicry and hybridity. To him “mimicry is the means by which the colonized adapts to the culture and behavior of the colonizer but always in the process changing it ...Such a process always contains in it the ambivalence of hybridity” (26) Hybridity according to Dobie is “the quality of cultures that have characteristics of both the colonisers and the colonised. Marked by conflicts and tensions, they are continually changing and evolving” (195) Like Bhabha observes, critics like Frantz Fanon and Rene Dumont foretold that “the anti-colonialist revolution would be undermined by a national bourgeoisie which would assume the mantle of the colonizers.” (289) True to their words, The Washington Post confirms the fact that African leaders have assumed the posture of their oppressors after independence.

It observes:

Once they replaced the colonial rulers, they wanted to be just like them. They wanted to be all-powerful and omnipresent. We just replaced white faces with black faces (20).

Frantz Fanon refers to this phenomenon as “black skin/white masks” and V.S Naipaul calls it the “mimic men”. Koigi wa Wamwere agrees with the fact that African leaders tend to imitate the very atrocities the colonizers meted out to African people. He says:

African dictators are some of the most hypocritical leaders anywhere. They condemn oppression of black people... yet they organize widespread massacres of their own black people. (22)

In effect, these critics believe that African leaders become as abusive and oppressive as the colonizer and in most cases, they become worse offenders. As observed by Kehinde : “The indigenous ruling class simply replaced the colonizer and began to rule with scorpion where the colonizer had ruled with the whip” (91). Ayitey George observes in *Africa Betrayed* that as a result,

Freedom from colonial rule has evolved into ghastly tyranny, arbitrary rule, denial of civil liberties, brutal suppression of dissent and the wanton slaughter of peasants. This malicious betrayal drives the deep sense of disillusionment, despair, and anger pervasive among Africans. (10)

Lorraine Hansberry, in her *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) also reiterates this fact when he questions:

Independence and then what?  
What about all the crooks and  
thieves and just plain idiots who  
will come into power and steal and  
plunder the same as before only  
now they will be black? (10)

In other words, Hansberry foresees leaders who, after independence, will still behave like the colonizers. African leaders still use the various institutional structures to abuse and oppress their subjects rather than use them in the interest of the African societies. For these critics, most African leaders do what they saw their colonizers do. The anticipated good leadership that Africans hoped for from their leaders was never to be realized. Instead many leaders turned out to abuse power, engage in corrupt practices, and oppress citizens. As a result of this, the hopes of the people that their conditions would be better when their own led them were dashed. Africans thus became disillusioned. Some writers believe that one of the reasons for the disillusionment of Africans on the socio-political landscape is the abuse

and oppression of the masses by African leaders. To these writers, the hopes and aspirations of African people have been dashed because African leaders have shattered the dreams of the struggle against colonialism after independence. Instead of helping the society, the leaders tend to oppress, abuse and exploit them just like the colonizers did. Colonial legacies such as the church and the army are also sometimes used as tools for the abuse of the masses. In addition to postcolonial literary theory and postcolonial disillusionment, this research is also within the framework of feminism. To many critics, women and children mostly fall victim to domestic abuse and oppression. Some are of the view that abuse and oppression stems from both colonialism and patriarchy. Amina Mama believes that “the inheritance of patriarchy from the colonial to the postcolonial state in many African countries perpetuates the colonization of African women”(7). Apparadurai also suggests that:

women bear the brunt of this sort of friction for they are often subjected to the abuse of men who are themselves torn between the relation between heritage and opportunity in shifting spatial and political formulations.(2)

Virginia Woolf in her *A Room of One's Own* also highlights feminist tenets. In her work, she highlights the need for women to reject the social construct that sees women as inferior to men. According to her, “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (2) ) Fiction as used here applies to excelling in all kinds of endeavours. She uses room as a symbol to signify financial and economic independence and freedom. To her, the female given financial independence and her privacy could be as productive and imaginative as men. She can thus find her own identity through this financial and economic

independence and freedom. This independence will eventually help her free herself from society's limitations and restrictions that oppress and suppress

her.

Mary Wollstonecraft is another proponent of feminist tenets. In her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she depicts women as an oppressed class regardless of social hierarchy.

She calls for women to be "duly prepared by education to be the companions of men." She

notes:

I wish to persuade women to endeavour to acquire strength both in mind and body and to convince them that the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment and refinement of taste are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness.(79)

In other words, Wollstonecraft argues for the females to take charge of their lives by recognizing that their abilities were equal to those of men and to define identities for themselves so as to be free from limitations that oppress her.

The research will reveal how the postcolonial literary theory of mimicry and hybridity and feminism are depicted in Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* and Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi's *Purple Hibiscus*. Specifically, this research will reveal how the two writers in their novels demonstrate how colonial legacies are responsible for abuse and oppression in the sociopolitical domains. The study will also show how the writers highlight feminist tenets of the need for the female to be economically empowered in order to free herself from abuse and oppression.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### OKEY NDIBE'S DEPICTION OF ABUSE AND OPPRESSION AND THE IMPACT OF TYRANNY ON THE MASSES IN *ARROWS OF RAIN*.

Many African writers incorporate socially relevant issues in their works. F.B.O Akporabaro explains that “the fictional situations explored in them are often the writers’ response to the often harsh socio-political realities of contemporary society” (38). In other words, there is a link between literature and reality and writers thus use their art to depict truth in their society. They therefore use their works to give expression to the sociopolitical issues. Achebe emphasises this observation when he notes that:

Literature whether handed down by word of mouth or in print, gives us a second handle on reality, enabling us to encounter in the safe manageable dimensions of make believe the very same threats to integrity that may assail the psyche in real life; and at the same time providing through the selfdiscovery which it imparts a veritable weapon for coping with the threats whether they are found within problematic and incoherent selves, or in the world around us. (170)

In view of this, several African writers have depicted the postcolonial situation in their works. Through their works, they give voice to those issues that directly affect the continent after colonialism. Commenting on the state of Africa after colonialism, Uzeochi observes that:

The postcolonial situation in Africa is characterised by fragmented nationstates whose rulers are dictatorial, corrupt and oppressive and who leave little room for opposition from citizens. Citizens mostly live in cycles of violence and poverty as a result.(17)

Okey Ndibe is one postcolonial writer who incorporates socially relevant issues in his works. In *Arrows of Rain*, he focuses on the ills and challenges of a fictional state called Madia. Primarily, his novel examines the brutality, abuse and oppression that some people, especially those who wield power of any sort, unleash on innocent and powerless people.

The novel *Arrows of Rain* is like other novels on military experience:

They all echo theatre of horror and failure of men in uniform to drive positive change after they had preached messianic, redemptive mission for entering into politics. ...they all point a flambeau towards command-and obey system, violence, power drunkenness, bestiality, brutality and above all militarism. (Uzuochi, 22)

*Arrows of Rain* presents characters that face diverse forms of inhumanity ranging from violence, political assassination, threats, repression and intimidations.

The plot of *Arrows of Rain* revolves around two characters Bukuru and Adero, caught between the choice of telling the truth and facing dire consequences or keeping silent while people suffer untold abuse and oppression at the hands of a powerful leader Issa Pallat Bello in the state of Madia. Bukuru is a journalist. He has been trained by his father and grandmother to tell the truth all the time. But Bukuru soon grows to realise that telling the truth does not come easy, and that when that truth is about a powerful person, its consequence could be very unpleasant. Fear forces Bukuru to withhold the truth from the public, the result of which is the brutal murder of a young innocent girl called Iyese.

Unable to live with the guilt of his silence and the possibility of being hunted down by the powers that be, Bukuru feigns madness and secludes himself from human habitation. He witnesses even more heinous crimes of abuse and oppression by the military in his seclusion. Even though Bukuru is innocent, the oppressor gets him arrested for a crime of rape and

murder and he faces death in jail. This situation forces him to open up and reveal all the secrets that he has kept for so long; secrets about the military head of state. Unable to come out of jail to tell his story, he trusts a young journalist, Adero, to do that for him while he decides to end his life because he could not face the consequences of his silence. The focus of this chapter is to examine how the novelist uses characterisation, language, the saturation technique, the story as a metaphor, symbolism, myth, and other relevant devices to present the issue of abuse and oppression in *Arrows of Rain*. He uses these techniques to present abuse of power by both civilian and military government, the causes, and the acts of abuse and oppressions under both military rule and domestic settings and the impact of tyranny on the masses. The issues of abuse and oppression in the novel are both overt and covert. The author presents abuse and oppression both on the political scene and in the domestic domain. One angle from which Ndibe highlights the issue of abuse is by depicting the factors that account for the abusive nature of the perpetrators. One literary technique that he uses to depict the cause of abuse and oppression in the domestic domain is characterization. He highlights the issues through the relationship between the characters Issa Pallat Bello and Iyesse. Bello's relationship with Iyesse is characterised by several abusive tendencies that is birthed from his perception of women as objects to be toyed with and his crave for a male son. The writer describes Issa Pallat Bello as a man who does not regard females and has an extreme desire to have a male son. In a dialogue with Ogugua, Iyese reveals the underlying cause of Bello's abusive tendencies. She observes: "he once told me he likes it when a woman cries" (p.160) It is this perception of women and his quest for a male son that leads to a relationship with Iyese, a young teacher who later turns into a prostitute as a result of her bitter experience with her husband because of childlessness. This revelation of the cause of his abuse explains Bello's sadistic nature and his abusive inclinations. The narrator

further gives reason for his predisposition towards abuse: "... he had also begun to exploit his mood swings to display his power to others. He had fallen in love with the idea of himself as a man from whom people skulked away in dread." (p.162) These observations reveal the appalling perception Bello has of women as objects that one can vent their anger on and abuse for pleasure.

Ndibe uses the saturation technique to depict Bello's abusive acts towards Iyese. The narrator saturates us with many instances of abuse that emphasise the fact that Bello is abusive. He observes that Bello and Iyese's relationship is repeatedly marked by beatings and rapes. For example, in one instance when Iyese tries to break off the relationship when she learns he is a married man, she reveals to Bukuru that: "he slapped me until my eyes saw lightening. Then he raped me laughing." (p.160) Their dialogue reveals a vivid picture of the animalistic treatment Bello metes out to his concubine and demonstrates his callous nature.

The narrator presents another graphic scene of abuse where Bello abuses Iyese when he comes to meet her with her lover Ogugua. In his anger over the issue of Iyese seeing another man he vows to punish her. Consequently, he goes to her house with three men and a dagger to abuse her. In a dialogue with Bukuru, Iyese graphically narrates her ordeal to Bukuru thus:

... As soon as I opened the door, one of them grabbed me and covered my mouth. They pushed me down on the bed and forced apart my legs. Issa brought out his dagger and said he wanted to teach my vagina a lesson.... The men pinned me to the bed. Then Issa stabbed my vagina with a dagger. I started bleeding. That's when he entered me with his penis. (pgs. 166- 167)

The language of the above account is simple and highly descriptive. The account creates a horrid image. The writer's choice of words, 'grabbed', 'covered', pushed, 'forced', 'dagger', 'stabbed' and 'pinned' enforce the image of violence. There is an appeal to the reader's sense of sight and that reinforces Bello's cruel nature especially towards women and further gives a clear picture of the barbaric maltreatment Iyese goes through in the hands of her sadistic partner. For a partner to stab his lover in the vagina with his dagger and then follow it up to have sex with her through that same dagger-stabbed, blood-oozing vagina is cruel and depicts Issa's brutality.

Ndibe uses characterisation and imagery to depict the effects of this abuse and oppression on the victims. The author presents the effects of abuse through the main characters who are victims of the various violations. This violation has gruesome impact on Iyese. Writing in the "Criminal Law Report", Dr. Chesler Phyllis describes the effect of violence on prostitutes:

For women who are prostitutes, rape is every bit as traumatic as it is for women who are not sex workers. It may even be more painful, as the act re-opens old wounds and buried memories of unbearable abuse (8)

Such is the case of the effect of the rape and the abuse on Iyese. This violence leaves a devastating effect on her. Apart from the pain, she bleeds profusely and is finally hospitalized. In a dialogue with Bukuru, she reveals the effect Bellos's atrocious act has brought her: "I have been bleeding since they left. This is the second pillow. She pointed to the floor beside her bed where a pillow lay, dark-red with blood" (p.167) The detailed description of the pillows creates a horrific picture of the extent of the abuse she suffered. The description of the pillow as 'dark red' emphasises the extent of the abuse she suffers and the duration of the bleeding.

It is not only Iyese who is affected by this violation. Through the first person narrative and simile used, the writer reveals the effect of the abuse on Bukuru. Bukuru reveals his unpleasant experience upon witnessing the horrific sight: “A sensation of horror swelled inside my head. “Oh!” I cried.” It was like the stab of the knife, but more painful. ‘Despicable cretins!’ ”. (p.170) The effect is so severe on him that he is affected psychologically and the abuse becomes an unforgettable experience for him. As a result, the psychological torture continues. He recounts that: “The sight and smell of Iyese’s blood stayed with me as I rode to work. I felt as if I were choking. Gore infected every picture I saw in my mind’s eye.(p.169) The use of the first person narrative unveils the personal impact of the abuse on Bukuru.

Another instance Ndibe demonstrates Issa’s abusive nature is when he afflicts and eventually murders Iyese and harms her baby. Issa tortures and kills Iyese for refusing to allow him to claim legitimacy over her new-born son. For her punishment, he brutally murders her and wounds the baby. The novelist employs the symbol of clouds, lightning and thunder to foreshadow the impending danger and death that Bukuru is going to witness. He recounts that on that fateful day Iyese was abused and killed,

... a brisk breeze brought clouds which thickened until the sun was blotted out.... Lightning loomed the sky with silvery streaks and thunder grumbled overhead. Then the sky’s broken water came down in monstrous sheets (p.179)

The image created here foretells the looming doom that is in sight. Bukuru further recounts that it was during this storm that he witnessed that

Iyese was sprawled on the floor, naked, her baby clutched to her chest. Her eyes were wide open, her mouth agape, a trail of blood ran out across the floor. ...

Stepping closer, I saw a gash on the baby's right leg, an ugly knife from which blood still flowed.(p.179)

This scene that Bukuru witnesses shortly after seeing his freshly killed lover and wounded son presents a traumatic, unforgettable experience for him. The author depicts the horror and pitiful end of Iyese as a result of an abusive relationship. The result of this abuse is clear. Iyese loses her life and her son is hurt badly. It is ironical that Bello who has been ruled by a desire for a male son his entire life is bent on hurting a male child just because he is denied responsibility knowing the value of a male son.

Ndibe depicts another typical example of domestic abuse through Ashiki's sister and her daughter. The perpetrator of this abuse is a husband who butchers his wife and daughter just to assuage his anger. Ashiki explains the cause of this man's abusive tendencies. According to Ashiki, the man, living in England with his wife and children, objected to his wife and children travelling to Madia, their hometown because of his fear of facing his failures. Ashiki recounts that "The man had not visited home since he left for England; he did not want to feel like a dullard in the eyes of his relatives, who would be apt to ask questions about his career."(p.102) The woman decides to go with her children despite her husband's opposition. As a result "the relationship between the man and his wife went from testy to turbulent- then all the way to tragic one short-tempered night."(p.102) The punishment from her husband is gruesome and cruel and this results in the cold-blooded murder of his wife and daughter. The narrator recounts that "The man had hacked his wife to death. Their older daughter had tried to come to her mother's aid and he had turned on her, leaving her too, a heap of flesh and blood. (p. 101) The image this accounts creates is grueling. The effect of this abuse is telling on Ashiki. It is reported that "a scowl came over Ashiki's face. "My

own sister, he cried, killed like a fowl.”(p.102) The use of the simile is effective in the sense that it is able to capture the cruelty and heartlessness of the perpetrator.

Apart from abuse and oppression of people in the domestic scene, Ndibe highlights various kinds of abuse in the political domains. On the political scene, he depicts the abuse of power of civilian governments and the untold violence and intimidation the military unleash on the masses.

Through the novelist’s choice of words, he presents a civilian government which abuses power. In *Arrows of Rain* the narrator presents politicians who are guilty of abusing power.

This is the picture Bukuru paints of the politicians who took power after independence:

The nation we inherited from the English was placed in the hands of politicians who sucked its blood until it became dry and anaemic. Overnight cabinet ministers puffed out protruding bellies they themselves called PP, for Power Paunch. What was left of Madia’s swagger was a mere impotence. (p.81)

The words ‘sucked’, ‘blood’, ‘anaemic’ and ‘protruding bellies’ paint a picture of how the politicians abuse power by squandering the wealth of Madia and living a reckless life. The Head of State, Askia Amin, together with his ministers, indulges in corruption, illicit affairs with women and consumption of alcohol. This vice results in Madia being ranked as sixth on the list of countries ranked as “disasters in waiting” by a world organisation. This ranking acts as a pointer to a later disaster that befalls the land. Following this ranking, Dr Bato, Madia’s Economic and Planning Minister blatantly dismisses the report. He further validates the needless death of Madian masses, arguing that people need to die for new ones to replace them. This insolence spurs riots from the masses and occasions the military to stage a coup and offer promises that give the masses hope. The character, Major James Rada

who announces the coup on radio, justifies the coup because the military see Madia engulfed in abuse of power and corruption. The address given by the major reveals their reason:

Fellow citizens, we have all been witnesses to the escalating acts of irresponsibility and corruption exhibited by the political classes. ...The state and national treasury have been bankrupted by politicians for their own profit; and the moral fabric of this nation has been torn apart. The Armed Forces of Madia have watched with increasing sadness and anxiety as the situation developed to crisis point. It was with the greatest reluctance but out of a sense of patriotic duty that we decided to seize the reins of power in order to avert any further deterioration.(p.193)

The reasons of abuse of power the Major gives for ousting the civilian government is rightly so. For Bukuru tells the reader that: “Madia was in the stranglehold of the most vicious kleptocracy anywhere on our continent- a regime in which ministers and other public officials looted whatever was within their reach and much that wasn’t.” (p.86) This view depicted by Ndibe in *Arrows of Rain* is similarly expressed by Chinua Achebe. He comments on the state of the nation in the hands of politicians and this is what he puts across:

Within six years of independence Nigeria was a cesspool of corruption and misrule. Public servants helped themselves freely to the nation’s wealth. A certain professor has recently described the government of many African countries as kleptocracy. Nigeria could certainly be called that. (82)

The coup is welcomed by the applause and jubilation of most of the citizens. This is because of their disappointment in the civilian governments. In the novel, the narrator observes that:

The streets were jammed. Cars blasted their horns. People embraced one another and pumped hands. Jubilant crowds chanted, 'Hang Amin!', 'Askia is axed!', 'Down with Amin's corruption. 'Welcome AFRRC! (p.193)

However, Bukuru does not receive the military with joy as the masses do. He observes that fear engulfs him right after the Major's announcement. "At the end of the broadcast, I found that my palms were sweaty, a formless fear awhile in my head. I took a long cold bath. Then I put on a black T-shirt over a pair of jeans and set out to my office."(p.193)

Bukuru deciding to wear a black T-shirt is symbolic. To him, the military take-over is a cause for mourning and that is why he decides to wear black. The symbol of the black Tshirt signifies the impending doom that awaits the people of Madia in the hands of the military.

Further, he observes:

I loathed the people's uncomplicated reaction, the crowd's certitude that the current development portended good. Was I alone in detecting a presentiment of terror in the officer's tone? Was I the only one who foresaw that the coup would entail much spilling of Madian blood?(p.194)

Bukuru's observation, coupled with the extensive use of the rhetorical questions, foreshadows that the military will also be guilty of abuse of power and oppression.

The author also uses symbolism and myth to highlight the fact that the military that comes in the guise of a saviour also ends up as a terror. The title of the book, '*Arrows of Rain*' is symbolic. The following remark by Bukuru captures the double-edged nature of rain:

I thought again about the people celebrating out in the streets, like children welcoming a first rainfall after a long, hard dry season. It all reminded me of a story my grandmother once told me, about the ambivalent character of rain,

sustainer of the earth's plenitude but also  
the harbinger of malaise. (p.195)

In Bukuru's grandmother's story, she tells of a village that is struck by severe famine because of several years of drought. This famine kills a lot of people. As a result, their diviner advises they make a sacrifice to pacify the sky god. They send the dog that carries out the sacrifice insolently. Subsequently, dog returns to the village to meet it flooded and "the villagers were all dead, their corpses afloat in pools of water" (p.196) His grandmother's conclusion is noteworthy: "Rain has two faces... It can give life, but its arrows can also cause death' " (p. 196)

The story is used as a metaphor to illustrate the condition of the masses under both civilian and military government. The years of drought and severe famine represent the untold hardships the masses suffer as a result of misrule and corruption of civilian government. The military is also represented by the dog. The choice of the dog to bring relief is striking. The dog is an animal that hunts and this connotes violence. It is ironical that it is this animal that is sent to bring relief. In the same vein, like the dog, the military by the nature of their training are not cut out for politics. Their duty is to defend and secure their nation. Just as in the myth the dog is unable to bring relief but rather brings untold hardship, the military also brings extreme hardship on the populace after promising to bring relief. The writer also uses the myth of the rain to reinforce the symbolism in the title "*Arrows of Rain*". By employing the blend of the myth and symbol of the rain in the novel, the writer creates the dual image of the military. As illustrated in the myth, rain paradoxically performs the role of a "sustainer of the earth's plenitude, but also the harbinger of malaise" (p.195) In other words, rain brings life, and it refreshes the earth. At the same time, its arrows can cause destruction and harm. In the same vein, the military steps in to relieve the masses but end up causing them pain.

The image of rain and dog thus become the central reflection of life under military rule. The writer therefore uses the motifs of rain and dog to foreshadow the tendency of the military to torture and abuse. The name the author gives the military also adds to the irony. They are called 'Armed Forces

Revolutionary and Redemptive Council'. True to their name they redeem the masses but they only aggravate the problems of the nation. It is this view of the fact that the military worsen the plights of the masses that Ake Claud observes:

The ascendancy of the military is one of the greatest tragedies of Africa, for the military is nothing other than a highly specialized apparatus of violence whose 'salience begins when sociability has become impossible and when civilized values no longer apply when we must take to the battlefields. That is why military rule is inherently and inevitably de-civilizing.(4)

Even though the leader of the Armed Forces Revolutionary and Redemptive Council professes that the purpose of their action is to redeem the state from politicians who abuse power, underneath the address of Major James Rada lies the tone of threat, intimidation and force. Right in his redemptive speech, he observes: "Anybody, or group of people, who in any way challenges the authority of the Armed Forces Revolutionary and Redemptive Council will be summarily dealt with" (193) The tone that pervades the above speech, which is interwoven with language of intimidation and naked force, suggests that the fate of Madia is doomed in the hands of the military. The above speech also reinforces

Ake's view that:

the military and democracy are in dialectical opposition. ... the military demands submission, democracy enjoins participation; one is a tool of violence, the

other a means of consensus building for peaceful coexistence.(18)

Right after the military's assumption of power, the military begins its acts of abuse and oppression. Ndibe piles on many examples to indicate the level of military's abusive and oppressive nature. One group of people that suffers the military's acts of oppression, intimidation and abuse is the press. Citing one key incident, the author captures how Isa Pallat Bello, the military Head of State, and his government oppress the press. The president makes a decree that criminalises any publication that seems to overshadow the president's own statement or deed. The penalty for breaking such a whimsical law is a heavy minimum of five year jail term. Madia press abides by this decree until one of them actually gets severely punished for publishing a tragic story and giving it bolder headlines than those of the president's speech somewhere. For his punishment,

the reckless editor was duly arraigned before the News Miscellaneous Tribunal. The tribunal's military chairman, a small headed giant named Brigadier Tipa Panazi, spent an hour shouting imprecations at the hapless editor before imposing a sentence of six year's hard labour. (18)

This forces all press men to cower and trivialise all other issues and make them less important than anything concerning the president. Similarly, in *Waiting for an Angel*, the narrator recounts "when the Dial prints a front page with the headlines screaming" Abacha: the stolen Bilions", the publications office is destroyed by arson and an arrest warrant put out for the editor James (p.201) These despotic acts is what Julius O.

Ihonvbere means when he says:

...Repression, human rights abuse, the abuse of power, privatization of the

public purse, attacks on academic and press freedom, the desecration of the judiciary and the general devaluation of life increased under military rule more than any other time.(51)

The writer uses vivid description to depict another instance where the military suppresses the press and abuses them. A photo journalist is abused and killed because he takes a photograph of military men. Bukuru recounts the experience of the photographer. He notes:

At one point in the morning one of our photographers staggered in, dripping blood, the right side of his head swollen. Shakily he told us how a group of soldiers had beaten him at a checkpoint, upset that he had taken their picture.(194)

The choice of words is simple and detailed. The words ‘beaten’, ‘staggered in’, ‘dripping blood’, ‘head swollen’ and ‘shakily’ give vivid detail of the effect of this torture on the photo journalist. The photo journalist suffers multiple punches from angry soldiers who did not understand why he was taking pictures of them. The pressmen enquired if he had not disclosed his identity as a pressman to the soldiers. In the following dialogue, this wounded photographer relived his disappointment and ordeal in the hands of the soldiers:

‘I did show my I.D.’

‘One of them snatched it from me. Then he took out a jackknife and cut my card to pieces. He said I was a spy. They started punching and kicking me and beating me with the butts of their guns’

They threatened to take me to their barracks and shoot me right away.(p.194)

For a pressman bearing an identity card to go through such abuse and torture is a clear depiction of the violation the press put up with under military rule. The author’s extensive use of words such as ‘snatched’, ‘jackknife’, ‘punching’, kicking, ‘threatened’, ‘butts’ and ‘gun’ among others enforces the image of violence. As an eye witness to the maltreatment,

the editor of the firm is thrown into a state of shock. The dialogue that ensues between him and Bukuru reveals his disillusionment: “These people are not allowed to bully innocent citizens”. ‘Yes they are’ Bukuru observes bitterly, “They have guns. And they now run this country.”(p.195) The tone revealed in the above dialogue is one of gloom that depicts the theme of disillusionment that postcolonial texts highlight. Unfortunately, the photographer is seriously affected by the abuse to the extent that he dies in his sleep. Such suppression of the press is undoubtedly a suppression of the vulnerable masses, who depend on the press for information and education on national issues and concerns. The writer further depicts the military’s acts of oppression on the press. During the court proceedings involving Bukuru, the judge gives a ruling that prevents the press from giving an objective and fair reportage.

He gives the ruling:

The members of the press are barred from reporting any part of today’s proceedings where the good name of His Excellency was maliciously smeared. Any reporter who flouts this order will be summarily dealt with (p.40)

The tone of this ruling evokes intimidation and suppression on the journalists. It reinforces the oppressive nature of the military.

The abuse and repression also extends to voices of dissent. In order to deal with opposition and dissenting views, the military uses violence and intimidation to sustain itself in power.

In the novel, Ndibe presents a military government that uses terror, intimidation and violence to cow voices of dissent. This is depicted both at the individual level and the general level.

For instance, the headlines after six months of Bello’s ascension to power are ghastly:

MADIAN WRITER HANGED- He was a critic of the dictatorship.

MADIAN MINISTER'S DEATH  
SUSPICIOUS- Dictator said to be  
having affair with deceased' wife.

120 STUDENT PROTESTORS  
REPORTED KILLED

DESPOT CANES VICE-CHANCELOR  
IN PUBLIC

DIPLOMATS SAY AFRICAN  
DICTATOR BEHIND  
DISAPPEARANCE OF OPPONENTS  
Victims  
may have been fed on  
lions.(p.213)

These glaring headlines reveal the diverse kinds of atrocious acts the military mete out to those who oppose them in any way.

In addition to the above, the opposition press that works under cover because of fear of intimidation paints grim images that further heighten the military's acts of abuse towards opposing voices: "Countless men picked up and tortured for saying a bad word about Bello in an unguarded moment in some bar; women, too, detained and tortured; children orphaned by assassins."(p.21) Like the oppression that voices of dissent suffer in *Arrows of Rain*, in *Waiting for an Angel*, when the university students demonstrate, soldiers come to the campus to rape the female students and ransack rooms, in the process destroying Lomba's works. Ndibe further depicts the military's acts of abuse and oppression towards prostitutes in the novel. According to Dina A Ligaga, Ndibe in *Arrows of Rain*

writes about prostitution in a context of military violence. It is ironic narration of the African state where prostitutes are innocent victims whose sexuality is misread as degeneration which dictators, the corrupt perpetrators of violence leave citizens no choice but to worship them.(11)

Ndibe paints a grim picture of what prostitutes in the state of Madia suffer in the hands of soldiers. It is not uncommon for countries, especially in Africa, to make attempts to rid their city streets of prostitutes and beggars sometimes. However, the unfortunate reality is that many of the people entrusted with this duty end up seriously abusing those women and taking undue advantage of them. According to Melissa Farley: “for the vast majority of the world’s women, prostitution is the experience of being hunted, being dominated, being sexually assaulted and being physically and verbally battered.” (17) This observation is aptly depicted in the novel. Lanky, the supposed lifeguard, tells of how many prostitutes have died in recent times at beaches. “A few months ago, corpses of prostitutes began to appear on beaches like poisoned fish.” (p.5) The use of the simile reveals the frequency with which prostitutes are abused and killed. The fact that only prostitutes were dying in this way means somebody must have made a deliberate effort to annihilate them in a most savage manner. In the press release issued by the police themselves, they describe it as a “recent spate of rapes and murders at several city beaches. All the victims are believed to be prostitutes.”(P.7) To be able to massacre such huge numbers of human beings and go uncaught only suggests that the perpetrator(s) must wield some economic or political power.

The opening chapter also paints a gruesome image of a young woman, brutally raped which leads to her death. As we learn later in the narration, her rape is the handiwork of a group of soldiers working directly for the head of state. Bukuru reveals “the vivid details of the two-hour assault, the woman’s screams... the male voices that tried to hush her up, the kicking and slapping that, finally silenced her”(P.55). The painful manner in which she died is evident in the narration of Lanky, the lifeguard. According to him, as he pressed her belly to get rid of the water she had drunk, “horrible sounds came from her mouth and nose” as though she were complaining and moaning. These sounds Bukuru later describes as “her low disgusted

moans, her deathly panting.”(p.55) The author implies that in the face of such brutality and abuse, even severe physical discomfort is much more preferable. He shows this by equating the unpleasant “dry, cold wind of harmattan” to the soft and soothing “*lover’s breath*.” This shows the level of disgust, pain and anguish associated with such incidents. Such brutal invasion of youth and innocence is an act condemned by the author.

The writer further gives another instance of the military’s abusive acts towards prostitutes. Tay Tay suffers telling abuse in the hands of the soldiers. In a dialogue between her and Bukuru, she recounts the ordeal she and other prostitutes went through in the hands of the army:

‘By the time we saw the army people, it was too late to run. At least ten of them surrounded us. One of them pointed his gun at us and shouted, “Freeze or you’re dead! They slapped us, *twap! Twap!* Stars flew from my eyes. Blood filled my mouth. I was so afraid of losing it I swallowed it. The soldiers made us jump like frogs to where their trucks were parked. ... One of the girls kept shouting that she was not a prostitute. The commander of the troops slapped her until she collapsed. Then he stood over her. Smiling, he said, “If you are not a prostitute, that means you are fresh meat. That is the kind I like.... They called us bush meat and boasted how they would show us “army fire”.”(pp.216-217)

The vivid description above paints a horrific image of the anguish the prostitutes endure in the hands of the soldiers. The heartlessness with which the soldiers mete out these abuses is striking. The continuous use of the onomatopoeic *twap! Twap!* demonstrates the severity of

the abuse. The impact of the abuse on Tay Tay and the other prostitutes is telling. Fear grips them to the extent that they run away from people who even want to come to their rescue.

Under the rule of General Isa Palat Bello, almost everybody in Madia seems to be under one form of oppression or another. The writer uses dialogue and characterization to highlight this oppression. Dr. Mandi observes: “He has run our lives....” (p.73) Even people who are supposed to be free, independent and assertive cower at the mention of Bello’s name or the army. Dr. Mandi’s reaction during his interactions with Bukuru shows he is a victim of the military just like everyone else. A clear example of this is seen when Dr. Mandi comes to see Bukuru in prison. The discussion between them shows clearly that the doctor is being manipulated against his will to pronounce Bukuru mad. Two views of the circumstance show oppression here. The first is that, as a psychologist, Dr. Mandi is expected to have a clear mind and conscience. Only then can he judge the mental wellbeing or imbalance of another person. Ironically, the psychologist himself has been made mentally unbalanced by pressure from the president’s office. He states,

I have received clear orders from His Excellency’s office to report that you’re a madman. I was compelled to sign a paper to that effect...I was told what to do, at gunpoint (p. 74)

This psychological oppression of a psychologist shows the extent to which ordinary citizens are mentally tortured, just because soldiers have taken over power and wish to hold on to it forever.

Furthermore, abuse of power is clearly displayed in the court, presided over by Justice Kayode. In a true court of justice, fairness and objectivity are supposed to be upheld. In this

court, however, the powers that be have manipulated the system in such a way that justice delivery has become just a piece of drama to be staged, always suiting the whims and caprices of the tyrannical ruling class. From the encounter between Bukuru and Dr. Mandi, we see that there really is no neutral party in the court room: the police have been ordered on how to prosecute Bukuru, without giving any recognition to the facts of the case; the judge and the jury have been instructed on how to feign objectivity and emotion while knowing that the case has already been prejudiced; and the supposed objective witness and psychologist has been forced to sign a paper on the kind of diagnosis he is to make of the accused. Dr. Mandi makes this known when he states among other things:

When your trial resumes, I'll take the stand and describe you as schizophrenic. Justice Kayode will pronounce you guilty on one count of second degree assault and one count of second degree murder...that's the idea (pp.74-75)

The whole justice system then is just a big sham, and all that is because the military are using the power of the gun to intimidate everybody to fall in with them. We can only imagine how many of such courts there are in the state, and how many innocent people have been falsely accused, misjudged and sentenced or even killed. Such abuse of power leads to the denial of justice to the masses just so that the ruling minority can maintain power.

We see another subtle form of oppression in the character of the police detectives. When Bukuru tells them the young lady had been raped, they get interested and prepare to take notes with the hope of receiving information that could lead to their solving the case. Yet as soon as Bukuru mentions the involvement of the vice task force “a shocked consternation came over the detectives’ faces” (p.56) and that is where their note-taking ends. From now, they are eager to get Bukuru to shut up. Clearly, they themselves are under undue pressure to

protect the image of soldiers even when they know that soldiers are culpable of a crime. When John Lati warns Bukuru, “you can’t accuse soldiers falsely” (p.56) he seems to be stating the reality in Madia that all other people can be accused except soldiers, and this is because soldiers are the ruling party. As if to authenticate that threat, he goes ahead to accuse Bukuru falsely and have him jailed. This is a clear instance of abuse of power since the soldiers force even detectives and police officers to do things against their own will and training.

The writer also depicts the military’s abusive deeds towards Bukuru. This is another instance of abuse of ordinary citizens by the military. Bukuru strikes readers not only as an ordinary citizen, but he is also harmless. He is first introduced as the lover of Mami Water, the marine spirit. This is a clear indication that Bukuru is one who would mind his own business and seldom interfere in other people’s legal affairs. His accusation of rape and murder is a clear instance of abuse and oppression of the innocent. This is particularly so, considering the fact that even Lieutenant John Lati states in court that they found no clear link between Bukuru and the murder. Yet, John Lati goes ahead to fully implicate him in the case.

Again, we see a clear instance of oppression of the weak and vulnerable in the society. John Lati’s order that Bukuru should be labelled Mr. X, a label meant for only unidentified male corpses shows that he has been prejudged, condemned and executed just for telling the truth. And why should that be? The name Mr. X explains it all: he had no one to identify with him and fight for him. The police are sure that even if he gets killed today, there would be nobody to relate him to since he was generally known as a mad man with no relatives, property or political affiliation. This ill-treatment exemplifies the direct and brutal suppression of the weakest voice of protest. Bukuru represents the people who can easily and conveniently be made scapegoats for crimes committed by the rich and the

powerful. In that position, Bukuru stands for all the poor, weak, homeless and destitute in society who are constantly oppressed, abused, humiliated and punished for crimes they know nothing about, or those of which they themselves are sometimes victims.

Further, the imprisonment of Bukuru at Bande maximum security prison, is an indication of the cruelty of the military in the novel: The vivid description of the prison setting reinforces the image of abuse. The narrator observes:

The prison compound was deadly quiet, bare and barren. Grass lay about the surface like sun-dried algae churned out by the sea .... A horrible stench flowed out of each door we passed, the stink of unwashed bodies mingled with the foulness of things that come from within them: faeces, urine, vomit, blood. (p.47)

These descriptions of the prison conditions are vivid and frightening. They portray a Madia in which the values of human decency have been abandoned. The prison conditions highlight the viciousness the masses suffer under the yoke of the military. The whole system is structured to expose the military as perpetrators of emotional and physical

violence.

In prison, Bukuru states “A swarm of mosquitoes detached themselves from the walls and advanced on me like soldiers closing in on an unarmed target”. (62) The image of soldiers furiously and mercilessly attacking an unarmed civilian may have been carried from the real world in Madia into the prison cells. Indeed, the description is not of mosquitoes in a prison cell, but of soldiers bullying real defenseless human beings.

Okey Ndibe portrays oppression and abuse in other forms. For instance, he uses a detailed description of seemingly unimportant things to drive home his point. His description of the

female detective's lips gives an image of savage oppression and abuse. "I spun around and faced her. Her lipstick was liquid and deep-red. It gave impression of a mouth dripping blood." (p.60) This detail may seem unimportant, but with it the narrator shows how state machinery is used without mercy to torture and intimidate the harmless people in the society. It gets even scarier to know that such an image is being painted of a woman, a gender that is known to be more sympathetic and merciful toward the weak. A similar image is created when he describes the group of eight police officers as "a pack of famished hyenas entrapping a prey." The author uses these detailed descriptions and metaphors to highlight the oppressive nature of the military.

Ndibe employs characterization to highlight the military's abuse of power. Through Isa Palat Bello and his proclamation of life presidency on himself, we see a clear case of abuse of power and dictatorial rule. The author describes Bello as a power-drunk leader whose reign is marked by tyranny and oppression. This observation by the narrator illustrates this fact:

The farce had little to do with the new title, which was superfluous enough, there being nobody in the country who seriously expected His Excellency, after a brutal reign of twenty years to hand over power to any force less ultimate than death itself (p.15)

This demonstrates the fact that Issa is a dictator who will relinquish power by no means other than death. The following quotation further reveals the dominating and intimidating nature of Issa:

His Excellency proclaims self president for life. ...Wishes Madian's to know that he is still the sun, rising and setting with unfailing regularity' That he steadily sees all traitors: all patriots too. All saboteurs

and colluders with imperialist agents working to undermine the Madian nation will be fished out and summarily dealt with.(p.17)

The tone that pervades the above quotation is that of pride and force and intimidation. This shows in the metaphor of the Head of State comparing himself to the sun. In other words, he sees himself as one in whom absolute power resides. Ojinmah remarks that the military “believing that they are accountable to no one but themselves, and having the ultimate weapon- the brute force of the army at their beck and call,- they have to see governance as a matter of how long they are able to stay and cling to power.(1991:86). This remark by Ojinmah is clearly reflected in Issa Pallat Bello. Before Bello took over power, the state of Madia enjoyed democracy and all its concomitant rights and freedoms. These included the right to elect their president at the right time, and to express their views on issues. The coming of Bello curtails all those rights and forces the people to only “cope with life under” him. Bello going ahead to declare himself life president flies in the face of justice, rights and freedom. The disappointment and disillusionment of the people is vividly expressed in the words of the news editor as he assigned Adero on New Year’s Day, asking him to speak to people and “...find out how they plan to cope with life under our perpetual leader” (p.14) So far, this chapter has discussed abuse and oppression both in the domestic and political domains. It has also examined the impact of tyranny on the masses as depicted through military rule and tyrannical leaders as presented by Okey Ndibe in *Arrows of Rain*. This chapter highlighted the fact that after independence leaders who wield power of any sort become as abusive and oppressive as our colonial leaders. Leaders who wield power of any sort are presented as violators of human rights. This is depicted in *Arrows of Rain* through the use of symbolism, metaphor, dialogue, saturation techniques, vivid descriptions,

rhetorical questions, mythology, paradox, irony, flashback, characterisation and setting. The human rights abuses, suppression, intimidation, abuse of power among others which are characteristics of both civilian and military rules are depicted in the novel.

# KNUST



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PRESENTATION OF ABUSE AND OPPRESSION IN *PURPLE HIBISCUS*

The function of the African literary artist cannot be overemphasized.

Okuyanda observes that:

The creative art for the African writer is not just an art form that seeks to entertain the audience, it functions beyond that. It is more of a social document geared towards the reconstruction of the socio-political configuration of the African people.(6)

In other words, the creative writer not only entertains through his art but he also concerns himself with the socio-political issues of society with the aim of correcting its ills. The literary artist, therefore, creates based on human experiences in order to give a true picture of realities in the society. As Ngugi rightly notes: “Literature does not grow in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape and direction in every area of concern by social and economic forces in a particular society.”(XL ) Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie fulfils this role of the artist with her novel *Purple Hibiscus*. *Purple Hibiscus* highlights the various forms of abuse that bedevil the society. Anthony C. Oha, for instance, observes that:

In *Purple Hibiscus*, there is a critical presentation of the oddities in Nigeria as well as Africa in general, as the continent trudges in biting tyrannical trauma of the military and anarchical leaderships.(9)

This chapter discusses how Adichie uses characterization, language, symbolism, setting, contrast, paradox, and the saturation technique to present the various forms of abuse and oppression in both the domestic scene and the political scene in the novel *Purple Hibiscus*.

The

novel *Purple Hibiscus* is about the life of the Achike family. The story is told through the voice of Kambili. The head of this family is Eugene. He is a wealthy Igbo businessman and a staunch Catholic. He is a religious fanatic who uses religion as a tool to abuse and oppress his family. He bullies his family on numerous occasions and uses other violent ways to correct his family. His children, Kambili and Jaja endure his abuse until they experience a different way of life when they visit their Aunt, Ifeoma. After this experience, Jaja begins to defy his father's oppressive rule. Adichie depicts how the family eventually reacts to the violence by resisting his abusive moves and violating his orders openly and sometimes silently. In due course, Beatrice poisons him when she feels she cannot contain the abuse any longer. The author uses the oppression in the domestic setting as a symbol of the general oppressive environment the country finds itself in.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie presents the oppressive environment the masses live in as a result of abusive leaders. The abuses and oppression are reflected beyond the small family setting to the larger society. She creates the Achike family as a symbolic representation of the wider society where there is imposition on the masses as a result of the military's acts of abuse, oppression and subjugation. Commenting on *Purple Hibiscus*, Kehinde –Ayo notes that

although *Purple Hibiscus* denotatively reads like a mere family saga, it has political overtone. It captures the sociopolitical foibles in a neo-colonial African country. It is about tyranny and people's complicity in their being oppressed. It powerfully evokes the Nigerian landscape.(6)

The novel *Purple Hibiscus* highlights the atrocities and oppressive acts both leaders on the domestic and political scene mete out on the masses.

One angle from which Adichie tackles the issue of abuse is by highlighting the factors that account for the abusive nature of the perpetrators. One technique she uses is characterization.

With Eugene, she depicts a character whose experience of abuse with the

Reverend father makes him internalize that trait. A review by women's law.org notes that:

Frequent exposure to violence in the home not only predisposes children to numerous social and physical problems but also teaches them that violence is a normal way of life- therefore increasing their risk of becoming society's next generation of victims and abusers.(2)

The view that abused children are susceptible to becoming abusers is also expressed by Amma Darko in the novel *Faceless*. Specifically, she notes that this view, "... cuts across genders, but it seems to be more prevalent with young males.... Abused young males, in particular, are also more prone to becoming abusers themselves."(p.169) This is reflected in the character, Poison, in Amma Darko's *Faceless* who becomes violent after suffering abuse in the hands of his stepfather. Adichie similarly demonstrates this point through Eugene who also becomes abusive as a result of the fact that he suffers abuse in the hands of a Reverend father who raises him. Eugene recounts this experience to his daughter, Kambili, after one of his several abuse of her:

I committed a sin against my own body once.... And the good father, the one I lived with, while I went to St. Gregory's came in and saved me. He asked me to

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boil water for tea. He poured the water in  
a bowl and soaked my hands in it.  
(p.34)

effect of this atrocious experience, coupled with the fact that he is subjected to cruel treatment by a Catholic Father makes Eugene see God as an unforgiving father who punishes sinners in the hardest possible way. Therefore, whenever he feels that a member of his family has gone wrong, he disciplines that person to the extent that that discipline becomes abusive. Eugene uses religion as a tool to abuse and oppress members of his family. This behavior has root in postcolonial theory. According to Ann Dobie,

when people are colonized, their traditions and practices are supplanted by imitation of those of the colonizer. Parts of the indigenous one as elemental tend to disappear, because they are either hidden or replaced, thereby removing that culture from history.

By extension, it is the legacy of colonialism represented by the Reverend father and Catholicism that Eugene uses as a tool to abuse his family. Sophia O. Owude notes that *Purple Hibiscus* highlights the issue of “colonial invasion of Africa in the late nineteenth century and the consequent cultural conflict between the colonizing power and the colonized other. (110) This conflict is what is represented in the character Eugene. Apart from highlighting the factors that make perpetrators abusive, Adichie also depicts various acts of abuse on victims in domestic domains. The writer uses characterization, language, setting, and the saturation technique to highlight diverse instances of domestic abuse. She highlights these acts of abuse through the characters: Eugene, Kambili, Jaja and

The  
Beatrice.

One character through whom the issue of abuse comes out is Eugene. Eugene Achike is the head of the Achike family. He is a wealthy businessman and a devout Catholic. The kind of Catholicism he practices is the fanatic type. This fanaticism makes him abusive and



oppressive. Ranti William observes that “in Purple Hibiscus, the worst kind of oppression is the stifling power of abuse — verbal, mental, and physical abuse wrought by Kambili’s father, “Papa”.”(8)

Adichie piles on many examples to indicate the level of Eugene’s abusive nature. One instance that he exhibits his abusive and oppressive nature is when he beats up his wife and children when his daughter, Kambili, breaks the “Eucharistic fast”. The reason for their punishment is their connivance with Kambili to break the fast. He abuses them not considering the fact that Kambili had to eat to sustain herself because of the panadol she had taken because of her cramps. Kambili’s description of how Papa beats the three of them is apt. According to her, Eugene beats them with his “heavy belt made of layers of brown leather with a sedate leather-covered buckle.” (p.110) The belt:

... landed on Jaja first, across his shoulder. Then Mama raised her hands as it landed on her upper arm, which was covered by the puffy sequined sleeve of her church blouse. I put the bowl down just as the belt landed on my back.  
(p.110)

The vivid description of their ordeal appeals to the reader’s sense of sight. Readers cannot help but sympathize with them. The ensuing analogy captures the image where Beatrice and her children are reduced to cows being shepherded by Fulani nomads. Kambili observes that:

Sometimes I watched the Fulani nomads, white jellabas flapping against their legs in the wind, making clucking sounds as they herded their cows across the roads in Enugu with a switch, each smack of the switch swift and precise. Papa was like a Fulani nomad— although

he did not have their spare, tall body as he swung his belt at Mama, Jaja and me, muttering that the devil would not win. (p.110)

The novelist, in presenting the atrocities Eugene metes out to his family compares the way he abuses his family to the way a Fulani nomand would treat his animals. The analogy of the plight of Beatrice and her children to that of cows further highlights the extent of the abuse and the pitiable situation in which they find themselves.

The novelist gives further instance to highlight Eugene's abusive nature. On one occasion, he scalds Kambili's feet. Eugene metes out this violent act on his children when he learns about the presence of his heathen father in Ifeoma's house and goes to pick them. He is angry his children did not tell him about their grandfather's presence in Ifeoma's house. According to him, they "saw sin and clearly walked right into it." (p.201) To Eugene, living with Papa Nnukwu is the same as sinning willfully. For their punishment, Eugene boils water and intentionally scalds their feet with it. Kambili narrates her ordeal:

He lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it towards my feet. He poured the hot water on my feet, slowly as if he were conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen... I watched the water leave the kettle, flowing almost in slow motion in an arc to my feet. The pain of contact was so pure, so scalding, I felt nothing for a second. And then I screamed. ... the burning on my feet was climbing up, in swift courses of excruciating pain, to my head and lips and eyes (p.201)

The author's choice of words is simple and highly descriptive. Kambili's vivid description of the abuse is appropriate since it helps paint a clear picture of the effect of the abuse.

The fact that it is odd for a father to intentionally boil water and pour on his children's feet in the name of discipline heightens the extent of the abuse. Apart from the physical pain Kambili suffers because of this abuse, she has to constantly put on socks to prevent people from seeing the scars.

Adichie uses vivid description to depict another instance where Eugene abuses Kambili. This happens when he sees the painting of Papa Nnukwu with Jaja and Kambili and destroys the piece of paper. Kambili suffers a brutal assault for bringing the painting of Pa Nnwuku to their house and trying to protect it from ruin. Eugene is angry that Kambili clings to the photograph of a heathen. For this reason he beats her so cruelly that she is hospitalized. The narrator recounts her ordeal. Eugene kicks her, and the metal buckle on his slippers stung like bites from giant mosquitoes... The kicking increased in tempo,... I curled around myself tighter, around the pieces of the painting... The stinging was raw now, even more like bites, because the metal buckle landed on open skin on my side, my back, my legs. Kicking. Kicking. Kicking. Perhaps it was a belt now because the metal buckle seemed too heavy, because I could hear a swoosh in the air. More stings. More slaps. A salty wetness warmed my mouth. I closed my eyes and slipped into the quiet. (p.217)

The language is simple and highly descriptive. The choice of words denotes violence. The words 'stung', 'kicking', 'stinging', 'bites', 'slaps', are violent and repeated. The extensive use of these words which are suggestive of violence further highlights the extent of the abuse. The effective use of simile to capture the effect of the metal buckle stinging like mosquitoes and the detailed description of Kambili's ordeal appeals to the reader's senses.

This goes further to depict the extent of the abuse and the effect on Kambili. This abuse leaves Kambili hospitalized for a full term.

Apart from Kambili, Eugene also abuses Jaja. The writer further depicts Eugene's abusive nature through how he maltreats his son. He is extremely strict and punishes Jaja in the hardest possible way. His punishments mostly pass for abuse. He abuses Jaja when he does not come first in his first Holy Communion class. This punishment deforms his little finger.

Kambili recounts that:

Papa took him upstairs and locked the door. Jaja in tears came out supporting his left hand with his right and Papa drove him to St. Agnes hospital. Later, Jaja told me that Papa had avoided his right hand because it is the hand he writes with. (p.153)

The author presents the gruesome act of father against son which deforms Jaja for life. The writer in highlighting the abusive nature of Eugene contrasts his way of bringing up his children to that of Ifeoma. Ifeoma is liberal and corrects her children in love. She, unlike Eugene, respects the views of her children. For example when Amaka refuses to be confirmed because she does not want to take a Christian name, Ifeoma gets upset but she does not beat her. She is free and fair, the opposite of Eugene. The juxtaposition of Ifeoma's treatment of Amaka with Eugene's treatment of Jaja further gives a clear view of Eugene's abusive nature.

The writer also gives several instances to demonstrate Eugene's abusive acts towards his wife. Akin to most spousal abuses, the violence Beatrice endures mostly takes place in their bedroom. Evidence of the abuse therefore is the fact that she finds solace in the figurines after the beatings and the fact that Kambili hears bangs from the bedroom when her mother

is being battered. Kambili tells us that until she became aware of the abuses, she “used to wonder why she polished them each time she heard the sounds from their room, like something being banged against the door.” Adichie through this comparison details how Eugene mistreats his wife. On two occasions, he beats her to the point that her pregnancy is aborted. On one occasion, the reason for the battery is that Beatrice requests to stay in the car and not visit Father Benedict after mass because she feels nauseous. Yet, because of Eugene’s stern look, Beatrice finally joins them to visit the priest because she lacks the will power to disobey her husband. On returning home, Eugene requests God “to forgive those who had tried to thwart His will, who had put selfish desires first and had not wanted to visit His servant after mass.” (p.40) After this ironic prayer, Eugene further assaults her. Kambili recounts how after lunch, she hears the abuses, what is metaphorically described as “the sounds” which is described as:

... Swift, heavy thuds on my parents hand carved bedroom door. I imagined the door had stuck and Papa was trying to open it. If I imagined it hard enough, then it would be true. I sat down, closed my eyes and started to count. Counting made it seem not that long, made it seem not that bad. Sometimes it was over before I even got to twenty. I was at nineteen when the sounds stopped. (p.41)

The detailed description of the beatings creates a mental picture of Eugene’s rage and how he brutally assaults his pregnant wife causing her to miscarry. After assaulting her, Kambili recounts that “Mama was slung over his shoulder like the jute sacks his rice factory workers brought in bulk.”(p.42) The essence of this simile is to help reveal the extent to which abuse reduces Beatrice into and paint a clear picture of what she has suffered. Blood stains trickle

behind as Eugene carries her to the hospital. Eventually, Jaja and Kambili “cleaned up the trickle of blood, which trailed away as if someone had carried a leaking jar of red water-colour all the way downstairs.” (p.41) The thorough account of the effect of the abuse paints a vivid picture of the extent of the abuse. Prior to this incident, the dialogue that ensues between Jaja and Kambili gives a hint that Eugene poses a threat to the survival of the baby. “We will take care of the baby; we will protect him.” Kambili confesses, “I knew that Jaja meant from Papa, but I did not say anything about protecting the baby.” (p.31)

Adichie gives another example to highlight Eugene’s abusive nature towards his wife. Eugene abuses Beatrice to the extent that she loses another baby. Beatrice recounts the ordeal Eugene puts her through:

You know that small table where we keep the family Bible, *nne*? Your father broke it on my belly. My blood finished on the floor even before he took me to St. Agnes. My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it. (p.253)

The abuse has great impact on Beatrice and puts her in a vulnerable position. Apart from the babies she miscarries, she suffers pain. Once, Kambili tells readers that “there were never tears on her face” and “her swollen eye was still the black-purple colour of an overripe avocado. The bruises resulting from the series of beatings Eugene metes out on Beatrice is described by the author as black- purple in colour. This description shows the severity of the beating.

It is not only Beatrice who suffers from Eugene’s abusive nature. The cruel handling of their mother also has a telling effect on the children. For instance, the abuse leaves Kambili traumatized. Kambili recounts that for a long time after the abuse, when she studied “The

black type blurred, the letters swimming into one another, and then changed to a bright red, the red of fresh blood. The blood was watery, flowing from Mama, flowing from my eyes.” (p.43) Furthermore, because of the psychological impact of the abuse on Kambili, the incidence is imprinted on her mind. As a result of this effect, she readily associates anything to the assault. For instance, when she pours juice on their table cloth, she notes, “Mama hastily placed a napkin on the spot, and when she raised the reddened napkin, I remembered her blood on the stairs.”(p.68) In effect, the impact of Beatrice’s blood on the stairs on her becomes great. Adichie draws a parallel to the abuses Beatrice suffers and the abuses the masses suffer under the military. On one occasion, when Kambili sees the military abusing the market women, she later relates it to her mum’s suffering. She recounts:

I thought about the woman lying in the dirt as we drove home. I had not seen her face, but I felt I knew her, that I had always known her. I wished I could have gone over and helped her up, cleaned the red mud from her wrapper.(p.52)

The analogy between the woman on the floor and Beatrice is significant. The woman lying in the dirt represents Beatrice and all women who suffer untold abuse. Adichie highlights the fact that Kambili is familiar with this kind of experience.

In addition to the above, Eugene’s abuses of his wife and children affect the entire family psychologically. Because of his abusive nature, they live in constant fear of his violent attacks. Kambili, observing how Ifeoma relates to her children, makes an emphatic statement that emphasises their lives is ruled by fear:

It was what Aunty Ifeoma did to my cousins, I realized then, setting higher

and higher jumps for them in the way she talked to them, in what she expected of them. She did it all the time believing they would scale the rod. And they did. It was different for Jaja and me. We did not scale the rod because we believed we could we scaled it because we were terrified we couldn't. (231)

The comparison between how Eugene treats his children to how Ifeoma treats her children reveals the effects of Eugene's abuse on his children. Their environment is suppressive to the extent that they are not able to express their views freely. The effect of the oppression becomes obvious to the extent that outsiders even notice it. On one occasion, Ade Coker, in a dialogue with Eugene, observes about the children, "They are always so quiet, so quiet." (p.65). Eugene tries to defend their silence. Ade Coker's statement after Eugene has legitimized his children's silence is noteworthy. He retorts: "imagine what the standard would be if we were all quiet" (p.65) Ade Coker's comment reinforces the effect of Eugene's oppressive and abusive training of his children.

Furthermore Amaka, on a different occasion notes that "Kambili behaves funny; while Jaja looks strange...Something is not right with them" (p.150). The author through the voice of Ade Coker and Amaka reveals the fact that the Eugene's children are affected by his abuses. Adichie also depicts Eugene's abusive nature through how he treats his father, PapaNnukwu. Eugene prevents his father from visiting him because he considers him a heathen. Kambili observes that:

Papa himself never greeted PapaNnukwu, never visited him, but he sent slim wads of naira through Kevin or through one of our Umunna members. Slimmer wads than he gave Kevin as Christmas bonus.(p.70)

The above observation reveals Eugene's cruelty towards his own father. It is ironical that he freely gives to outsiders when his father suffers in poverty. It is rather Ifeoma who herself is struggling sees to the needs of her father. Papa Nwukwu himself attests to this:

Nekenem, look at me. My son owns that house that can fit in every man in Abba, yet many times I have nothing to put on my plate. I should not have let him follow those missionaries... where would I be today if my chi had not given me a daughter"(91)

Apart from using characterization to highlight the issue of abuse, the author uses appropriate setting to capture the oppression and abuse highlighted. The writer juxtaposes different settings to bring a contrast between the oppressive domestic environment and an environment devoid of suppression. The narrator observes that:

Laughter rang out in Auntie Ifeoma's house, and no matter where the laughter came from, it bounced around the walls, all the rooms. Arguments rose quickly and fell just as quickly.... The flat always spackled. (p.148)

In Ifeoma's house, there is laughter and noise. In addition, the narrator recounts that the room was small and the furniture close. Kambili makes a striking observation about Ifeoma's house. She recounts: "I noticed the ceiling first, how low it was. I felt I could reach out and touch it; it was so unlike home, where the high ceilings gave our rooms an airy stillness" (p.121) She further notes that in Enugu, their: "yard was so wide enough to hold hundred people dancing atilogu dance, spacious enough for each dancer to do the usual somersaults and land on the next dancer's shoulders".(p.17) This description of the two settings captures the warmth in Ifeoma's house as opposed to the emptiness and suppression

in their father's house. Furthermore, she points out that in Enugu, their "compound walls, topped by coiled electric wires, were so high I could not see the cars driving by on our street." (p.17) The huge house with vast space and high walls paints an imposing picture which creates an image of prison life. This depicts the extent to which the victims of abuse lack freedom. They are prisoners in their own home. This description of the house is appropriate because it is indicative of the oppressive environment they live in. Also, the symbolic use of red hibiscus in the Enugu setting is noteworthy in the discussion of abuse and oppression. According to the narrator, all the hibiscuses in their front yard "were a startling red." (p.24) Carl Jung's mythological analysis notes that, the colour red, "because of its association with blood, easily suggests passion, sacrifice or violence." (Dobie 59) The red hibiscus in this setting is thus symbolic of the violence and brutality reflected in the Achike family.

Similar to the house in Enugu, the house of the Achike's in Abba is striking. The narrator notes that the house has high gates that are "looming black." (P.90) This description further portrays oppression and suppression. Jaja and Kambili live a life marked by rules and restrictions which suppresses the children. The rules and restrictions signify Eugene's way of enforcing his authority and oppression on his children. However, repression lessens in Abba. Kambili notes the freedom they have in Abba, which they do not have in Enugu. She draws the contrast this way: "in Abba our rooms adjoined; back in Enugu, they were far apart." (p.66) Again, "In Abba, Jaja and I had no schedules. We talked more and sat alone in our rooms less, because Papa was too busy entertaining the endless stream of visitors..." (p.67). This allows for some warmth and freedom. Adichie highlights the leniency this setting provides Kambili and Jaja. On one occasion, when Eugene gets annoyed with Jaja

and Kambili for over staying at their grandfather's house, Kambili thinks Papa will beat them. Yet, Papa just tells them to finish eating and go and pray for forgiveness after which he leaves to attend to some other business. Kambili says that after Papa went upstairs, "The silence he left was heavy but comfortable, like a well-worn prickly cardigan on a bitter morning." (p.77) This simile is significant. It suggests a kind of warmth they feel as a result of the little freedom they enjoy in Abba.

On the other hand the setting Adichie depicts at Nsukka is strikingly different. The environment portrayed here is devoid of restrictions and inhibitions. Ifeoma and her children reside in a small residence and they are relatively poor. In spite of these challenges, this setting resounds with chatter and laughter. This family lives in a free and fair environment where there is freedom of expression and choice. Her children make their own choices without any imposition. The first impression Kambili gets of Ifeoma's family is the freedom and warmth they enjoy compared to the suppression she and Jaja suffer at home. Adichie illustrates this by showing the difference between how Ifeoma's family behaves compared to how they behave at Enugu. For instance, unlike the long prayers and boring routine the Achikes follow at home, the atmosphere here is congenial. Their prayer over food is very brief and Amaka and her siblings are allowed to take their food from the dining area to the living room to watch TV. The family prayers are interspersed with Igbo songs. This striking difference becomes clear to Kambili when they visit. Her comment reveals that she is lost:

I had felt as if I were not there, that I was just observing a table where you could just say anything at anytime to anyone, where the air was free for you to breathe as you wished. (p.128)

The foregoing statement of Kambili reveals the contrast between the suppression in her father's house and the freedom in Ifeoma's house. This juxtaposition between the settings further highlights the theme of abuse and oppression.

Apart from their freedom of movement, Ifeoma's children are also able to speak their mind without fear whereas at Enugu, Eugene's family fears speaking their minds. On occasions when a new product from Eugene's factory is brought home, they are required to "compliment Papa's new product. We always did, each time an employee from one of his factories brought a product sample for us." (p.21) As a result of their fear of him, they do not do an honest criticism of the products. So when Ifeoma's child, Amaka, visits, and honestly criticizes Papa's juice, Kambili is surprised. Amaka tells Papa, "It's a little too sweet. It would be nicer if you reduced the sugar in it." (p.106). This juxtaposition demonstrates the effect an oppressive environment has on its victims.

Ifeoma, apart from being liberal, is firm and thus corrects her children when they go astray. In one instance when Obiora insults his friend, she reprimands him and ensures that he apologizes to his friend. Her comment afterwards is noteworthy. She explains to him the reason for her action: "I do not quarrel with your disagreeing with my friend. I quarrel with how you have disagreed. I do not raise disrespectful children in this house do you hear me?" (p.250). This incident emphasizes the fact that although Ifeoma is free with her children she disciplines them when they go wrong. The dialogue between Amaka and

Kambili further highlights the fact that Ifeoma is firm. Amaka tells Kambili:

I always got the stick on my palm and Obiora got his on his buttocks. Afterwards, we would talk about it for hours. I hated that. Just give me the lashes and let me out. But no, she explained why

you had been flogged, what she expected  
you to do not to get flogged again. (p.250)

Amaka's dialogue with Kambili brings out the fact that the punishment Ifeoma gives her children aims at correcting the children's wrong behaviour unlike Eugene's that instills fear in them. Through the depiction, Adichie highlights that punishment can be carried out constructively. This setting affects Jaja and Kambili positively. Their brief experience at this new setting offers them a new found sense of freedom and tranquility, symbolized by the purple hibiscus which is "fragrant with the undertones of freedom." (p.16) The purple hibiscus from this setting, according to Heather, "becomes a metaphor for freedom and independence. The purple flower then comes to signify Kambili's urge to bloom, her natural instinct to look for the light. (1)

Apart from domestic abuse, Adichie highlights the abusive and oppressive nature of military rulers in *Purple Hibiscus*. Suppression of the more vocal in the society is a kind of oppression depicted in the novel. Ovio Ibe Otu observes that:

military intervention in governance is an aberration. Nigerians should understand that political administration is not part of military training. Rather, soldiers are trained to defend the territorial integrity in their countries.(23)

The above comment indicates that the nature of the training of the military does not make them cut out for politics. As a result of this when they move into politics they lose their professionalism. General Salihu Ibrahim for instance registers his displeasure with the military's involvement in politics when he notes:

I make no pretence of my disdain of the involvement of the military in political affairs of this country. I hold a strong view that any military organization that intends to remain professional and

relevant to his calling has no business meddling with politics(19)

Olajimoke also observes that “All the past military regimes have been a curse rather than a blessing to this country”(7). In the novel *Purple Hibiscus*, when the military takes over, the masses are not happy about it and foresee doom. For instance, when Eugene hears that the military has staged a coup, he:

looked sad; his rectangular lips seemed to sag. Coups beget coups, he said, telling us about the bloody coups of the sixties, which ended in a civil war just after he left Nigeria to study in England. A coup always began a vicious cycle. Military men would always overthrow one another, because they could, because they were all power drunk. (p.32)

Through Eugene, the writer indicates the fact that one successful coup attempt is a breeding ground for other ones. Eugene further notes that what Nigerians need is “not soldiers ruling us. What we needed was renewed democracy. Renewed Democracy.” (p.33) Femi Falana supports this when he observes that “the Nigerian military should be clear by now that as an organization, it is incapable of organizing a transition to democracy” (9).

The general public in *Purple Hibiscus* also does not welcome the news of the military in politics. According to Kambili there are demonstrations after the coup. She says:

The first week after the coup, Kevin plucked green tree branches every morning and stuck them to the car, lodged above the number plate, so that the demonstrators at Government Square would let us drive past. The green branches meant Solidarity....I wondered what it would be like to join them, chanting “Freedom” standing in the way of cars. (p.35)

The reason for the protest of the masses to military intervention is that they believe the military is worse than the civilian government. The military abuse power and subject the general populace to a life of oppression, intimidation and abuse. Through a dialogue between Eugene and his family, Adichie foretells the fact that the military will be as corrupt as civilian governments. He tells his family, “What a headline. They are all afraid. Writing about how corrupt the civilian government was, as if they think the military will not be corrupt.” (P.33-34)

Adichie highlights the excesses of the military when they rule. She vividly captures the physical abuse of the citizenry and the abuse of power of the military. The military subject the masses to bullying and oppression. She piles on many examples to indicate the extent of the military’s abusive nature.

For instance, she highlights how the military subject the masses to oppression and torture. Through Kambili, Adichie depicts how the masses are intimidated and mistreated by soldiers during the military rule. Kambili recounts that after the coup,

there were soldiers at the roadblock near the market, walking around, caressing their long guns. They stopped some cars and searched them. Once, I saw a man kneeling on the road beside his Peugeot 504, with his hands raised high in the air.

(p.35-36)

The above quotation gives a clear picture of how the military abuse, intimidate and oppress the masses. The use of the child narrative voice gives an objective account of the abuse.

The writer gives another instance where market women are mistreated and abused by the military. Adichie gives a detailed account of how soldiers demolish the stalls of the market women. The reason for the demolition is that their structures are considered illegal. The

pitiful aspect of their plight is that the helpless traders are not given the chance to take their wares or move their structures. Soldiers do not only destroy their stalls but also their goods.

Kambili gives an eye witness account of the market women's ordeal in the market:

Soldiers were milling around. Market women were shouting and many had both hands placed on their heads, in the way that people do to show despair or shock. A woman lay in the dirt, wailing...I saw the soldier raise a whip in the air. The whip was long. It curled in the air before it landed on the woman's shoulder. Another soldier was kicking down trays of fruits, squashing papayas with his boots and laughing.  
(p.52)

The language is simple and detailed. The detailed description in the above quotations excites the reader's pity. To think that soldiers carry out this atrocious duty with glee highlight the cruelty of the military. To add to the atrocities the military mete out to the traders is the maltreatment the women suffer. The pitiless treatment of the traders by soldiers highlighted above supports the point Ihonvbere observes about the military. He notes that

... untold pain and destruction have been caused by the military during the numerous clashes with civilians. The story of the pain the military has caused the powerless and 'unconnected' Nigerians is endless"(511)

Apart from the abuse of the masses, Adichie presents a situation where the press suffers untold abuse under the military regime. As a result of this oppression, majority of the press feel intimidated to criticize the military. For instance, when the military shuts the offices of the 'Standard' newspaper, most of the newspapers are scared to report it and those who did,

did not give the story any importance. For instance, in 'the Guardian' newspaper, "The story of soldiers closing down the Standard was tucked into the middle page, next to advertisements for women's shoes imported from Italy." (p154) This emphasizes the fact that they are afraid of the reaction of the military.

The military also suppress Ade Coker. Contrary to the press men who are afraid to criticize, Adichie depicts the character, Ade Coker who is the editor of the Standard newspaper. He criticizes the military without fear. As a result, he suffers untold abuse and oppression in the hands of the military. For instance, he condemns the brutal murder of three men. When the Standard newspaper reports how the Head of State and his wife bribe people to send heroin abroad, an arrest warrant is put out for Ade Coker while he was returning from work. This arrest is because his story casts a smear on the Head of State and his wife. The author's account of how Kambili envisages his arrest is noteworthy:

I imagined Ade Coker being pulled out of his car, being squashed into another car, perhaps a black station wagon filled with soldiers, their guns hanging out of the windows. (p.46)

Even though the above is only an imagination of what the military puts Ade Coker through, it highlights the extent to which the military could go to torture their critics. Later when Eugene gets Ade Coker out of jail, Eugene in a dialogue with his family recounts Ade Coker's experience in jail. He notes "they put out cigarettes on his back. They put out so many cigarettes on his back" (p.50) This clearly depicts the military as callous and brutal.

The military also abuse Ade Coker when he refuses to cooperate with the Head of State not to publish how the military killed a voice of dissent. Nwankiti, a radical prodemocracy

activist is murdered. Ade Coker publishes a source that gives a hint that the military killed Nwankiti. This news results in the suspending of Nigeria from the Commonwealth. The source noted that:

Soldiers shot Nwankiti Ogechi in a bush in Minna. And then poured acid on his body to melt his flesh off his bones, to kill him even when he was already dead.  
(p.207)

The above description depicts the cruelty of the military against their critics. Adichie's account of how the military silences Ade Coker is telling. The narrator observes that "It rained heavily the day Ade Coker died, a strange, furious rain in the middle of the parched harmattan." The torrential rain foreshadows Ade Coker's impending death. His death is gruesome and pitiable. The Head of State sends him a parcel while he was having breakfast with his family. "Ade Coker was blown up when he opened the package- a package everybody would have known was from the Head of State." The detailed presentation of the death of both Nwankiti and Ade Coker is striking. Both accounts create a vivid image of the victims suffering. It is pitiable that these characters suffer this untold brutality for fighting for the cause they saw as right for their country.

This gruesome death of Ade Coker has a telling effect on his entire family and friends. Apart from the psychological effects on the whole family, his child after witnessing the cruel torture her father goes through is unable to speak for almost four months. She only heals partially after thorough medical attention both at home and abroad. Even that the child only says, 'mama'. Jaja's comment captures the effect of the abuse on the child appropriately: "she will n ever heal. She may have started talking now, but she will never heal." (p.263) Jaja's comment emphasizes the fact that there are some experiences that people go through

that affect them for life. Kambili also suffers a traumatic experience as a result of Ade Coker's death. She recounts her nightmares in which she sees Ade Coker's "charred remains spattered on his dining table, on his daughter's school uniform, on his baby's cereal bowl, on his plate of eggs." (p.213) These depictions indicate that abuse has telling effects on victims.

The military also abuse Eugene. The author uses paradox to depict Eugene who suffers some oppressive and abusive acts from the military. He has a complex personality that is highlighted in a series of paradoxes. He is a freedom fighter and an abuser. He fights injustice by using his newspaper, "the Standard," to challenge the sociopolitical ills and abuse of power that mark the government. Ironically, he is as well a perpetrator of abuse like the people he attacks. Eugene plays a paradoxical role as a victim of abuse and a perpetrator of abuse. Ironically, he rules his house with a heavy hand and strict discipline which mostly goes overboard and results in several abuses. In the same vein, the military oppresses Eugene for giving space to journalists to speak through his newspaper, the standard. Eugene's condemnation of the ills of the military attracts the wrath of the military. In an attempt to punish Eugene for giving room for journalist to criticize the government, the soldiers shut down his factories. Readers get to know through Kambili that:

Soldiers had gone to one of the factories carrying dead rats in a carton, and then closed the factory down, saying the rats had been found there and could spread disease through the wafers and biscuits (p.214)

This oppressive act against Eugene affects him greatly. He becomes affected to the extent that he no longer visits his other factories as he used to do. Instead, he spends long hours with father Benedict praying.

Adichie also highlights oppression and intimidation on the university setting. She depicts this through a sole administrator who suppresses the vocal in the school. One technique the writer uses to emphasise the oppressive nature of the military is symbolism. The sole administrator represents the military. Adichie uses happenings in the university community to depict events on the national scene. In the university setting, the sole administrator takes unilateral decisions. Just as those who criticize the military government on the national scene are oppressed, those in the university setting who criticize the sole administrator suffer the same fate. The sole administrator is symbolic of the military that is a dictator and thus suppress its critics. This is because the sole administrator is “the university’s equivalent of a head of state.” (p.228) It is revealed the university body does not welcome the news of the sole administrator and thus protest against the sole administrator. Aunt Ifeoma’s comment reveals their protest :

We cannot sit back and let it happen, where else have you heard of such a thing as a sole administrator in a university. A governing council votes for a vice chancellor. That is the way it has worked since this university was built, that is the way it is supposed to work  
(p.227)

The sole administrator, like the military also mismanages the university. The narrator recounts instances of water and electricity shortages. This leads to demonstrations that result in the closure of the university. Like the military who intimidates its critics, the sole

administrator oppresses people who protest against him. Adichie depicts this through the character Ifeoma, a lecturer at the university. She is frank and fearless. According to the narrator, she is “tall, exuberant, fearless, loud, and larger than life.” (p.103) Contrary to Beatrice, Kambili notes that “every time Aunt Ifeoma spoke to Papa, my heart stopped, and then started again in a hurry.”(85) This reveals Ifeoma as frank and fearless. She exhibits this trait when the ‘sole administrator’ takes over the university. Aunt Ifeoma and other lecturers who fearlessly criticize the sole administrator are victimized. Ifeoma’s promotion to senior lecturer is withheld. As a result of her criticisms, when students demonstrate against the ‘sole administrator’, the powers that be think she influences that move. She thus suffers intimidation in the hands of the authorities. They come to her house searching for documents intended to interfere with the peace of the university. The narrator recounts how security officers scattered everything in her room:

They did not look inside the drawers they flung open, they just threw the clothes and whatever else was inside on the floor. They overturned all the boxes and suitcases in Aunt Ifeoma’s room, but they did not rummage through the contents. They scattered, but they did not search. (p.236)

Afterwards, they caution Aunt Ifeoma to be very careful. Evidently, the security men only came to intimidate Ifeoma. These instances are demonstrative of the abusive and oppressive nature of the sole administrator. The psychological effect of intimidation and suppression on these characters is striking. Some of the characters like Ifeoma are forced to leave the country for America. As Obiora puts it, “... By the time we get to university the good professors will be fed up with all this nonsense and will go abroad.” (p.237) Obiora’s comment here

highlights the challenge of elites forced to leave the country as a result of suppression. This step affects some of her children who preferred life in Nigeria.

Apart from physically abusing and oppressing the masses and the press, the military also abuse power. Eugene notes, that the “politicians were corrupt” and the Standard “had written many stories about cabinet ministers who stashed money in foreign bank accounts, money meant for paying teachers’ salaries and building roads.” Yet, he observes this gets worse when the military seize power. In a dialogue between Aunty Ifeoma and Beatrice, the author reveals the mismanagement of the military. Ifeoma tells Beatrice:

‘Look what this military tyrant is doing to our country.’ Aunty Ifeoma closed her eyes, in the way that people do when they want to remember something unpleasant. ‘We have not had fuel for three months in Nsukka. I spent the night in the petrol station last week, waiting for fuel. And at the end, the fuel did not come. (p.84)

The mismanagement by the military becomes obvious in other facets of the society. The masses are denied quality healthcare and there are strike actions from various sectors of the society. It is ironic that the military that promises a better life for civilians have their priorities misplaced. They rather intimidate the masses that criticize them.

This chapter has examined the various forms of abuse in *Purple Hibiscus*. This chapter highlighted the causes, acts of human rights abuses and oppression on both the political and domestic scene. The chapter also discussed the implications of these abuses on the victims. These issues are highlighted mainly through characterization, metaphor, simile, paradox, setting, symbol, dialogue and the first person narrative technique.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### A COMPARISON OF VICTIMS' REACTIONS TO ABUSE IN *ARROWS OF RAIN* AND *PURPLE HIBISCUS*

Every human being has a right to freedom and an abuse free-life. However, if this freedom is denied, there is a tendency for the victim to react. And if one revolts, the response is diverse. Reaction is dependent on the individual and his exposure. The response can take the form of a violent action against offenders, silence, rebellion, recoiling and fear. According to Crampton and Eldon,

no matter how terrifying a given system may be, there always remains the possibilities of resistance, disobedience and oppositional groupings. (p.10).

Okey Ndibe and Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi are writers who highlight the varying responses of their characters to abuse and oppression in their respective novels, *Arrows of Rain* and *Purple Hibiscus*. In other words, how each of these characters reacts to the abuses of their victimizers reflects the diverse ways different people respond to the varied forms of abuses both on the domestic scene and the national domains. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how Ndibe and Adichie use characterization to highlight the differences and similarities between the diverse responses of the victims of abuse and oppression as depicted in both *Arrow of Rain* and *Purple Hibiscus*.

First of all, both writers present a civilian government that abuses power and thus occasion the military to oust power. Furthermore, in both novels the perpetrators of abuse on the political scene are military leaders. On the other hand, on the domestic scene, the abuser in *Purple Hibiscus* is a husband towards his wife and children. However, in *Arrows of Rain* the

author depicts two instances from different domestic settings. In one setting, the victimizer is a man abusing his concubine and in another setting, the violator is a husband towards his wife and child.

In addition, both writers use the third person narrative point of view. However, the writer in *Arrows of Rain* uses the multiple points of view to capture the issue of abuse. The narrators are adults. On the other hand, in *Purple Hibiscus* it is a single narrator. The narrator here is a child. The use of the child narrative and the choice of the varied narrators allows for an objective presentation of the issue of abuse.

Furthermore, in both Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, the writers use characterization to highlight how the victims of abuse respond to the abuses of their perpetrators. Their reactions are varied. For some characters, their initial reaction is fear and later rebellion depending on their exposures. For instance, in *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili and Jaja's approaches to the issue of abuse and oppression differ. Initially, they both succumb to their father's violations until they are exposed to life in a different environment. In Nsukka, Aunty Ifeoma consciously and unconsciously aids Kambili and Jaja to free themselves from the effect of their father's suppressive upbringing. One way she does this is by demonstrating the congenial environment in which she lives with her children.

Commenting on this environment that sparks the various reactions in the Achike family, Kambili juxtaposes the freedom marked by Aunty Ifeoma's training as against the suppression marked by their father Eugene's. She observes:

It was what Aunty Ifeoma did to my cousins, I realised then, setting higher and higher jumps for them in the way she talked to them, in what she expected of

them. She did it all the time believing they would scale the rod. And they did. It was different for Jaja and me. We did not scale the rod because we believed we could, we scaled it because we were terrified that we couldn't. (p.231)

Aunty Ifeoma gives her children the liberty to say anything and they live in an environment devoid of restrictions. As a result of this exposure, Kambili and Jaja get the opportunity to know that there is something wrong with the way their father brings them up. This new exposure sparks various reactions in Kambili and Jaja. Through this exposure to freedom they get to realize their suppression. This stirs in them various reactions that eventually end their father's abuses and oppression. At Nsukka, both of them learn to express their feelings. On one occasion Kambili notes, "I laughed. It seemed so easy now, laughter. So many things seemed easy now. Jaja was laughing too..." (p.288) Jaja's appearance and the way he carries himself also changes dramatically. Kambili observes that Jaja's shoulders broaden and he smiles broadly when Papa asks that they stay longer at Nsukka "and Jaja smiled so widely I saw dimples I did not even know he had" This observation is significant. This reveals the relevance of Nsukka to their freedom from Papa's grip. Nsukka is a symbol of freedom. Both of them return with things that have symbolic undertones to their freedom. Jaja comes with seeds of purple hibiscus and Kambili comes with painting of Papa Nnukwu. Both signify freedom from a life of oppression and suppression. These symbols both Jaja and Kambili bring reveal their quest to free themselves from the repressive hold of their father. Kambili makes a noteworthy observation: "Nsukka could free something deep inside your belly that would rise up to your throat and come out as a freedom song. As laughter." (p.303) Jaja's reaction to his father's abuses and suppressive rule is noteworthy. Initially, he

succumbs to his father's violation. However, after their visit to Nsukka, he turns defiant. This change is driven by the exposure he has at Nsukka. Apart from what he learns from the congenial environment Auntie Ifeoma and her children have, Jaja also learns of the defiance of king Jaja of Opobo. Auntie Ifeoma teaches him: "Being defiant can be a good thing sometimes....Defiance is like marijuana-It is not a bad thing when used right" (p.

152 ). Jaja Achike, whose real name is Chukwuka is nicknamed Jaja because, according to Auntie Ifeoma, "when he was a boy, all he could say was Ja-Ja"(p. 151) In a dialogue with Jaja, she recounts a statement she makes to Beatrice about the nickname: I told your mother that it is an appropriate nickname, that you would take after Jaja of Opobo."(p.152) Auntie Ifeoma alludes to king Jaja of Opobo to teach the children the essence of defiance. According to her, king Jaja "refused to let (the British) control all the trade. He did not sell his soul for a bit of gunpowder like other kings did."(p.152) This allusion to a king who rebels against colonial oppression and defies its consequence spurs in Jaja a desire to defy his father's suppressive rule.

Subsequently, like king Jaja of Opobo, Jaja starts to defy his father's instructions when he returns from Nsukka. Right from Nsukka he begins to show signs of defiance. One device the writer uses to bring out Jaja's defiance against his father's abusive tendencies is symbolism. Jaja bringing the stocks of purple Hibiscus from Nsukka to plant in Enugu is symbolic. Just as purple hibiscus was created out of an experiment, Jaja is spurred on to experiment to challenge the status quo. His determination to resist and defy oppression and obtain freedom is evident from various instances. On one occasion when Eugene concludes that Papa Nnukwu will face judgment because he was a heathen, Jaja quickly retorts: "Maybe he didn't want to convert"(p.197) This remark from Jaja marks the beginning of his rebellion.

Jaja's remark shocks Eugene. He observes: What did you say? Is that what you have learned from living in the same house as a heathen?(197) This question reveals the shock Eugene receives when Jaja begins to challenge his opinion.

Another instance Jaja speaks up in the face of threat and intimidation is when Kambili breaks the "Eucharistic" fast. When Eugene queries Kambili for breaking the fast, Beatrice, out of fear tries to give excuses for Kambili's action. However, Jaja boldly "... cut her short. 'I told her to eat corn flakes before she took panadol, Papa. I made it for her.'"(p.120) The tone in Jaja's remark reveals his boldness and defiance. Jaja takes the blame defying the consequence. This account depicts Jaja as a fearless character who is bold even in the face of violation.

Jaja also registers his protest when he breaks the order they follow during meal time. Previously, their meal time was ordered in such a way that no one left the table until Papa shared the grace. Yet, Jaja defies this order after Nsukka. He boldly requests for the keys to his room to go have his privacy while they were still having dinner. This defiant move by Jaja is a means by which he registers his protest against the various abuses and restrictions his father imposes on the family.

Jaja still rebels against his father's orders when he refuses to go for Holy Communion. When Eugene tells him, "You cannot stop receiving the body of our Lord. It is death, you know that." Jaja retorts: , "Then I will die." "... he looked Papa in the face now...Then I will die, Papa." (p.14) This dialogue reveals Jaja's resolve to challenge his father's intimidations. He challenges his father daring the consequences. This move by Jaja marks the beginning of his freedom from his father's suppressive grip. The narrator observes that: "Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja did not go to communion and

Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the *étagère*.” (p.1) In other words, Eugene’s grip over his family begins to wane after this incident. This is depicted in various scenes. In one of such scenes, Papa throws the missal at Jaja for not going for Communion with the intention of punishing him. However, Kambili notes that:

It missed Jaja completely, but it hit the glass *étagère*, which Mama polished often. It cracked the top shelf, swept the beige, finger-size ceramic figurines of ballet dancers in various contorted postures to the hard floor and then landed after them. Or rather it landed after their many pieces. It lay there, a huge leather-bound missal that contained the readings for all the three cycles of the church year. (p.15)

The use of the figurines and the *étagère* has symbolic implications. They signify the various instances Beatrice is abused by Eugene because she takes solace in polishing them every time after the violations. So when the missal directed at Jaja hits the *étagère* and breaks the figurines, Eugene symbolically ends his own abuse and suppression of his family. Kambili’s observation is noteworthy. She notes: “When Papa threw the missal at Jaja, it was not just the figurines that came tumbling down, it was everything.” (p.23). In other words, religion symbolised by the missal, which has been used by Eugene to abuse and oppress his family, falls apart.

Another instance the author highlights Jaja’s defiance is when he refuses to say anything to please his father when a sample of cashew juice from Papa’s factory is brought home. Until this incident, the whole family tastes and gives their comment when they bring a product from Papa’s factory. However, this time, it is only Mama and Kambili who give their expected complimentary remarks. In dialogue between Papa and Jaja, the writer highlights

Jaja's resolve to end pleasing his father. Papa asks him, "Jaja have you not shared a drink with us, *gbo*? Have you no words in your mouth?" (p.21) He asks again, "Have you nothing to say, *gbo*, Jaja?" Jaja's response is striking: "*Mba*, there are no words in my mouth." This answer shocks Papa. The narrator recounts that on hearing Jaja's reply, "There was a shadow clouding Papa's eyes, a shadow that had been in Jaja's eyes. Fear. It had left Jaja's eyes and entered Papa's." (p.21) Jaja by this action defies and subdues his father's intimidation. His action plays a vital role in weakening his father's hold and grip on him and the family at large. Kambili sums up the implication of Jaja's defiance when she observes:

Jaja's defiance seemed to me now like  
Aunty Ifeoma's experimental purple  
hibiscus: rare, fragrant with undertones of  
freedom, a different kind of freedom  
from the one the crowds waving green  
leaves chanted... A freedom to be, to  
do.(p. 24)

Ade Coker is a character in *Purple Hibiscus* whose reaction to abuse and oppression is similar to Jaja's. He is depicted as a defiant character who defies various military intimidations to criticize the military government. Even though he is arrested and suffers untold abuses for speaking against the government, he remains resolute. He still defies all odds to write about how some soldiers murder Nwankiti Ogechi. Prior to this publication, a representative from the Head of State holds a meeting with him and Eugene. The representative: "had called to say that Big Oga was willing to give him an exclusive interview." Ade Coker response is striking:

But they want me to cancel the Nwankiti  
Ogechi story. Imagine the stupid man, he  
said they knew some useless people had  
told me stories I planned to use in my  
piece and that the stories were lies...

(p.205)

The tone of his reaction in the above account reveals Ade Coker as a daring and fearless character who refuses to bow in the face of intimidation. Subsequently, he retorts:

No way! They don't want Nwankiti Ogechi to become an issue now. Simple! And you know what it means, it means they have wasted him! Which one is for Big Oga to try and bribe me with an interview? I ask you eh, which one is that." (p.206)

The tone and indignation in the above comment gives a clear indication of Ade Coker's determination to refuse to be cowed and bribed to shield the fact that soldiers killed Nwankiti. He defies all odds and puts his life on the line to publish the story. Consequently, when the next edition of the Standard came out, it had Nwankiti Ogechi on its cover page. Kambili recounts: "The story was detailed, angry, full of quotes from someone called The Source."(p.207) Ade Coker's defiant move results in the suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth. This defiant move leads to his eventual death. Both Ade Coker and Jaja are characters who exhibit traits that show resoluteness in their quest to defy and fight oppressive rule.

Contrary to the defiant reactions exhibited by Ade Coker and Jaja to various forms of abuses and intimidations in *Purple Hibiscus*, Okey Ndibe depicts a character who exhibits striking difference with regard to his reaction to torture. Bukuru cowers and suffers intense fear in the face of abuse and oppression. As a result of the many violations Issa Palat Bello metes out to Iyese, Bukuru becomes terrified. Prior to witnessing the various abuses, Bukuru promises to publish Iyese's story. Yet after he witnesses how Issa violates her, he reacts differently.

His initial response is anger toward Issa Pallat Bello for violating Iyese. Yet, soon his anger is overshadowed with fear for his own life. His comment aptly captures how he shies away from abuse:

My anger at Issa Palat Bello and his minions was becoming mixed with fear for myself, lest I, too, fall victim to their butchery. Slowly, the fear encircled the anger, nibbling away at it. In the end the outrage was in the belly of the fear, the anger was eclipsed.(p.169)

The above remark captures the image of a character who runs away in the face of abuse and oppression. Unlike Ade Coker who readily defies intimidation and threats of death, Bukuru rather chooses silence because of fear for his life. He, therefore, stops publishing Iyese's story with the excuse that the story is flat. Before this incident he battles with his choice of reaction. He observes:

Something told me Iyese would count on me to avenge her. But how? With what tools could I stand up to her violator? A pen? Against men with guns? Moral indignation Against men with guns?(p.170)

The extensive use of rhetorical questions in the above reveals the various fears Bukuru battles with when challenged to respond to tyranny. Contrary to Ade Coker who defies abusive tendencies, Bukuru chooses silence and fear as a reaction to the abuse. Issa Pallat Belo eventually murders Iyese when she refuses to let Issa claim responsibility for her new born son. This further intensifies Bukuru's terror. Upon seeing Iyese's dead body and her wounded baby, he becomes terrified. He observes:

When I snapped out of my trance, it was to a feeling of intense fear. What if somebody came in and found me at the scene of this horrible crime? Fetching a washcloth, I wiped my fingerprints off the door knob. Then I tiptoed out of her flat.(p.179)

After this incidence, Bukuru's life is marked by intense fear. When Issa eventually becomes Head of State, Bukuru's fear heightens when he announces "The government is firmly determined to deal summarily with any trouble maker."(p.200): Bukuru recounts his feeling:

Then a cold fear crept up inside me and I was transported to the past, to the fount of terrible memories. I remembered Iyese pinned against the wall with Bello's hand at her throat. The pillows basted with her blood. The grotesque tranquility of her final posture, stretched out with her baby on her breast.... Terrors I could neither name nor disentangle dinned in my head. This man whose cruelty I knew so intimately now personified absolute power. And I was his enemy. (p.201)

His fear worsens when two men come to look for him at his office. This fear finally sends him into exile. He takes refuge on B beach. Yet, he still witnesses more violent rapes and killings of prostitutes by Issa Pallat Bello's soldiers. Contrary to Ade Coker who is bold enough to face intimidation despite threats, Bukuru cows in the face of tyranny. He personally admits his frailty and weakness in reacting to abuse in a dialogue with Femi:

Like you I started out as a young man working for a newspaper. But I was weak: I never wanted to be touched by anything that quickened the heart or made the soul sweat. Now, when I wish to

speak out, I have no way of making my voice heard – unless you will help me(pp.48-48)

However, when he eventually decides to speak up it is too late. He testifies in court about the death of the prostitutes on B. Beach. His revelation in court about the atrocious crimes committed both by soldiers and the dictator, General Bello makes him a victim of Bello's abuses. In the extract below, Bukuru reveals the effects of his fear. His prolonged silence creates a lot of damage and regrets:

I am here because many years ago I fooled myself that the counterfeit coin of silence was good enough to buy peace of mind. I forgot my grandmother's wisdom, that the mouth owes stories the debt of speech. ( p.245)

Through the above dialogue, the author highlights Bukuru's regrets in delaying to act out on the advice of his grandmother: "stories never forgive silence" (248) This fear and silence hastens him to his eventual end.

I know I am a man who ran away from duty and love.... My silence has no hope of redemption. It is too late in the day for me to look for insights. What I know are simple truths. I know that the fabric of memory is reinforced by stories, rent by silences. I know- ... that a voiceless man is as good as dead. (p.248)

In the end, he requests Femi to be his "voice". "For he can only throw his story... a feeble weapon" against the power of the state. Bukuru ultimately commits suicide to save him from the shame. He represents those in society who decide to end their lives in the face of

abuse and oppression because they regret the consequences of their inactions and they do not see the cycle of abuse ending.

Even though Bukuru's reaction is in contrast with Jaja's and Ade Coker's defiant response, Bukuru's response to abuse is similar to how Kambili reacts to cruelty. Like Bukuru, Kambili chooses silence and fear as a strategy to react to violence. She chooses to endure the abuses of her father without speaking about it. The harsh treatment Papa Eugene metes out on Kambili makes her timid and fearful. As a result of this fear, she is unable to express herself.

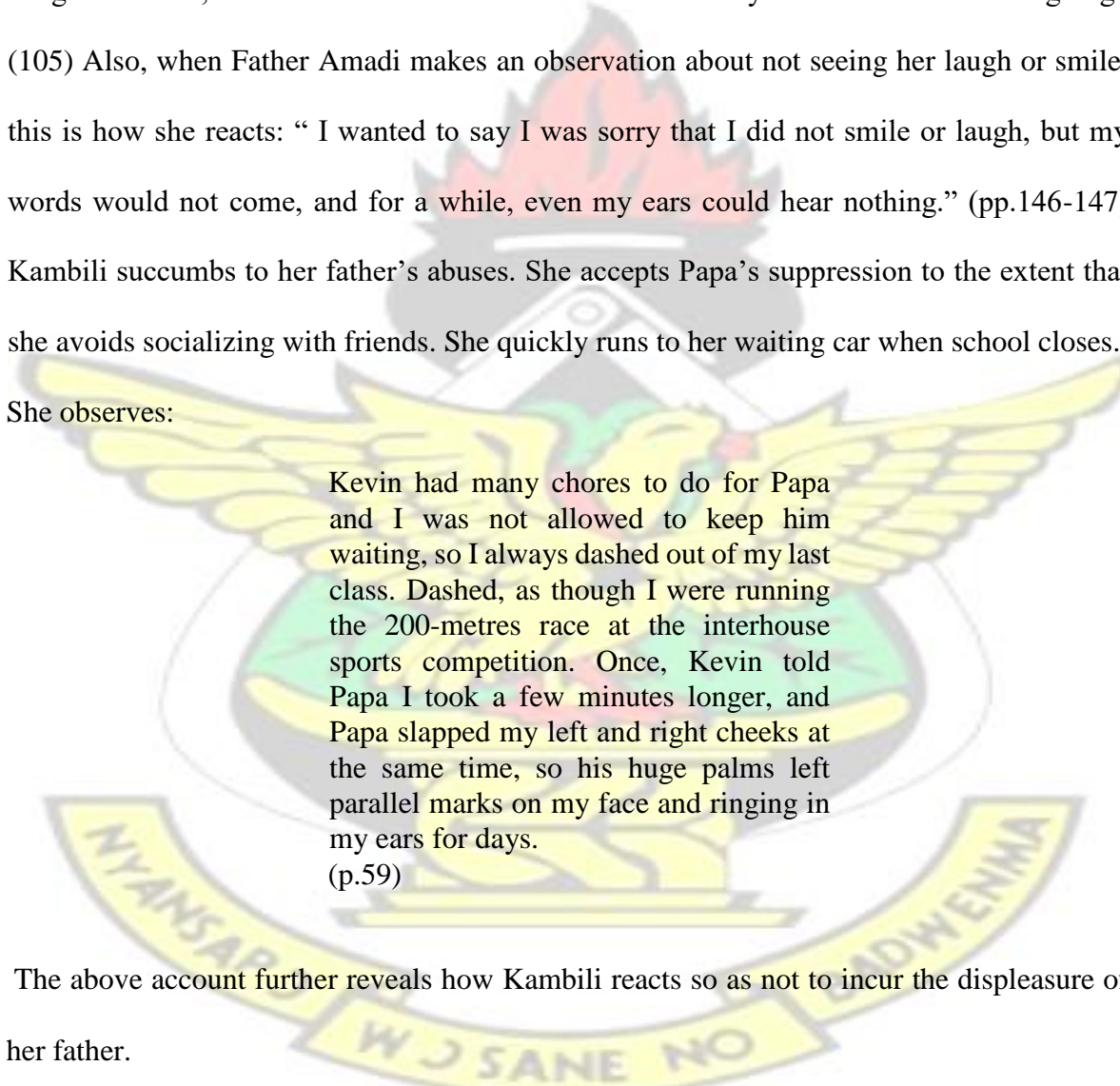
According to El- Bushra:

Silence can also provide a private space to deal with trauma, to regain self-esteem, and to build a sense of empowerment in an often unpredictable and dangerous world.(96).

This notion captured in the above quotation is depicted in Kambili's reaction. She chooses silence as a tool to react to her father's several abuses. Kambili is presented as a character who always tries to please her father despite his numerous abuses. She becomes fearful and thus recoils so as not to invite the wrath of her father. There are several instances Kambili keeps quiet or says something different from what she intends to say as a result of fear. For instance, on one occasion, she says something different from what she had intended when Papa throws the leather bound missal at Jaja and it smashes the glass étagère and the figurines of Mama. Kambili is not happy with Papa's behavior. However, because of fear, she says something that absolves Papa of blame. She later recounts,

I meant to say I am sorry Papa broke your figurines, but the words that came out were, "I'm sorry your figurines broke , Mama." (p.18)

The above account from Kambili indicates that Kambili's response to abuse is fear. She, therefore, avoids saying what her father will not be pleased with. There are other times Kambili chooses silence as a response. For instance, when Aunt Ifeoma asks Kambili and Jaja if they would like to visit Nsukka, Kambili is lost for words because she does not want to say anything to displease her father. She notes, "I mumbled to my plate, then started to cough as if real, sensible words would have come out of my mouth but for the coughing" (105) Also, when Father Amadi makes an observation about not seeing her laugh or smile, this is how she reacts: " I wanted to say I was sorry that I did not smile or laugh, but my words would not come, and for a while, even my ears could hear nothing." (pp.146-147) Kambili succumbs to her father's abuses. She accepts Papa's suppression to the extent that she avoids socializing with friends. She quickly runs to her waiting car when school closes. She observes:



Kevin had many chores to do for Papa and I was not allowed to keep him waiting, so I always dashed out of my last class. Dashed, as though I were running the 200-metres race at the interhouse sports competition. Once, Kevin told Papa I took a few minutes longer, and Papa slapped my left and right cheeks at the same time, so his huge palms left parallel marks on my face and ringing in my ears for days.  
(p.59)

The above account further reveals how Kambili reacts so as not to incur the displeasure of her father.

Eugene's oppressive rule has a toll on Kambili to the extent that his death does not end the effect of oppression on Kambili. Even when Papa dies, she observes

I wanted to tell Jaja that my eyes tingled with unshed tears, that I still listened for, wanted to hear Papa's footsteps on the stairs. That there were painfully scattered bits inside me that I could never put back because the places they fit into were gone. (pp.293-294)

Kambili is affected by Eugene's oppressive acts to the extent that even after his death, she cannot grasp the reality that oppression has ended.

Though Kambili is affected by the abuses for the greater part of the plot Auntie Ifeoma and Father Amadi play significant roles in Kambili's ability to break free from the effect of the abuses and oppression. Apart from Auntie Ifeoma, Father Amadi plays a significant role in Kambili's ability to break free from the silence and the effect of her father's abuses. Through Father Amadi, she learns to discover herself and appreciate that Christianity does not have to be oppressive and restrictive. He demonstrates that differences in religion should not put a barrier between people. The effect of Father Amadi is so great that she learns to laugh. Kambili observes:

We really did not need the music, though, because his voice was melody enough. I felt I was at home, that I was where had been meant to be for a long time. I laughed. It sounded strange, as if I were listening to the recorded laughter of a stranger being played back. I was not sure I had ever heard myself laugh. (p.186)

The effect of Father Amadi is so great that she yearns for more of his company. Through the extensive use of rhetorical questions and metaphors, Kambili points out that association with Father Amadi helps her discover new possibilities. She notes:

Didn't he know that I did not want him to leave ever? That I did not need to be persuaded to go to the stadium or anywhere with him? The afternoon played across my mind as I got out of the car in front of the flat. I had smiled, run, laughed. My chest was filled with something like bath foam. Light. The lightness was so sweet I tasted it on my tongue, the sweetness of an overripe bright yellow cashew fruit.(p.187)

This exposure later helps Kambili to resist her father's oppressive tendencies. For instance, Kambili who previously always succumbs to her father's dictates defies him. This is depicted on the occasion when Eugene destroys her grandfather's painting. She defies her father and still holds on to the torn pieces during the consequence. This defiance by Kambili further reveals the impact of her association with Father Amadi.

The reaction of the prostitutes in *Arrows of Rain* is similar to Kambili's responses. Like Kambili, Tay Tay and her colleagues are presented as defenseless in the face of abuse. They therefore submit to the violations in fear and pain. In a dialogue with Bukuru, Tay Tay reveals their helplessness: "By the time we saw the army people, it was too late to run. At least ten of them surrounded us." (p.216) This statement gives an indication that the prostitutes do not have any choice than to yield to the abuses of the soldiers.

The character Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus* takes a noteworthy approach to oppression and violation. The narrator indicates that she is brave. She portrays that Ifeoma is "tall, exuberant, fearless, loud, larger than life." (p.103) She is brave to the extent that with her presence alone Kambili sees past fearless warriors in her. She notes:

When she barged into the dining room upstairs, I imagined a proud ancient forbear, 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. (p.88)

The picture presented in the above description of Ifeoma further emphasises her bravery. As a result of this bravery, she initially, criticizes and condemns the oppressive acts of the sole administrator. She remains relentless even when they deny her promotion and she receives diverse threats and intimidations. However, she eventually gives up speaking against the military. She chooses the option of leaving the country for America. It is ironic that such a brave character at a point gives up speaking against tyranny. Chiaku, Ifeoma's friend registers her protest against Ifeoma's decision to leave in the face of oppression when she observes:

The educated ones leave, the ones with the potential to right the wrongs. They leave the weak behind. The tyrants continue to reign because the weak cannot resist. Do you not see it is a cycle? Who will break the cycle? (p.249)

Chiaka's observation in the above is an indication that when the brave who can resist oppressors rule take the option of leaving, abuse and oppression continues.

Amaka also registers her displeasure with Ifeoma's response to abuse through a dialogue between Amaka and Obiora. Amaka who opposes her mother's choice asks Obiora :

What do you mean, leave? Why do we have to run away from our own country? Why can't we fix it?" ... so we have to run away? That's the answer, running away?(p.250)

The extensive use of the rhetorical question in the above further reiterates the authorial comment that leaving in the face of dictatorship is not the best option and does not end violations. However, Obiora's remark is also noteworthy: "It's not running away, its being realistic. By the time we get to university the good professors will be fed up with all this nonsense and will go abroad." (p.237) Obiora's point highlights the fact that sometimes the apparent reaction to abuse is to leave when nothing else can be done.

Dr. Mandi's reaction to abuse in *Arrows of Rain* can be juxtaposed with Ifeoma's response in *Purple Hibiscus*. Unlike Ifeoma's initial response to abuse, Dr. Mandi at the start cowers in the face of intimidation. His dialogue with Bukuru reveals his frustration when he is threatened to pronounce Bukuru as a mad person. When Bukuru asks if he will tell the truth, his response is noteworthy:

'I'm afraid not. My hands are tied in that regard' His face was mournful and tired.... 'You can't publicize dirty secrets about the Life President and hope to sleep peacefully' (73)

The above extract is a clear indication of a character who cowers under intimidation. Like Dr. Mandi, Justice Kayode and the police officials cow in the face of intimidation. They therefore succumb to the whims and caprices of the oppressor.

However, Dr. Mandi finally decides to speak against oppression and face the consequences.

'Illness has forced me to consider what is important and what is merely expedient. I have decided not to bear false witness in court... Either way I'll die. I might as well die a death that will earn me some dignity.'(247)

Dr. Mandi therefore represents people who only speak against tyranny when there is no way out. He is unlike Ade Coker and Jaja who are ready to die in their quest to rebel

against oppression.

Adichie's depiction of how Beatrice reacts to the various violations of her husband can be compared with how Ndibe's Iyese reacts to the abuses of her lover Issa Pallat Bello. For both Iyese and Beatrice, they initially endure the brutalities of their respective partners. For Beatrice she believes she is privileged to have Eugene as her husband. To her "A husband crowns a woman's life." As a result, she accepts blame even when her husband abuses her. She therefore does nothing when her husband violates her. She also watches her husband abuse her children and she is unable to defend and protect them because she does not want to be "a woman with children and no husband". (83) On one occasion when Kambili is hospitalized after a horrid assault on her, Beatrice is helpless. "Her face felt clammy with tears... Her face was puffy from crying, and her lips were cracked with bits of discolored skin peeling off."(pps. 217-218) Yet, instead of condemning Eugene's act, she tries to suffer in silence.

When Ifeoma comes to visit Kambili she encourages Beatrice to take prudent action to curb this abuse. She notes: "This cannot go on, *nwunye m*,...when a house is on fire, you run out before the roof collapses on you" (p.219) Ifeoma urges Beatrice to leave the abusive partner, yet Beatrice still finds reasons to justify Eugene's abuses: "It has never happened like this before. He has never punished her like this before. It has never happened like this before."(p. 220) The remark from Beatrice reveals her attitude towards abuse. According to Okuyada, "Beatrice is an embodiment of the traditional woman... Content with the economic security her husband guarantees."(255) In view of the fact that she depends solely on her husband for financial security, she endures her husband's violations and suffers in pain. This view of

Beatrice has root in feminism theory. When she miscarries after her gruesome ordeal in the hands of Eugene, she does not blame him for her loss. On returning from the hospital, she tells her children: “There was an accident, the baby is gone.” This remark shows Beatrice as a character who even protects the image of her abuser. Even after this ordeal, she accepts to join the family pray for her forgiveness for a crime her husband metes out on her.

Beatrice chooses to endure an abusive marriage. It is sad that after several of these horrible experiences, Beatrice still remains in the abusive marriage. When Ifeoma asks her to leave the marriage, she questions: “Where would I go if I leave Eugene’s house?” Tell me, where would I go?... Do you know how many mothers pushed their daughters at him?” Do you know how many told him to impregnate them even and not bother paying a bride price?

(p.255) Through this dialogue and the extensive rhetorical questions, the author reveals

Beatrice as a docile, weak and helpless victim of oppression and abuse. According to the WHO study on Health and Violence:

Most abused women are not passive victims... Some women resist, others flee, while others attempt to keep the peace by giving in to their husbands’ demands. What may seem to an outside observer to be a lack of positive response by the women may in fact be a calculated assessment of what is needed to survive in the marriage and to protect herself and her children. (95)

The above reflects the life of women like Beatrice, Ifeoma and Iyese. Beatrice succumbs to the varying degrees of abuses of herself and her children. She endures the violation of Eugene because she is dependent on him. She has similar traits with Ifeoma’s friend who expresses similar sentiments: “Do you think we do not all know the truth, *eh?* But

*gwalkerom*, will the truth feed your children? Will the truth pay their fees and buy their clothes?" (p.227-228) Like Ifeoma's friend, Beatrice would prefer submitting to an oppressive rule for the sake of her children. However, her option of not leaving her marriage is significant. Since she was dependent on Eugene, her option of leaving would have resulted in leaving her children behind to continue suffering abuses. Her action indicates that to stop oppression, it is the oppressor who must go. Beatrice on this note demonstrate a trait similar to Chiaku who believes in staying to end tyrannical rule.

However, Beatrice eventually decides to end the abuses of Eugene when she gets fed up with the abuses. She therefore resorts to poisoning his food bit by bit and this finally results in his death. She succeeds in killing the oppressor. Her elimination of Eugene signifies an end to the various suppression and abuses of her family. Adichie highlights that the reactions of Beatrice have consequences. First, her inaction against tyranny for a long time results in dire consequences. When she finally takes a step, it results in Jaja's imprisonment. She therefore becomes the symbol of the group of people whose delay in speaking against oppression brings telling results.

Unlike Beatrice, the character Iyese's initial response in *Arrows of Rain* is to try to break off the relationship with an abusive partner. However, her action results in more abuses. She subsequently takes steps to report her lover to the appropriate quarters. Unfortunately, the police make light of the situation. Iyese recounts her ordeal in a dialogue with Bukuru when he enquires what happens when she reports the abuses to the police. The dialogue that ensues between them is noteworthy:

She sighed, exasperatedly. Don't you live  
in this country?  
The police told me that the law does not cover  
people like me'

What did they mean?  
They asked if he was my husband. I said  
no.  
Was he my sugar daddy?  
I said I didn't know what that meant.  
So they asked, was he married?  
I said yes.  
And did he spend money on me?  
I answered yes, from time to time.  
Then the officer in charge said,  
“*chikena*, he's your sugar daddy.  
He can beat you.  
I left the police station in tears.”(p.160)

The dialogue above reveals the ridicule Iyese suffers in the hands of the police when she chooses to report abuse. After this experience, Iyese chooses to remain silent in the abusive relationship. It is sad that the situation is not limited to fiction but reality. Women are vulnerable to human rights abuses and this creates a fertile ground for exploitation. In an article titled “Police Abuse Sex Worker: A Global reality, Widely Ignored” by Chi Mgbako, “To gather evidence of a crime against a sex worker, they have to first take it seriously”(5) noted one sex worker about the lack of police attention to report on violence. “ If we go to the police to report abuse, we're made fun of, we are told you deserve it”(5) They chase you away. Iyese suffers a similar fate in the novel. As a result, she chooses to endure the abuses until she meets her untimely death.

In the article, ‘Victims and/or Victimisers’ Women’s De (con) structive Power in *The Housemaid* Monica Bungaro notes: “In a general atmosphere of corruption and exploitation... any distinction between victims and victimizers, abusers and abused becomes blurred” (pp28) This observation holds in discussing the character Eugene. He is both a victim and a victimizer. This makes him react to abuse in diverse ways. As a victim of abuse,

Eugene believes and accepts that violence is a good thing. Like Kambili, he endures violations in silence. When the Reverend father abuses him as a child, he comes to accept it as a constructive measure instead of a destructive measure. This is one reason that makes him abusive later in life.

However, as an adult, Eugene resists and rebels against oppressive rule like Ade Coker. He defies and criticizes the military through his newspaper. Father Benedict testifies of his bravery in the face of terror:

Look at Brother Eugene. He could have chosen to be like other Big Men in this country, he could have decided to sit at home and do nothing after the coup, to make sure the government did not threaten his business. But no, Brother Eugene spoke out for freedom. (pp.12-13)

Ade Coker further in a postscript where he thanked his publisher, describes Eugene as : “*a man of integrity, the bravest man I know.*” (p.50).

Eugene however coils in the face of tyranny later in the novel. As a result of his criticism of the military regime, they find ways of bringing him down. Kambili recounts what

Mama tells them has happened to their father. She says:

Soldiers had gone to one of the factories carrying dead rats in a carton, and then closed the factory down, saying the rats had been found there and could spread disease through the wafers and biscuits (p.214)

With his factory closed down, Eugene is so disturbed that he no longer visits his other factories as he used to do. He rather spends long hours with father Benedict saying special

novenas. He is thus affected by the action which is taken against him. It is for this reason that many people will keep quiet over the wrongs of military regimes.

Paradoxically, Eugene doesn't only criticize abuse and oppression but he is also a perpetrator of abuse. His response to abuse as a perpetrator is interesting. After he abuses his family, he appears remorseful. On one occasion when Kambili is hospitalized after his abuses, Kambili observes " I could tell that his eyes were soft, that he was speaking and crying at the same time. " My precious daughter. Nothing will happen to you. My precious daughter." (p. 219) This account depicts Eugene as a character who appears sorry after he abuses his victim.

The response of the masses to both the military and civilian government abusing power is striking in both *Arrows of Rain* and *Purple Hibiscus*. The masses in Ndibe's novel welcome the news of a coup with jubilation. The narrator recounts it thus:

The streets were jammed. Cars blasted their horns. People embraced one another and pumped hands. Jubilant crowds chanted, 'Hang Amin!', 'Askia is axed!', 'Down with Amin's corruption. 'Welcome AFRRC!(p.193)

The masses overwhelmingly applaud the military at first because the coup marks the end to the tyranny of civilian government represented by Prime Minister Askia Amin and his corrupt ministers. However, in *Purple Hibiscus*, the masses do not receive the news of a coup with joy. Instead there were several demonstrations after the coup.

So far, this chapter has discussed the various ways the victims of abuse react to abuse.

Both writers indicate that the reactions are diverse. The chapter highlighted that some individuals rebel in the face of oppression while others succumb to abuse. Yet, other people also speak up against dictatorial rule whereas others take the option of leaving.

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## CONCLUSION

The issues of abuse and oppression are prevalent in Africa, and Africans have a cause to be concerned about them. African writers have contributed immensely in depicting this social menace in their literary works. This research considers abuse and oppression from the perspective of two novels. This research has discussed how Okey Ndibe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie present abuse and oppression in their novels, *Arrows of Rain* and *Purple Hibiscus*. They both prove that people who wield power of any sort – domestically and politically – abuse and carry out various forms of maltreatment against vulnerable people like women, children and the masses.

In, *Arrows of Rain*, Ndibe presents a military government that intimidates and suppresses the masses after taking over power from the civilian government. He further depicts abuse and oppression in the domestic domain. Similarly, In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie depicts various forms of abuse from both the domestic domain and the political setting. She uses the incidence of abuse in the family setting to represent the larger picture of the state. Both writers highlight a tall list of abuse, their causes, implications and effects on the victims and the society at large and how these victims react in the face of abuse. These issues are highlighted through literary techniques such as characterization, vivid descriptions, child narrators using the first person narrative technique, setting and other novelistic devices. The concerns they both raise in their respective novels are a reflection of the sufferings and hardships the masses suffer in a society ruled by tyrannical leaders.

The research examines this social menace through the postcolonial theory of hybridity and mimicry and feminism. The study comes out with the findings that African leaders tend to assume the posture of the colonizer with regard to abuse and oppression. African leaders

carry out untold violence on their people just as the colonizers oppressed Africans. It is apparent in both *Arrows of Rain* and *Purple Hibiscus* that civilian and military governments abuse power and become guilty of oppressing and intimidating the masses when they are in power. In *Arrows of Rain* for instance, the civilian government abuse power and this occasions the military under Issa Pallat Bello to seize power. Yet, they become as abusive and despotic as the civilian and colonial governments. This results in the disillusionment of the masses.

The research also establishes that colonial legacies such as the church and the army are sometimes used as tools for the abuse of the masses. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Eugene is a hybrid of the African and the European he has mimicked. He thus uses religion as a tool to abuse his family members. He suffers abuse from a Catholic priest and he transfers this abuse to his family. At the national level however, he is patriotic. He fights against leaders who abuse and oppress the masses. He therefore becomes a hybrid of the African and European ways of life.

The study also uses Virginia Woolf's theory of feminism which argues that the female given financial independence and her privacy could be as productive and imaginative as men. This independence will help her free herself from limitations that tend to limit and oppress her. The women who are traumatized in our primary sources are mainly simple uneducated women who are helpless and vulnerable. The study comes out with the finding that women who are not economically and educationally empowered are forced to endure debilitating and abusive marriages and relationships. Beatrice in *Purple Hibiscus* demonstrates this view point. She chooses to endure an abusive relationship because she has nowhere to go. Iyese also chooses to endure an abusive relationship because she is not economically empowered.

Feminist ideas of emancipation and empowerment are thus highlighted. Ifeoma suggests to Beatrice that she could divorce her husband in order to free herself and her children from abuse and oppression.

A critical examination of abuse and oppression in the socio-political landscape of Africa in *Arrows of Rain* and *Purple Hibiscus* demands that certain practical measures be taken to attain a society with fewer incidence of abuse and oppression.

First of all, for women to break free from abuse and oppression, there is the need for them to be economically empowered through education. This is one way they could free themselves from oppressive and abusive conditions. In *Purple Hibiscus*, it is because Beatrice is not empowered economically that she endures the abuse of her husband for a long time.

However, Ifeoma is able to practically deal with abuse because she is empowered.

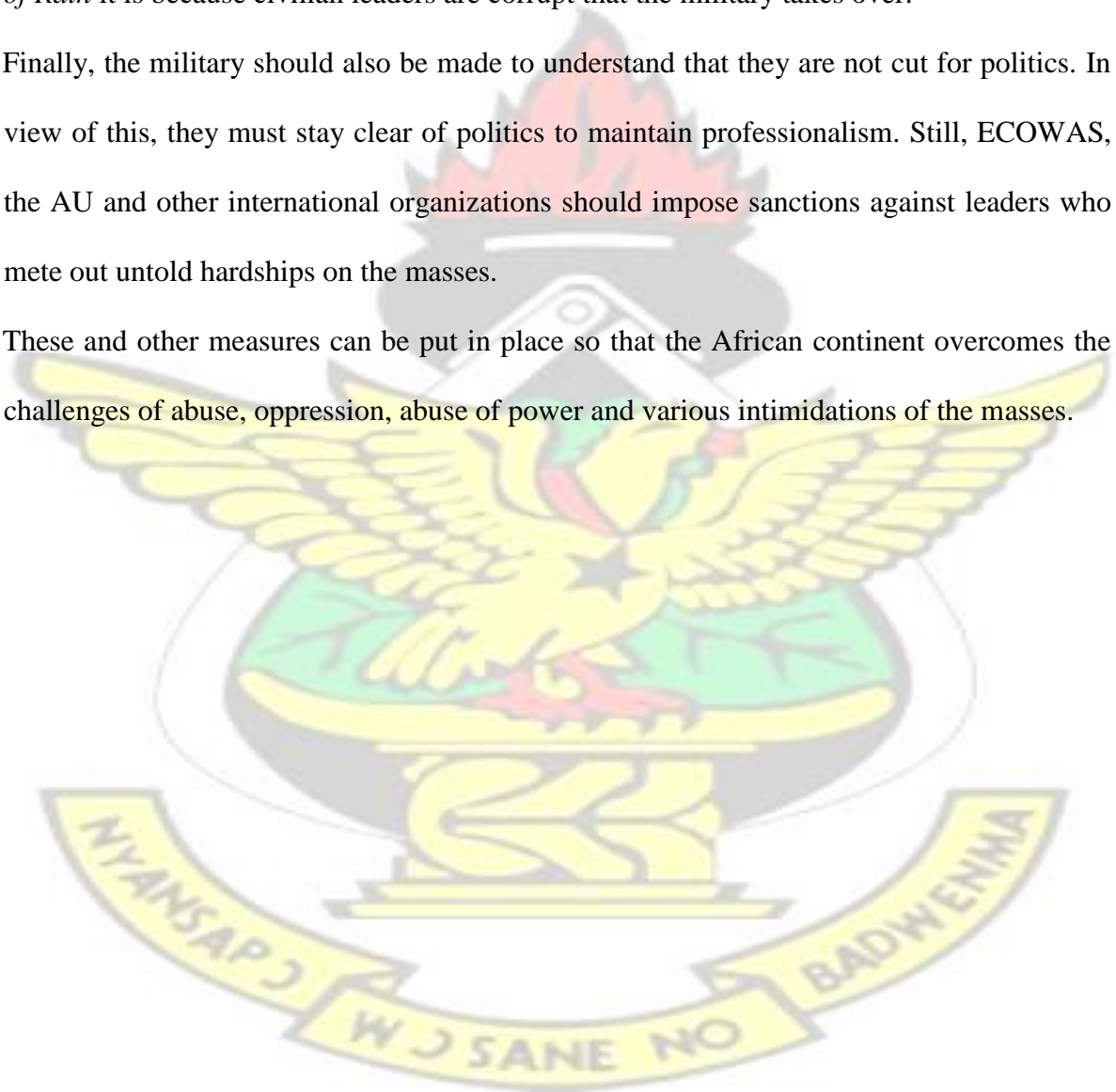
Also, parents need to bring up their children in a free and fair environment devoid of oppression and suppression. This would help them to discover their potential. In *Purple Hibiscus*, it is because Ifeoma is liberal in bringing up her children that they are able to discover their potential. Eugene on the other hand trains Kambili and Jaja in a restrictive and oppressive environment. This results in their lack of confidence and their becoming fearful.

Furthermore, there is the need for awareness to be created for victims of abuse to speak up and report it. The society needs to be educated on laws governing abuse and authorities should treat reported abuse cases with urgency and seriousness. In *Arrows of Rain*, Iyese chooses to suffer abuse because the police officials make light of the situation the first time she reports.

Again, mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that leaders who hold positions do not abuse power. Democratic institutions must be strengthened to check leaders so that they do not become corrupt but rather initiate good policies that will foster peaceful co-existence among leaders and the masses. When this is done, there will be little or no room for the military, for genuine or selfish reasons, to seize power. In both *Purple Hibiscus* and *Arrows of Rain* it is because civilian leaders are corrupt that the military takes over.

Finally, the military should also be made to understand that they are not cut for politics. In view of this, they must stay clear of politics to maintain professionalism. Still, ECOWAS, the AU and other international organizations should impose sanctions against leaders who mete out untold hardships on the masses.

These and other measures can be put in place so that the African continent overcomes the challenges of abuse, oppression, abuse of power and various intimidations of the masses.



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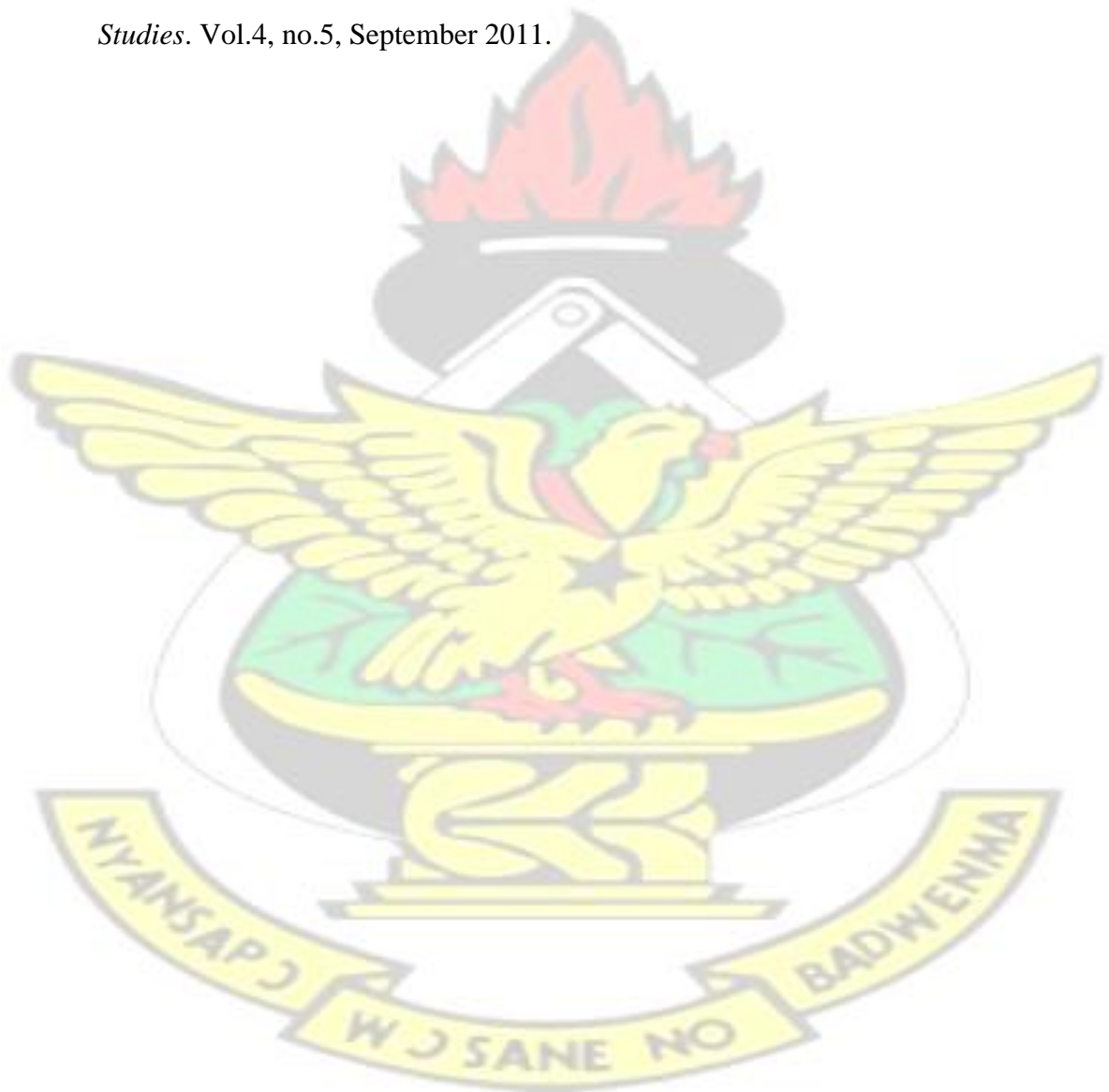
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