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**Fiction as a Blend of Fact and Imagination in Chimamanda
Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus***

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Abstract

*Fiction is an imaginative story rather than being a documentation of any historical fact. However, fiction, as a branch of literature, reflects the author's society. This is why fiction is believed to be a mirror through which a society is seen. Since fiction is something that mirrors society, facts and imagination are always well blended by the author. What this means is that historical and realistic facts are always the writer's source of inspiration. The question now is how well has the writer blended facts and imaginations in his work? This research work therefore aims to ascertain how well Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has blended facts and imagination in her *Purple Hibiscus*. The researcher has equally reviewed scholar's opinions on the concept "Fiction." This he believes would aid him pass judgment on Adichie's work. To consolidate his work and make it very categorical, the researcher draws copious excerpts from the novel. This he believes will enable the reader to understand the work with ease. In analyzing the work, the researcher believes that among other approaches, sociological approach is more adequate in analysis of the fiction.*

Introduction

Abrams (2005) describes fiction as any literary narrative, whether in prose or verse, which is invented instead of being an account of any history. To him, fiction is not an account of any events that actually happened. Similarly, Baldick (2004) looks at fiction simply as the general term for invented stories. He goes further to include that fiction is now usually applied to novels, short stories, novellas, romances, fables and other narratives in prose and in most cases, plays and narrative poems. It is an obvious fact that fiction, though it is a work of imagination, is a mirror through which a society is seen. This is why Perrine (1978) states that unless fiction gives something more than pleasure, it hardly justifies itself as a subject of college study. He states further that unless fiction expands and refines our mind or quickens our sense of life, its value is not appreciably greater than that of a miniature golf, bridge or ping pong. According to him, for fiction to have a compelling claim on our attention, it must yield not enjoyment but understanding. By “Understanding,” Perrine means understanding of life which simply entails that fiction must mirror life as to enhance the understanding of life. Perrine had earlier argued in favour of the fact that fiction is a blend of imagination and reality when he posits that social and historical realities may inspire a writer. Kennedy, Gioia and Bauerlein (2009) strongly believe that fiction does not evolve from nothing. It is rather, a product of society. To them, “Fiction covers any literary work that, although it might contain information true to reality, is not bound by existing facts and events. Rather, it imparts a world spun out of the author’s imagination” (64).

From the views of the scholarship reviewed, it can be inferred that each of them is of the view that though fiction is a product of imagination, historical and sociological facts are to be aptly blended. This justifies Perrine’s assertion that when fiction is studied, a particular society’s way of life is understood. Based on this fact, the researcher has decided to use sociological approach. Hoping Taine (1828-1893), a French critic was one of the earliest sociological theorists. He listed three major factors, he believed, determine a work of art to include: *race, milieu and moment* (Cited in Habib, 2011).

By **race**, Taine referred to national characteristics that are typically found in works of art produced by the creative artists of a given country. By **race**, it is believed that Taine actually meant *culture*. By **milieu**, Taine meant environment and by **moment**; he meant the personal influence in a writer’s life; the immediate happenings in the writer’s environment that inspires the writing. A more contemporary statement of the social approach, according to Ann Dobbie, comes Wellek Warren. Wellek and Warren name three similar areas that are of interest to the social critic to include *the sociology of the writer, the social context of the work and the influence of literature on society*.

Fiction as a Blend of Fact and Imagination in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie affirms that a true fiction should be a blend of imagination and reality when she subtly blends a lot of realities into her fiction. *Purple Hibiscus*, when studied, tends to in addition to the pleasure it offers as a fiction, also gets the audience abreast of certain sociological and historical facts. This is in line with scholars' prescription that a good fiction should mirror the author's society. Watts states that,

The novel is the form of literature which most reflects this individualist and innovating reorientation. Previous literary forms had reflected the general tendency of their cultures to make conformity to traditional practices. The major test of truth: the plots of classical and renaissance epic, for example, were judged largely according to a view of literary decorum derived from the accepted models in the genre. This literary traditionalism was first and most fully changed by the novel, whose primary criterion was truth to individual experience.... The novel is thus the logical literary vehicle of a culture.... (107)

In the words of Cooper, Adichie strives for a holistic vision in her novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, one that integrates Igbo customs and language with catholic ritual and which incorporates men into her gender politics and embraces the literary traditions of her elders.... If this sounds high flown, we need to understand that Adichie attempts to represent this syncretised world through the material culture and everyday realities of life in modern Nigeria. (1)

Many instances abound where Adichie, in the novel aptly blends facts and imagination. Today, concerned individuals bemoan that the Igbo language is going into extinction because nobody likes to speak the Igbo language. They prefer to speak the English language as to be counted among the aristocrats in the society. The people believe that when their children speak the English language it places the children higher above others. In reality, most parents punish their children when they speak the Igbo language especially with people outside. Adichie, through the naïve narrator, Kambili states that they are never allowed to speak the Igbo language in public. Kambili clearly states that:

Papa was staring pointedly at Jaja. "Jaja, have you not shared a drink with us, *gbo?* Have you no words in your mouth?" he asked, entirely in Igbo. A bad sign. He hardly spoke Igbo, and although Jaja and I spoke it with Mama at home, he did not like us to speak it in public. We had to sound civilized in public, he told us; we had to speak English. (21)

As Perrine states that a novelist in his fiction is free to use existing places and personalities in his fiction especially in sociological and historical fiction because

using familiar places makes the novel look real, Adichie in a number of places in *Purple Hibiscus*, used existing and familiar places as parts of her fictional setting. In doing this, she is meticulous in painting the pictures of the places in such a way that her fictional places cohere with the existing places. On page 28, as the naïve narrator, her brother, Jaja and their mother interact among themselves; the mother gladly tells them about her pregnancy. She goes further to say that she went to Park Lane the previous day to see her doctor. Park Lane is a popular government hospital in the present Enugu State.

While Achike indicts her daughter for not taking first position in the school, he chronicles his own experience while he was a student. The school the fictional character says he attended years ago is an existing school in the historical place. According to him, “.... Nobody dropped me off at school. I walked eight miles everyday to Nimo until I finished elementary school. I was a gardener for the priest while I attended St Gregory’s Secondary School.”

This is a historical fact. Those days, before schools were built in all villages and towns, people trekked to far away places to be educated. We are told that Eugene Achike hails from Abba, Adichie’s hometown. In the present Anambra State, Nimo is an existing village not far away from Abba. Adichie, being a native of Abba, is conversant with many neighbouring villages to Abba. Abagana, Ukpok, and Nimo are some examples and her portrayal of these villages and towns in her novel gives the true picture of the historical places. Her description of the popular Oye Agu Abagana keeps one wondering if the novel is after all, a non-fiction.

Again, Adichie’s description of historical festivals in Abagana and her environs, certain real traditions and cultures of Igbo people make the work akin to Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* seen by critics as ethnography of the Igbo. Adichie vividly chronicles historical facts about the belief of Igbo people about the sacred aspect of masquerade cult. Among the Igbo, Abagana is a town that despite the proliferation of churches in the town, the people of Abagana still observe their tradition and culture. Mmanwu is part of their tradition and it is a sacred issue not usually discussed among the uninitiated and the womenfolk. One reading *Purple Hibiscus* sees glaringly, the historical Abagana and environs as well as their true beliefs, traditions and cultures. Auntie Ifeoma takes her children, Papa Nnukwu, Jaja and Kambili to Abagana to watch masquerades. Papa Nnukwu tells them about each masquerade. From him, we understand the historical facts that certain masquerades are not to be looked at by women. When Jaja asks Papa Nnukwu if people carry masquerade, Papa Nnukwu shuns him and tells him that masquerades are spirits and as an uninitiated, he should not participate in discussing the mystery of masquerade. In Igbo, especially in most parts of Anambra State which constitutes part of the scope

of the research, the issue of masquerade is a mystery. Achebe echoes this in *Things Fall Apart*. In any case of *ita mmanwu*, the victim's house would be set ablaze.

It is the belief of a typical Igbo man that the essence of marriage is to procreate. It is a global fact, made vivid in creation when God says to the first man and woman to go into the world and procreate. Again, it is a popular fact among the Igbo people that one man does not marry a wife all alone. Flora Nwapa echoes this historical fact in her novels especially in *Efuru* and *Idu*. With this belief, when a woman fails to prove her mettle by producing as many children as possible, members of the *umunna* would begin to persuade the man to begin to look for black goat before darkness would come. Beatrice thus shares her pathetic experience with her children. She says to them, "God is faithful. You know after you came and I had the miscarriage, the members of *umunna* even sent people to your father to urge him to have children with someone else. So many people had willing daughters, and many of them were university graduates, too. They might have borne many sons and even taken over our home and driven us out, like Mr. Ezendu's second wife did...." (28)

The Civil War Experience

Historical facts about the Nigeria and Biafra civil war are mirrored by Adichie. One reading *Purple Hibiscus* needs not crack one's brain much trying to decode the history mirrored by the author. She makes it so vivid and categorical that at a glance, one who has any knowledge of the civil war understands Adichie's message with ease. The naïve narrator says,

.... A general with a strong Hausa accent came on and announced that there had been a coup and that we had a new government. We would be told shortly who our new head of state was.

Ade Coker the editor in the fiction, is the historical Dele Giwa who was killed via letter bomb. On several occasions, the fictional Ade Coker was arrested for saying the truth about the nation and her governance in the *Standard* which he is the editor. The true pictures of the murders of Ken Saro and Dele Giwa are aptly mirrored by Adichie. Historical Ken Saro Wiwa is symbolized by the fictional character Nwankiti Ogechi. Adichie narrates his pathetic killing this way,

When we got the next edition of the *Standard*, I knew it would have Nwankiti Ogechi on its cover. The story was detailed, angry, full of quotes from someone called The Source. Soldiers shot Nwankiti Ogechi in a bush in Minna. And then they poured acid on his body to melt his flesh off his bones, to kill him even when he was already dead.

The message carried by the *Standard* about the death of Ken Saro Wiwa, fictionalized Nwankiti Ogechi is the exact account of the death of Ken Saro Wiwa.

The veteran journalist, Dele Diwa published the heinous killing of Saro Wiwa. This heralds his own murder. The military heads of state never wanted anybody to say the truth about their dictatorship and anybody who dared reveal the fact would face his fate. The death of Dele Giwa is no longer news in Nigeria. Even the afro beat musician, Fela sang a satirical song about the murder. Adichie pathetically fictionalizes the fact about the killing and perpetual horror witnessed in Nigeria during the military rules under Generals Sani Abacha and Ibrahim Babangida. On page 212, through the invented character, we see the historical reality of the killing of Dele Giwa. In the excerpt below, Adichie did not add or remove anything that would make the reader crack his or her brain trying to decode the intended message.

It rained heavily the day Ade Coker died, a strange, furious rain in the middle of the parched harmattan. Ade Coker was at breakfast with his family when a courier delivered a packet to him. His daughter, in her primary school uniform, was sitting across the table from him. The baby was nearby, in a high chair. His wife was spooning Ceralac into the baby's mouth. Ade Coker was blown up when he opened the package – a package everybody would have known was from the Head of State even if his wife Yetande had not said that Ade Coker looked at the envelope and said “It has the State House seal” before he opened it.

Purple Hibiscus mirrors how corrupt Nigeria was during the military regime, precisely, during Abacha and Babangida's regimes. Adichie succinctly paints a true picture of the ills of the heads of state and how they dared not spare anybody who dared to criticize their corrupt and autocratic administration. Journalists were afraid to report facts except very few who, in spite all odds, determine never to sit on the fence. Ade Coker is a paradigm of such determined journalists as mirrored by Adichie. Of course, the fate of such determined journalists in a corrupt society like Nigeria during the military rule is made obvious by Adichie through the murder of Ade Coker. According to Kambili, “I knew the arrest was because of the big cover story in the last *Standard*, a story about how the Head of State and his wife had paid people to transport heroin abroad, a story that questioned the recent execution of three men and who the real drug barons were” (46).

Contemporary Facts in *Purple Hibiscus*

Thousands of beggars in all parts of Nigeria's major roads and streets feature in *Purple Hibiscus*. Blending the fact into fiction, Adichie decides to mirror the fact as it is in real life rather than fictionalizing it. She points at the existing places and locations where the beggars are mostly found in Enugu. The naïve narrator, Kambili says that as her father takes her to school, at Ogui Road, he slows down to give the beggars some money. Anyone familiar with the physical Ogui Road in Enugu State will attest to the fact that the place, in reality, accommodates plethora of beggars and

hawkers. Also, the description of Ninth Mile in the fiction is more realistic than fictitious. Adichie gives us the apt illustration of the existing Ninth Mile with all the trades done in the place. Ninth Mile is always ever busy and the doggedness of the hawkers is well chronicled by Adichie. Kambili in the novel, states that at Ninth Mile, Papa stopped to buy bread and okpa. Hawkers descended on our car, pushing boiled eggs, roasted cashew nuts, bottled water, bread, okpa, agidi into every window of the car.

It is a common knowledge that Nigerian politicians and those on top are corrupt. They siphon any money meant for constructing the government roads into their pockets. In most cases, they give contracts to inexperienced contractors who charge less so that greater part of the money goes into their bank accounts. Adichie fictionalizes the known fact with Kambili's narration that, "The expressway was a single lane, and when we got behind a lorry he stayed put, murmuring that the roads were unsafe, that the people in Abuja had stolen all the money meant for making the expressway a dual-carriage." The fictional description of the expressway is a true picture of our major roads especially in the eastern part of the country.

The fates of widows in most parts of Igbo societies in Nigeria are clearly illustrated through Adichie's fictional characters. Adichie's invented character, Auntie Ifeoma whose husband Ifediora has died helped her pass her historical message across. It has been a common thing among the Igbo that when a man dies, his wife, in most cases, is accused of being responsible for the death. Even when it is categorical that the woman is innocent, the members of the kindred, probably in order to afford themselves the opportunity to share the man's properties among themselves, indict the poor woman of abetting the husband's death. When Auntie Ifeoma is asked when she would take her children to their father's placeso that their uncles and aunties would see them, she says, "Perhaps today, although I don't have the strength for Ifediora's family right now. They eat more and more shit every year. The people in his *umunna* said he left money somewhere and I have been hiding it. Last Christmas, one of the women from the compound even told me I had killed him." Beatrice concurs with Auntie Ifeoma that *umunna* in most cases constitute to the problems women pass through in real life. Beatrice says, "Did our own *umunna* not tell Eugene to take another wife because a man of his stature cannot have just two children?"

High rate of unemployment in Nigeria which is a source of concern to everybody is aptly mirrored by Adichie. The issue of embargo on employment that is never lifted is no longer news in Nigeria. After suffering for years in the university, one graduates and joins the other unemployed graduates. Adichie vividly blends the historical facts of unemployment in Nigeria into the fiction. She presents this fact so realistically so that one reading the novel, sees the true image of Nigeria in the novel.

Aunty Ifeoma is a lecturer and in a dialogue she has with Beatrice, the historical fact is made vivid.

“*Nwunye m*, sometimes life begins when marriage ends”

“You and your university talk. Is this what you tell your students?” Mama was smiling.

“Seriously, yes. But they marry earlier and earlier these days. What is the use of a degree, they ask me, when we cannot find a job after graduation?”

In addition to the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria, the issue of perdurable scarcity of fuel in Nigeria is a source of concern to all. Nigeria is richly blessed with the product yet it is always scarce in the country. When it is seen at all, the price always escalates. Adichie states that the problem of scarcity of the product had remained in the country since the military rule. She categorically x-rays the ills meted to the country by the military Head of State through the invented character; Aunty Ifeoma bemoans thus, “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. Some people left their cars in the station because they did not have enough fuel to drive back home. If you could see the mosquitoes that bit me that night, eh, the bumps on my skin were as big as cashew nuts.”

Incessant industrial actions by medical doctors and other sectors is an inherent fact in the annals of the Nigerian history. Doctors and other labour unions embark on industrial actions because their demands are not granted to them. The incessant strikes are hazardous to the nation. Adichie makes it vivid that medical doctors’ strikes herald premature deaths in Nigeria. In the novel, Aunty Ifeoma takes the indisposed Papa Nnukwu to Nsukka to take care of him but doctors are on strike. Private hospitals without the requisite medical equipments take the advantage to hike their bills despite the fact that they have no necessary medical equipments. Papa Nnukwu, whose life could have been saved if doctors were not on strike, eventually dies. On page 193, we hear Amaka laments that Papa Nnukwu would be alive now if the medical centre was not on strike. Also similar to the devastating effects of the recurrent industrial actions is the problem of perennial power outages in Nigeria. On several places in the novel, we are able to infer that power supply in Nigeria is irregular. Again, when there is power outage, Amaka groans over the incessant power outages when she says, “Hei.... This is not a good time for NEPA to take light.”

In Nigeria, contracts are awarded and re-awarded and at the end, they are never completed. On rare occasions, when they are managed to be completed at the long run, the quality is always very inferior. Adichie aptly mirrors this fact through the voice of Aunty Ifeoma. Father Amadi has promised to come and take Kambili

with him to the stadium. Auntie Ifeoma admonishes Kambili to get prepared as not to keep Father Amadi waiting when he comes. She adds that the stadium has no roof to shelter the spectators so they should leave on time in order to get a better place to sit at the stadium. Amaka's response that it is because they have spent ten years building the stadium and that the money has gone into people's pockets, immediately reveals to us that Adichie is talking about Nigerian administrators who award contracts as well as antagonize the contracts by siphoning the money meant for the project into their private accounts.

The Colonial Experience

As Nnolim notes that the historical novel broadly reconstructs a series of historical events and the spirit of a past age, Adichie vividly, through Papa Nnukwu, gives a true account of colonialism and the early missionaries to the country. Showing his aversion for the missionary, Papa Nnukwu says,

I remember the first one that came to Abba, the one they called Father John. His face was red like palm oil; they say our type of sun does not shine in the white man's land. He had a helper, a man from Nimo called Jude. In the afternoon they gathered the children under the *ukwa* tree in the mission and taught them their religion. I did not join them, *kpa*, but I went sometimes to see what they were doing. One day I said to them, where is this god you worship? They said he was like *chukwu*; that he was in the sky. I asked them, who is the person that was killed, the person that hangs on the wood outside the mission? They said he was the son, but that the son and the father are equal. It was then that I knew that the white man was mad. That father and the son are equal? *Tufia!* Do you see? That is why Eugene can disregard me, because he thinks we are equal.

With the statement above, Papa Nnukwu believes strongly that it was Christian religion that actually corrupted our people. This is the belief of other Igbo people and that was why they antagonized the first white missionaries. Achebe consolidates this historical fact as research shows that the earlier missionaries were given the *ajo ofia* to build their church there. It was the belief of our people then that all abominable things cast into the *ajo ofia* would haunt the missionaries. When nothing of such happened, physical attacks were launched on them. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo slays the white man's messenger.

The Belief of the Roman Catholic

Roman Catholic doctrine and the belief about the mystery of extreme unction are well fictionalized by Adichie. It is believed that if a dying person receives extreme unction before he eventually dies, the person is safe whether or not he or she was a Catholic before his or death. This is vividly pictured by Adichie in *Purple*

Hibiscus. Papa Nnukwu was never a Catholic and in fact, he abhorred everything Catholicism. He becomes sick, dies as a result of lack of medical care because his son Eugene, vows not to spend his money to save the live of anyone who is not a Catholic. When Papa Nnukwu dies at the long last, Eugene is contacted. To Auntie Ifeoma's surprise, Eugene seems unperturbed that his father died. He is only interested to know if he was given extreme unction so he asks Auntie Ifeoma, "Did you call a priest to give him extreme unction?" Auntie Ifeoma is amazed that all that he could say about the tragic news is if he was given extreme unction. To make things worse, Eugene goes further to emphasize that "I cannot participate in a pagan funeral, but we can discuss with the parish priest and arrange a Catholic funeral." To this, Auntie Ifeoma responds with fury, "...Was our father a Catholic? I ask you, Eugene, was he a Catholic?" (195.)

The belief of the Roman Catholics about the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary: It is believed that Blessed Virgin Mary appears at certain places in Nigeria and this is well documented by Adichie. Umunya apparition ground in Anambra State is an example. Aokpe in Benue State is another. In *Purple Hibiscus*, we hear Auntie Ifeoma asking Uncle Eugene if he has heard about Aokpe. She goes further to explain that Aokpe is a tiny village in Benue State. This is a fact. Historically, in the present Benue State of Nigeria, Aokpe is well known as an apparition ground. Virgin Mary, according to history, began to appear in October, 1992 to a twelve year-old girl, Christiana Agbo in Aokpe. Aokpe is located in a remote part of Benue State of Nigeria. The apt way Adichie integrates the historical fact about Aokpe into her fiction is highly commendable. She invents fictional characters she uses as an indispensable tool to tell the historical truth. Auntie Ifeoma for instance, tells her brother on page 107, that she wants to go on pilgrimage to Aokpe with the children including Jaja and Kambili. Though the characters are invented, the locations are real.

Further on page 115, Adichie integrates realistic fact about Catholic belief that after each confession, one becomes spotless again. According to the naïve narrator, as they drove home, Papa states that "I am spotless now, we are all spotless. If God calls us right now, we are going straight to Heaven." He goes further to emphasize that, "We will not require the cleansing of purgatory." Eugene's belief that after confession, one's sins are forgiven is the belief of any good Catholic in real life. Also the belief that in purgatory, the sins of a deceased is completely cleansed is made vivid in the novel. Any Catholic reading the novel easily appreciates it for it shares his or her experiences. A non Catholic tends to see through the fiction, the ethnography of the Catholic Church.

Real Locations and Historical Figures Part of Fictional Settings and Characters

On page 118, Adichie proves that she is familiar with Nsukka and the environs. The fictional description of the real locations in the novel is so vivid and

categorical in such a way that one who has not been to Nsukka, precisely, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka immediately knows the geography of the area through the fictional description. The whole of pages 118 and 119 are mere documentation of real facts. The apt illustration by Adichie through the fictional narrator is a true mirror of the realistic University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Kambili states that as they are taken to Nsukka by the driver, Kelvin, she sees a sign on the roadside that reads UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA. Adichie starts from there to give us a vivid description of the real locality. She states that:

Near the town of Opi – the dust – covered church and school sign read OPI –we came to a police checkpoint. Old tyres and nails-studded logs were strewn across most of the road, leaving only a narrow space.... We were driving past the market. The crowded roadside stores with their sparse shelves of goods threatened to spill over onto a thin stripe of road already full of double-parked cars, hawkers with trays balanced on their heads, motorcyclists, boys pushing wheelbarrows full of yams....

Eventually, they get to the gate of the University, the fictional description of the university gate, the motto of the university, the logo, the portrait of a lion among other things are mere adaptations of the realistic University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Through Kelvin, we understand that the fictional character, Auntie Ifeoma who is a lecturer in the University, lives in the University Staff quarters at Marguerite Cartwright Avenue. Interestingly, this fictional staff quarters is the realistic place in University of Nigeria, Nsukka where the the staf of the university live. Adichie subtly blends the history and imagination in a clear and credible means.

Adichie describes Nigeria's highlife musicians in the way they are talked about in real life. Fela, for instance, is a Yoruba musician known for his fearlessness in satirizing political ills during the military rule in Nigeria. Osadebe and Onyeka Onwenu are popular Igbo musicians who, in their individual albums, preach unity and oneness among the major and minor tribes in Nigeria. The character, Amaka, in *Purple Hibiscus*, says, "I listen mostly to indigenous musicians. They are culturally conscious; they have something real to say." Amaka goes on to chronicle the popular Nigerian musicians as mentioned above as the people whose musical albums, she cherishes.

Adichie is conscious about sanitizing Nigeria. This is why she has employed satire as an indispensable tool for correction. In an attempt to correct ills, Adichie firstly vividly x-rays the ills and makes them categorical in such a way that corrections can be made. For instance, she aptly condemns the rate to which Nigerian politicians siphon the money meant for provision of social amenities into their pockets. They are unperturbed about the suffering of the masses. When the undergraduates have been without water and power for long, they are aggravated to

rioting. Through the fictional characters, Adichie makes it categorical, the fact that our politicians are not only corrupt but also self-centred. Thus when Amaka says that she wouldn't allow the students to riot if she was the V.C, Obiora quickly retorts, "If some Big Man in Abuja has stolen the money, is the V.C. supposed to vomit money for Nsukka?" In addition, she reiterates the perils the masses perpetually suffer as a result of incessant scarcity of fuel in the country. Nigeria is a major producer of oil, yet the product is always unavailable in Nigeria.

Historical figures and facts are chronicled and well documented by Adichie in such a way that the reader gets abreast of the historical fact while reading the fiction. In the view of Charles Nnolim, "the fictional characters interacting with actual historical personages, through their actions give expression to the impact which the historical events have upon people living through them, with the result that a picture of a bygone age is created in personal and immediate terms. Real facts about King Jaja of Opobo are well documented through the dialogues of the fictional characters. Through Obiora, we hear that Jaja of Opobo was a stubborn king. Auntie Ifeoma consequently, gives us a true fact about the historical figure when she says that King Jaja was a king of the Opobo people and that when the British came, he did not sell his soul for a bit of gunpowder like the other kings did, so the British exiled him to the West Indies and that he never returned to Opobo. In the novel, King Jaja is described as a defiant king of Opobo people.

Historical fact about how General Sani Abacha died atop a prostitute is well known to every Dick and Harry in and around Nigeria. This obvious fact is well fictionalized by Adichie in the novel. Anyone who reads the novel immediately remembers Sani Abacha's death. He was a Nigerian military head of state, well known for his corrupt practices. His ignominious death can hardly be erased from the minds of people. In Adichie's own words, "After the Head of State died months ago – they say he died atop a prostitute, foaming at the mouth and jerking....

Effects of Colonialism on the religion and tradition of the Igbo

It must be noted at this point that before the white man came with his religion, African people had their own religion. In Igbo, traditional religion was the mode of praying. Adichie affirms that traditional way of praying is akin to the Christian mode of praying. Ozoemena Nsugbe, a popular *egwu ekepi* musician has in one of his albums, disclosed that Christian religion imitates the mode of practices of the traditionalists. It is a fundamental fact that both religions pray to the same God and that being the case, different religions need not antagonize the other as Eugene Achike despises his own father simply because they do not belong to the same religion. Eugene nurses the illusion that his father is a heathen and that he would rot in hell when he dies. He thus forgets the biblical injunction not to judge in order not to be judged. In real life, a typical traditionalist does not plan to harm anybody,

rather, like Papa Nnukwu prays for his son, they think good of the other. Ozoemena Nsugbe attests to this fact when he alleges that people join the Christian religion so as to keep perpetrating ills with impunity since Christians believe that their God condones so many things. In spite Eugene's hatred for Papa Nnukwu, Papa Nnukwu still thinks good of him. This he demonstrates in his prayers for him. He prays thus: "Chineke! Bless my son Eugene. Let the sun not set on his property. Lift the curse they have put on him." Papa Nnukwu believes that western religion has done harm to his son so he asks God in his prayer to lift the curse placed on his son by the missionary. Besides, the prayer demonstrates the fact that in whatever condition, one's child remains one's child. That is why an adage says that blood is thicker than water.

Satiric Strictures in the Novel

Realistic fact about how the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was governed during the military rule and the ills of sole administratorship were well integrated into the fiction. While x-raying the historical fact, Adichie condemns the activities of sole administrators who sack any member of the staff that dares to criticize them. Nigerian administrators fail to understand that criticism heralds progress. Auntie Ifeoma is such a person who cannot sit on the fence and allow ills to be perpetrated. She says to her colleague, "We cannot sit back and let it happen, *mba*. Where else have you heard of such a thing as sole administrator in a university?"

Ifeoma's colleague says to her, "They said there is a list circulating, Ifeoma, of lecturers who are disloyal to the university. They said they might be fired. They said your name is on it." Ifeoma's response is that, "I am not paid to be loyal. When I speak the truth, it becomes disloyal," quickly reveals to us the rate to which the sole administrators abhor the truth. In addition to this, Adichie categorically unmasks the high rate of corruption in Nigeria. In different offices in Nigeria, some people's promotions remain static especially if they are not loyal to the administrators. In most cases, people's files are sat on so that years after they are due for promotion, they remain on the same level. Because Auntie Ifeoma is not so docile as to dance to the tunes of the sole administrator, her file was sat on. Obiora says, "Do you know how long they have been sitting on her file? ... She should have been senior lecturer years ago."

In the novel, students always riot over certain philistine attitudes exhibited by the sole administrators in providing the necessary social amenities to them. The fictional angry students in Adichie's thus sing, "Sole administrator must go. He doesn't wear pant oh! Where is running water? Where is light? Where is petrol?"

It is an obvious fact that getting an American visa in Nigeria is always a herculean task. This is why in Igbo, we hear people say, "*A na acho gi ka visa*

America” to anyone who seems very scarce. Adichie got this obvious fact well integrated in her novel. Most of the people who applied for visa were refused the visa without reasons. Having made up her mind to leave Nigeria to America, Auntie Ifeoma prays profusely that her visa is not rejected. The children who are eager to go to America pray that God would make it possible. When she comes back from the embassy and tells them that she has got the visa, Jaja is amazed that she is not looking happy and Auntie Ifeoma says in response, “Oh *nna m*, I am. Do you know how many people they refuse? A woman next to me cried until I thought that blood would run down her cheeks. She asked them, “How can you refuse me a visa? I have shown you that I have money in the bank.”

Towards the end of the novel, Eugene Achike dies of food poisoning and Jaja has been in the cell since he unconsciously, admits having a hand in the death of his father. Years after his incarceration, his case is not yet tried in the court and the family has continued to bribe the police and the lawyers to ensure his safety and as well, facilitate his release. Jaja tells his mother and Kambili that there are people in the cell who had been in the cell for years before he came into the cell yet their cases have not been tried in the court. These are inherent things in Nigeria. Corruption and bribery eat so deep into the country that innocent people have the cell as their permanent abode. According to Kambili, “We do not talk about the huge checks we have written, for bribes to judges and policemen and prison guards.” In spite all these, Jaja’s case is not tried in the court. Justice delayed is justice denied. Kambili believes this when she says that if anybody gave birth when Jaja first came to the prison, the child would be talking now, would be in nursery school.” With the statements, Kambili means that her brother has been very long in the prison yet his case has not been tried in the court.

Conclusion

Like Iguanre, Solomon states that a literary artist is in constant consonance with his environment, Adichie has proved that she is concerned about the welfare of her nation by condemning certain ills for correction to be made. Literary artists have a job to do to ensure that their societies are preserved. When things no longer go the way they ought to go in the society, literary artists, through their works, fight against the aberration. This is why satire featured so prominently during the Neo-Classical era because many charlatans and dullards began to write the kind of unconventional literature. Concerned artists like John Dryden, Alexander Pope and others felt that satire would be the best weapon to fight the trend as well as correct the impression. In order to use literature to criticize, the writer has to look around his or her society. What this means is that real things happening in our society should be the source of the writer’s inspiration. This is why it is believed that literature must mirror the writer’s society. Whether typical satire or any form of literature, real facts inspire the

writer. The question therefore is how well has the writer blended facts and imagination in his/her work?

Adichie subtly, like a master craftsman, blended facts and imagination in such a way that while the work is read as a fiction, the reader derives historical facts from it. Although Adichie tells a story the reader already knew, she demonstrated her ingenuity in plotting the novel in such a way that the reader is eager to get to the end of the plot with all curiosity. One cannot conclude that the work is non fiction because even when so many facts are blended into it, the characters, setting and the plot are all products of fiction. Her plot is plausible and credible despite the fact that it is complicated. Adichie's style is good and worthy of emulation.

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