

Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and the Valorization of Womanhood

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Abstract

The Nigerian Civil War has birthed much writing with the actors and victims reimagining the dark historical experience, highlighting the divergent role(s) in different literary genres. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, one of the latest additions to the corpus of the war narratives, marks its distinctiveness by its fictive feminization, valorizing the marginal 'other'. Available studies on the text focus on gender and trauma, with a passing mention of education. With the feminist theory as its thrust, this paper examines Adichie's redefinition of the status of femininity vis-à-vis education. Through the actions of male/female genders and the rural illiterate/highly educated female gender captured in duality, Adichie, in the text, configures education as an undercurrent for the exploits of the educated female even as it (education) serves as the author's strategy of subverting gender bias in society.

Keywords

Civil War, Feminism, Other, Subversion, Education

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No singular event in Nigeria has birthed much writing as the Nigerian Civil War as actors and victims recall or reimagine the dark historical experience highlighting the divergent role(s) in different literary genres. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* is one of the latest addition to the corpus of imaginative literature on the war. Her novel marks its distinctiveness basically as a fictive feminization of the war, valorizing the woman, the marginal 'Other' in the man/woman duality.

The attempt at altering the marginal position of the female gender is essential to feminists' struggle from its genesis (Opara 57; Nwapa 528; Otuegbe 6). Fundamental to the struggle is the deconstruction of the patriarchally-induced perception of the woman and the reconstruction of the image of the woman generally believed to have been crushed by patriarchally-conceived customs, traditions, and religions. The reconstruction efforts world over have birthed the Feminism ideology, creative and scholarly writings, some of which attempt to rewrite or challenge phallogocentric history, valorizing the female gender (Morris 9; Selden et al. 117-119). Joan Scott justifies efforts such as those aforementioned, contending that such attempts are not just adding women to history, but telling stories the way they should be told, thus making women take their place as historians (10). Scott's contention re-echoes the focus of Flora Nwapa's writing, which according to her, is intended to project "a more balanced image of African womanhood" (527) in relation to the perceived negative portraits of the woman in African male-authored narratives.

The early African females' imaginative attempt at refashioning "a more balanced image of the woman" as illustrated in such texts as Nwapa's *Efuru*, Buchi Emechita's *Second Class Citizen*, Zainab Alkali's *Still Born*, and lately Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, to mention but a few, has come with subversion as the male image is often deconstructed and is reconfigured in contrast to the female as a failure or is demonized as an agent of the afflictions of the female gender.

Globally, the attempt to recreate the image of the woman in society has catalyzed the emergence of sundry feminists with varying ideological persuasions, all with intent to unfetter the woman from supposedly stifling collars of patriarchy fostered by traditions, religions, and culture. Western feminists with divergent ideological leanings are grouped thus: liberal, radical, Marxist, and Black/Womanist feminists. African feminism is distinct from Western feminism to which it is affiliated (Davis 563) and owes its origin – concerning its emergence as a movement or an ideology (Opara 58). Its distinction exists

essentially based on the peculiarities of the cultural and religious experiences of the African woman.

Like the Western forms, African feminism has also forked into different brands, all threaded together, however, by the subjugation of the African woman promoted by cultural and religious dictates. The most prominent of such brands are Catherine Acholonu's *Motherism* which seems to be a derivative of *Womanism* by Alice Walker, an African American feminist author; Molara Ogundipe-Leslie's *Stiwanism*; and Chikwenye Okonjo's *African Womanism*.

Acholonu's *Motherism* focuses on the centrality of the woman in society. It expresses its Africanness by its celebration of African motherhood and respect for the family union constituted of the father and mother, the environment and the world as Acholonu explains *Motherism* as "a melting pot of all people, men and women, even feminists who are concerned about the menace of wars around the globe, racism, malnutrition, political and economic exploitation... the degradation of the environment and the depletion of the ozone layer through pollution" (2).

Ogundipe-Leslie's *Stiwanism* is a euphemized feminist neologism that, in its originator's thinking, attempts to diffuse the tension often engendered in the African gender relations by the term feminism (549). This euphemized feminism, in Leslie-Ogundipe contestation, is essentially not anti-men or the African cultural heritage but seeks the inclusion of women in Africa for holistic social transformation and harmonization. STIWA is an acronym for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa, which is not a departure from other brands of feminism in Africa or the world over, seems to summarize the fundamental concern of women – altering the conditions of women in society. The Africanness in Leslie-Ogundipe's advocacy exists eloquently only in the inclusion in the acronym the epithet "in Africa".

As has been stated earlier, the thread binding all the brands of African feminism is non-separation from the male gender, and respect for African culture – a fundamental point of departure from the Western brands that include Black feminism/"Womanism", which was evolved to address the peculiarity of African American woman perceived to have been excluded by her color from the middle-class centered white feminism. The cultural alignment of feminism is not exclusive to African feminism as cultural dictates are obvious in the emergence of other brands of feminism such as Queer Feminism and Lesbian feminism within Western feminism that includes Alice Walker's "Womanism" that encourages bisexuality as is unabashedly explored in her *The Color Purple*. Such bisexuality as exhibited by female characters in Walker's text – which doubtless, is influenced by the liberal American cultural milieu – is alien to the African cultural atmosphere.

Even as African feminists' writings advocate a change in the marginal position of the female gender through the rewriting of history or the recreation of the status of the woman, they are devoid of the advocacy and exploration of bisexuality of the female gender. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's efforts at rewriting the female gender are laced seriously with feminist ethos unblemished by western liberal culture. Running through her major texts, however, is the focus on the educated middle-class families as can be discerned in her three novels – *Purple Hibiscus*, *Americanah*, and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Her focus on the educated middle-class is significant. It smacks of the influence of her middle-class background – having been born and parented in a university environment by a professor father and an educated mother, whom both belonged to the middle-class. The attention on the middle-class evinces the coloring of the experience of this class on her creative engagements. By her spotlight on the middle-class, which she is a part of,

she falls into a seeming snare into which Lukacs' sees every writer fall. Lukac detects "writers will tend to present the inside pictures of the class on which their own experience of society is based. All other social classes will tend to be seen from outside." (qtd in Amuta 61)

In the author's note in one of the last pages of our text in consideration, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, she validates Lukacs' observation where she reveals the source of the materials for her Nigerian Civil War narrative. She discloses that besides her personal research on the war, the recounts of her middle-class relations – her professor father, educated mother and civil war veteran uncles – form the basis of her fictionalized historical text (Adichie *HYS* 542, 543).

Her middle-class privileged opportunities and their influence on her choice of educated middle-class in our works as can be seen in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are traceable to her *We must all be Feminist* pamphlet in which is her brazen admission of her feminist leaning. She reveals that her uneducated great and grandmothers exhibited feminist streaks (13, 17). The revelation here is instructive concerning her choice of educated female characters with a feminist consciousness. She seems to have modeled her female characters in *Half of Yellow Sun* to fulfill the lacking of her beloved grand/great grandmothers, whose feminist streaks were muffled by their lack of western education (13).

Albeit Adichie's feminist stand predates her pamphlet, *We must all be Feminist* as it is resonant in her *Purple Hibiscus*, *Americanah*, and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, it is in her pamphlet that the vociferousness of her ideological bent becomes audaciously overt. The feminist consciousness has been innate in her, from her teenage years as she reveals in her *We must all be Feminists* (6). In this book, she re-echoes popular feminists' contestation that gender is a social construct, arguing that culture, which assigns gender roles, is a human creation. Drawing largely on her personal experience and the experiences of others with whom she has closely associated, she interrogates the culture-based assigning of roles centered on gender rather than on interest and ability (6). She deduces that society has taught humans to internalize the inferiorization of the female gender, giving so much attention to the male gender – a thing that props up the invisibility of the woman, she argues (9).

Such contentions as enunciated in the above booklet have greatly sculpted her writing through which she subverts the invisibility of the female gender. Her model choice of females in her narratives that are made visible, as has been stated earlier, unfortunately, are all of the same class under which the writer subsumes – educated middle-class. By the choice of this class of female characters, Adichie, in her subversive attempt, is advocating the education of the female gender for her visibility in society that Adichie sees as skewed to the advantage of the male gender.

Adichie's exploration of the educated female characters is not alien to African feminist discourse or ideology that contends that the denial of education and the economic emasculation of the woman strengthen the fetters of female subjugation and push her down the abyss of invisibility. Feminists, therefore advocate the education and economic independence of the woman to unclasp the manacles of suppression. These twin points of education and fiscal liberation have been explored in several female imaginative works such as Flora Nwanpa's *Efuru*, Buchi Emechita's *Second Class Citizen*, Zainab Alhkali's *Still Born*, Tsitsi Dagarembga's *Nervous Condition*, Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*, among others.

Adichie, in her text under consideration in this essay, explores the twin concerns of African feminists – education and fiscal liberality with their social benefits,

particularly during the Nigerian Civil War. Her exploration of the two is however unique: her female heroines are not just educated, but highly educated. Her choice of highly educated female characters can be interpreted to be her belief that higher education translates to enhanced social benefits. This underscores her desire that in modern society, the female gender needs to be of elevated intellectual exposure to heighten her contributions to society in opposition to her illiterate female foils. Essential to this paper on Adichie's Nigerian Civil War narrative, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, is her redefinition of the status of femininity vis-à-vis education. This point is explored not only through the male/female gender duality but also through rural illiterate/highly educated female gender parallel. The mere focus on gender to the exclusion or a passing mention of education in the text obfuscates the crux of the feminist ideology in the text. The primacy accorded education, which is central to this essay, establishes its distinctiveness from other studies on Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Since its emergence, the text has not ceased to catalyze critical responses. Some of the essays on the text explore the trauma provoked by the Civil War; while others have examined it as the writer's attempt at rewriting the history of the Nigerian Civil War with the lenses of the female gender. Augustine Nwanyanwu and Okwudiri Anasuidu in "Trauma of a Nation and the Narrative of Suffering in Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*" focus on the psychological trauma provoked by the suffering of the characters. The duo in the essay explores sundry encounters of various characters during the civil war and their psychological responses to their experiences. For instance, Olanna who has been in the northern part of the country before the war is traumatized by heart-rending sights of her slaughtered close kinsmen in the north.

Lauren Rackley sees Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun* challenging androcentric history by narrating the civil war with her eyes on the exploits of women. Rackley examines the trauma of females in the text, with attention to the domestic domain and female experience. She attributes the entire ordeal of the Igbo to the British colonization of Nigeria of which the Igbo are a part. She sees the trauma of the Biafran war as national, affecting the larger Nigerian nation.

Eyoh Etim's interpretation of the text shares some form of similarity with Rackley's as he reads the text as a feminist's attempt at rewriting the history of the Civil War, valorizing the female gender. He yokes the text with Akachi Ezeigbo's *The Last of the Strong Ones* side as counter-narratives that parallel texts by a male author like Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty*, that like, Achebe's early novel is phallogocentric, focusing exclusively on their engagements.

Textual Analysis

Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* is divided into two parts that are tethered together with artistic finesse as they cohere. The first part explores the mid-sixties of the twentieth century shortly after Nigeria's independence from the British colonialists. The second part focuses on the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War and its effects on the Igbo enclave within the first segment when the country was still a nation in transition, evolving into a modern nation. This underscores the fact that it was a nation-state where the traditional cultural values were very much alive, influencing the thinking of the people, including education, gender roles and attitude towards the female gender. Adichie attempts to alter the thinking of the first period that is symbolic of the continuation of the devaluation of the female gender by creating parallel characters that undermine the old order. The attempts are achieved mainly in the second part of the narrative – especially from the outbreak of the civil war – through the juxtapositional actions of the educated middle-

class, and illiterate characters of both genders. The apposition serves as a window to achieve Adichie's advocacy of higher education, essentially for the female gender. We shall examine these parallels that run through the gamut of the text.

The Parallel of the Old Traditional Woman and the Educated Woman

In consonance with her contestation against African cultural dictates that privilege the male gender – vis-à-vis roles assigning as captured in *We Must all be Feminist* – Adichie, in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, challenges these dictates through the accentuation of the educated middle-class female twins named Olanna and Kainene, the two dominant female characters in the narrative. The twins, who are western educated – up to master's degrees from foreign universities – are symbolic of the modern parallel to the traditional African woman. The traditional African woman is symbolized by women such as their mother and other women such as Odenigbo's illiterate rural mother, the twins' mother's female relations – Auntie Ifeka and her daughter resident in the northern part of Nigeria – as well as other illiterate rural women among whom Olanna lives and interacts in a rustic milieu during the Civil War. Essentially, the binary is the major instrument by which Adichie deconstructs the traditional femininity and trumpets her advocacy for the intellectualization of the female gender.

The advocacy is explored in the text in different ways that include her presentation of the mother of Olanna and Kainene as barely literate, underlining the focus on education in the text. The focus is built up with information on the actions of the characters, both male and female before, during and after the war. The actions of the non-educated all revolve around and serve as foils to the actions of the educated. As part of the premium on education also, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka Campus is a major setting of the text, before and during the war. The University of Nigeria, a second university established in the newly independent Nigeria in the text is an amalgam of the teaching staff of Nigerians and foreigners from Europe and America – a fusion that is vestigial of the immediate colonial past. It is on this university campus we come across almost all the major and many minor characters in the text who have established relationships before the Nigerian Civil War, particularly at Odenigbo's house in the lecturers' quarters.

Odenigbo's house in the staff quarters is symbolically a rendezvous of lecturers of radical thinking. As revealed in the words of Professor Ezeka, the rendezvousing lecturers, amidst drinking, are concerned with evolving a new nation excised free from the ideological strings of the West and East:

“Do you think we have time to worry about that? ... What matters is whatever will make our people move forward. Let's assume that capitalist democracy is a good thing in principle if it is our kind – where somebody gives you a dress that they tell you to look like their own, but it doesn't fit you and the button have fallen off – then you have to discard it and make a dress that is your own size. You simply have to.” (159)

Significantly, it is with this group of lecturers at Odenigbo's place that Olanna – one of Adichie's models of the educated woman – identifies when she gets employed as a Sociology lecturer. In a radical choice, she has preferred the job of an academic and getting married to Odenigbo to getting married to the Minister for Finance, Chief Okonji, assumed to be a money bag, and living in luxury as barely literate. Her rich father and

mother have strongly desired to marry off their daughter in exchange for government contracts from the Minister. Olanna's rejection of her parents' choice of husband, her choice of job – an objection espoused also by her equally well-educated twin sister, Kainene – and her decision to be rather married to a radical lecturer are evocative of three contestations of feminists, particularly early African feminists, against patriarchy inherent also in the Adichie's narrative. First of such contestation is the "thingfication" of the woman (a mere property to be traded off to a man). Second is the limited or denied education and third, the financial dependence of the woman on the man – a thing that promotes female subjugation.

Olanna's resistance is, therefore, Adichie's subversive attempt at altering patriarchal objectification of the woman, and her economic subjugation through the instrumentality of education. It is worthy of note that feminists see education as an effective cudgel for the liberation of the woman from inhibitive patriarchal chains. Through Olanna's self-emancipatory actions, Adichie, like earlier African feminists in the mold of Nwapa and Emecheta reverses the old order represented by Chief Ozoibia and his wife (the parents of the twins) and other non-literate characters who are also symbolic of the old traditions that have been heaved into the post-colonial era.

The old tradition in pre-independence Nigeria, which the rural villages are also emblematic of and for which Adichie negotiates a change, is further illustrated in the text in Ugwu's relocation from the village to serve Odenigbo on the campus of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. This is consistent with Adichie's advocacy for tinkering a change through education. No wonder, therefore, that on the campus, Ugwu falls in love with his master's and mistress' peculiar use of English and desires to read and alter his rustic status and become like his role models. It is not surprising that during the war he becomes an ancillary teacher at the different places to which they are forced to relocate for shelter. At Orlu, imitative and under the supervision of Richard, Kainene's British boyfriend, he writes a book on his experience of the war.

The Role of the educated in the Nigerian Civil War

Even as Adichie configures education as an effective tool for social transformation, she does so highlighting education and its recipients not as flawless individuals. The educated intelligentsia of both genders is portrayed in the text as blends of both good and bad streaks. Odenigbo, despite his intellectualism and radical avowal, is blemished by sexual incontinence, before and after his marriage to Olanna. Before he is formally bonded to Olanna conjugally, he had exhibited his moral foible, succumbing so easily to the pressures of his illiterate mother by impregnating Amala, a young girl his mother had brought from the village to be a replacement for Olanna. If the first act could be mitigated as inadvertent on his part, but his indulgence in adultery with Alice, their wartime single female neighbor, establishes it as a weakness that besmirches his exalted learning.

On her part, the elitist pedagogy Olanna had received abroad does not insulate her from the bug of sexual infidelity either. In a bid to get even with Odenigbo for his unfaithfulness, before the war, she also gets into casual sex with Richard, her twin sister's boyfriend. Adichie may have introduced these actions and reactions of the duo in the text as part of her feminist contestation over the non-superiority of either gender; however, the condemnable nature of the immorality of both actions and reaction is validated in the text by the burden of guilt each of them bears after the commission of the

act – the acts bring both into equality. Obvious also in the acts of the duo is the inability of academic learning to singularly evolve morally flawless humans.

The incapability of education to culture moral rectitude in humans is further explored in the actions of highly educated people, especially during the Civil War. This is illustrated in the actions of Professor Ezeka, one of the radical academics at the rendezvous at Odenigbo's house is appointed Director for Mobilization during the war. The position puts him above his peers as he now drives a sleek Mercedes Benz car:

[...]he had put on some weight and his thin neck had filled out [...]There was something sleek and new about him, about the fine suit, but his supercilious expression was the same, as was his voice. (360)

The above picture of Professor Ezeka is antithetical not only to his pre-war image, but it also contradicts the war tempo that dictates humble living conditions for all – rich and poor, educated elites and illiterate as instantiated in Odenigbo and Olanna who are forced by the war to inhabit a squalid habitation with the poor and illiterate in a rustic milieu. Adichie accentuates the contradictory portrait of Professor Ezeka to highlight the perfidy of some of the highly educated class who profit materially from the war while the majority of people wallow in hunger and death. This picture is not different from what Achebe has painted in his short story, "Girls at War" in which some unscrupulous people see the period of general malaise as one for the unconscionable appropriation of the relief materials meant for all. The treachery of the like of Ezeka becomes loud when viewed against the background of his pre-war ideological avowal, and the need for sacrifice from all classes of people during a war that is supposedly fought for the benefit of all.

Education and the Woman during the War

Not all educated people fortunately are scavengers: most of them contribute positively to the war. The likes of Okeoma, the poet, fights in the war front and gets killed. Adichie's feminist lenses are, however, focused on the contributions of educated females represented by Olanna and Kainene. The roles of the duo during the war are explored through the prism of their education and this crystallises in the text through a juxtaposition of their individual and collaborative activities alongside those of unlettered women with whom they come into a relationship, especially during the war. The paralleling of two classes of women provides the basis for the establishment of the inferior and the superior as most people delineate their position through comparison with others. In the interactions of educated Olanna and Kainene with the uneducated women, the latter are put in a position of disadvantage. This is a covert strategy of Adichie to underscore her feminist advocacy for the education of the woman. Feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft had disputed that lack of education weakens the potentials of the woman, thus diminishes her humanity (qtd in Weedon 111). This feminists' postulation is validated in Adichie's narrative through her representation of the disadvantaged state of the unlearned woman that is more resonant, especially during the Civil War.

Even before the war, illiteracy with its debilitating consequence on the woman is illustrated in the text where Olanna meets an elderly illiterate woman who has gone to the airport to receive her son. Despite her elitist upbringing, Olanna, who is enlightened, draws close to comfort the elder woman when the latter in her illiteracy is expressive of unfounded fears over her son's arrival. In the intercourse here is the sisterhood of the educated and the illiterate inaugurated by the well-educated Olanna.

Olanna's education with its benefits come to the fore during the war, particularly the forced relocation of her four-member household to Umuahia. This period of anomie pushes to the fore her quick sense of social and psychological adaptability. In their new location, their rented new home is a two-bedroom apartment that is a "thatched roof and cracked unpainted walls" (246) with a kitchen and dining – a habitation Ugwu and Baby see as abnormal and unbecoming the status of Master (Odenigbo). Their displeasure only underscores Olanna's sense of adaptability as she laughs off Ugwu's complaints with an expression of gratitude, "Don't you know many people are sharing houses now. The scarcity is serious. And here we are with two bedrooms and a kitchen and a living room and a dining." (246)

Her adjustment is underlined in the word "now" in her above statement – a contrast between the pre-war living conditions with that of the war period. This no doubt indicates her malleability. This can be best appreciated against the background of these three basic factors about her: her affluent pedigree, elitist European education and higher pedagogical engagement as well as her psychological experience prefacing their forced dislodgement from the university campus – the trauma provoked by the macabre sights of her pregnant dead relation and others in Kano as well as the head of little Igbo girl whose mother was carrying it in a calabash on the train back home to the East. So devastating have the effects of these sights been on her, yet she quickly rejigs her a psychological constitution alongside her elitist exposure and adjusts herself to the newer challenges that the war poses.

Her pliability is once more demonstrated when she resists the pressure of her rich parents to fly out to Britain rather than stay back to endure the challenges of the war. Her resistance to her rich parents' desire evinces her strength of character and adaptability. This determination to stay back is in contrast to Mama's (Odenigbo's mother) who also refuses to leave the late husband's compound with her son and his household in the village for another to escape the impending invasion of the enemy soldiers. (405) Mama's rigidity is founded not on reasoning, but purely on her inflexible adherence to the tradition and customs of her people – a rigidity that blinkers her sense of reasoning and the need for a change with the times. No wonder she dies during the war, while Olanna survives the war. The death of one and the survival of the other is not inadvertent but is intentional on the part of Adichie as the writer.

Her (Olanna's) education still puts her at advantage over her unschooled female counterparts concerning her being visionary as she looks beyond the raging war and organizes free school classes for the children at Akwakuma village to which she and Odenigbo's household have moved. The classes are her "noble win the war effort." (432) At Orlu, where Kainene has set up a war refugee camp, Olanna engages in the same business of teaching the children at the camp. The visionary nature of hers contrasts the world of the unschooled as evidenced in the parents of Amala's approval and release of their illiterate teenager girl to Odenigbo's mother to bait him into sexual intercourse and eventual marriage to him rather than taking advantage of the dawn of a new era – post-colonial era – and educate their daughter. Odenigbo's mother and Amala's parents are quintessential of the majority of the illiterate in the post-independent Nigeria ill-equipped for modern society. Odenigbo, in trying to get Olanna to understand the reason for his mother's action, summarises an unfortunate lot of the illiterate thus, "The real tragedy of our postcolonial world is not that majority of people had no say in whether or not they wanted this new world; rather, it is that the majority have not been given the right tools to negotiate this world." (129) The likes of Amala, her mother, Odenigbo's mother are truly ill-equipped to negotiate the new world.

Odenigbo's interpretation of the plight of the unlettered is the basis for Adichie's advocacy for education and his statement becomes valid during the war when Olanna's intellectual exposure paves way for her to get relief materials with some ease as compared to the illiterate women with whom she comes in contact. Some of such women as she comes in contact with also exhibit their naivety when one of her illiterate poor neighbors' children shows signs of Kwashiorkor – war-engendered malnutrition. Olanna however draws the child's mother's attention to its deficiency in protein and promptly gives her some dry milk for the child. Olanna has had the milk alongside other essentials courtesy of the relationship she had had with Professor Ezeka back on the campus of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Kainene's Education and Its Benefits during the war

The war efforts of Kainene, Olanna's twin sister, are not different. During the war, she does not go into moral degeneracy like Eberechi, an uneducated young girl, who exploits her femininity for her survival during the war by dating a soldier. Kainene, in contrast, uses her education and her connections not just for her survival, but that of the poor, helpless victims of the war. Before the war, she had taken over the running of the father's business in Port Harcourt. At the start of the war, she exhibits her visionary nature, like her twin sister, Olanna. Before the fall of Port Harcourt to the Federal army, she had made prepared rations in advance by buying a house at Orlu to which she relocates. She uses this house later as a refugee camp majorly for the vulnerable – women and children – providing their health and food needs of the refugees. She does this singlehandedly, not getting support even from her wealthy father that has fled abroad.

Conclusion

Adichie attempts to retell the Nigerian Civil War story, highlighting the contributions of women even as many interpreters of her text have pointed out. Veneered in her attempt is a feminist ideology of altering genderized hierarchy fostered by culture and making the woman visible. Her feminist advocacy as enunciated in her pamphlet, *We must all be Feminists*, seems to have influenced her war narrative. Her advocacy does not depart completely from the quotidian African feminists' advocacy concerning the education and the economic independence of the woman as illustrated in Kainene and Olanna, her dominant female characters. She has however moved from the commonplace issue of the victimhood of the woman, which serves as the thrust of her maiden novel. What stands out in her advocacy, however, is the intellectualization of the woman as instantiated in Miss Adebayo Olanna and Kainene, who are highly educated young women. Adichie sees elevated education as fundamental to the equality in male and female gender intercourse.

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