



CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *PURPLE HIBISCUS*: A GYNOCRITICAL INTERPRETATION

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Abstract:

Scholars have employed Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* to discuss diverse themes, including domestic violence, silence and voice, religion and fanaticism, family, love, and resistance. The novel has also attracted a number of criticisms, including feminist, colonial, postcolonial, and ecocriticism. This article aims at adding to the list by interrogating the novel through a gynocritic lens, which looks at the novel's dependence on the woman as a writer rather than as a reader. Gynocriticism is a feminist theory coined by Elaine Showalter in 1979. The theory is an offshoot of the feminist focus on conventional women's roles in a patriarchal and male-dominated world, but aims to create a new tradition of women's literature that focuses on women's experience, their sisterhood and subculture. The article therefore, analyses the themes of voice vs silence, motherhood- a tool for resistance, and friendship and sisterhood from *Purple Hibiscus*. The article finds from the novel that women cannot only be seen with respect to men, domestic roles, and treatment in a patriarchal literary society and world, as illustrated through the female characters such as Beatrice, Ifeoma, Amaka, and Kambili in the text, but also in their internal struggles and relationships with other women and their perceptions about life. This article establishes that if women continue to focus on the literature produced by men, they will never be able to learn about their internal experiences and will only know women as seen by men. The article therefore, concludes that Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is a Nigerian narrative that urges women to aspire to negotiate silence, violence, and family to carve out space for themselves through solidarity, alternative space, and ultimately, autonomy.

Keywords: Gynocriticism, women, Elaine Showalter, voice, solidarity, violence

1. Introduction

The novel has remained relevant in its role of providing a platform for writers around the globe to showcase their imaginative acumen, talent, ideas and creativity in relation to man's activities. Among well-acclaimed Nigerian novelists, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie stands out as one. She

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belongs to the category of contemporary writers in the country, otherwise known as the third generation of novelists. In the same group are Nigerian writers such as Sefi Atta, Helon Habila, Chris Abani, Uzodinma Iweala, and Chigozie Obioma, whose writings deal with themes of post-military rule, migration, identity and gender. Adichie's style and form are captured in her exploration of the themes of religion, immigration, gender, culture and the legacy of colonialism. According to Adichie's Wikipedia page, *Purple Hibiscus* has been translated into more than forty languages, which qualifies it to be categorised as world literature. She has admitted to having been influenced by the renowned writer Chinua Achebe and Buchi Emecheta. A brief biography of Adichie is given below.

Adichie was born on 15th September, 1977, in Enugu, Nigeria. Her parents are James Nwoye and Grace Ifeoma. She studied communication and political science at the Connecticut State University. She also studied creative writing at Johns Hopkins University and African studies at Yale University, both at the master's level. Her major works include *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *The Thing Around Your Neck*, and *Americana*. Her awards include the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Five Books in 2025, Hurston-wright legacy award in 2024. Others are the Orange Prize for Fiction in 2007, the O. Henry Prize in 2003, the US National Book Critics Circle Award, and one of the New York Times for 10 Books of 2013 (africanworld.princeton.edu).

2. Literature Review

Purple Hibiscus has generated sustained scholarly arguments about political tyranny, religious conflict, and post-colonial identity in Nigeria. While these readings illuminate the national and ideological dimensions of the text, they often treat the experiences of female characters as secondary to broader political allegory. From a feminist perspective, various scholars have used *Purple Hibiscus* as a case study for feminist and womanist readings. Some of these include: Musa W. Dube's post-colonial feminist reading (2018), Pallavi Das' feminist/ post-colonial reading (2025), Chipso Perpetual Zhira's comparative radical feminist reading (2019), and Nigus Gebreyohannes and David's ecofeminist reading (2022). While all the above readings of the novel tilt towards feminism, the scholars' emphasis differ in their discussion of themes and styles. Dube, for instance, dwells on how colonialism and patriarchy overlap in Nigerian homes, using Papa Eugene and Auntie Ifeoma for illustration. On her part, Zhira takes on radical feminism as she insists on patriarchy as the root of oppression. She compares Adichie with scholars like Alice Walker and Neshani Andreas, showing how they all negotiate spaces for resisting patriarchy. Connecting women's oppression to the exploitation of nature is the perspective from which Gebreyohannes and David take their reading.

All the above scholars have contributed to knowledge through their readings from different perspectives. However, this article fills the existing gap by analyzing Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* from a gynocritical perspective. A gynocritical approach will shift the center of analysis by interrogating the novel's representation of women's consciousness, voice and resistance within a patriarchal space. This will entail a discussion of feminist critique, where the woman is seen as a reader, which is referred to by Elaine Showalter as gynocriticism.

This article employs analytical and quantitative methods of research. The structure takes care of introduction, providing the background to the discussion. This is followed by the theoretical framework- gynocriticism, a background of the author, as well as the synopsis of the text. Also is the analysis of the text which discusses themes such as: silence vs voice, motherhood, a tool for resistance, and friendship and sisterhood, and their implications for feminist consciousness.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Gynocriticism is adopted for use in this article. It is the study of women's writing and concerns with female experience, imagination, language, and the history of women writers. Elaine Showalter coined the term in 1979 in her essay "*Towards a feminist Poetics*", to distinguish it from feminist critique that reads male texts.

3.2 Definitions of the Concept of Gynocriticism

Elaine Showalter defines gynocriticism as "*the study of women as writers, and its subjects are the history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary tradition*" (22). Showalter, in her definition of gynocriticism, lays emphasis on the woman as a writer, showing a contrast with feminist critique, which reads male text through a feminist lens, a contrast which is significant for the understanding of the focus of this article. The subjects of gynocriticism, as listed in her definition is an indication that the theory is about constructing a female framework for analysing women's literature.

Another gynocritic scholar, Annette Kolodny, defines gynocriticism as "*a method that seeks to uncover a specifically female aesthetic, by examining the patterns of imagery, symbolism, and narrative structure that emerged from women's shared historical and psychological experience*" (1). Similar to Showalter, it can be observed that Kolodny also lays emphasis on the act of reading as a woman, and also the need to recover female reading practices.

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, on their part, define gynocriticism as "*the study of a distinct female literary tradition marked by anxiety of authorship, revision of male myths, and subversion of patriarchal literary convention*" (23). Though they do not use the word gynocriticism like other scholars in their work, their submission aligns with that of Showalter and Kolodny in terms of literary elements as the subject of the theory and their focus on how 19th-century women writers rewrote male texts to create space for female voice. Additionally, is the fact that, the analysis of this article finds expression in the submission of Gilbert and Gubar.

While presenting it as distinct from French post-structuralist feminism, and focusing more on historical and material conditions of women writers, Toril Moi opines that gynocriticism is "*a criticism concerned with woman as writer, and as the producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres and structures of literature by women*" (15).

Viewing it from the perspective of African gynocriticism/womanism, Chikwenye Ogunyemi defines gynocriticism in the African context as "*the study of how African women writers create a woman-centered narrative that reflects African female experience, values, and survival strategies, distinct from both western feminism and male African literary traditions*" (93). Ogunyemi's argument

is that African women writers, as distinct from their Western sisters, develop their own aesthetic and political concerns.

The core distinctions across the foregoing definitions can be summed up in the areas of subject matter: that women should be writers and not just characters. The goal is to recover and theorise a female literary tradition and aesthetic. The method of achievement, on the other hand, is to focus on female experience, language, and imagination rather than only protesting patriarchy in male texts. Lastly, there are contextual variants, where African gynocriticism/womanism adds cultural and communal dimensions that are absent in Euro-American versions. All of the above align with the focus of this article.

3.3 Basic Ideologies of Gynocriticism

3.3.1 Elaine Showalter's Three Phases of Women's Writing

Elaine Showalter is acclaimed as the founder of gynocriticism. She describes three stages in the history of women's literature and also proposes a similar model of the growth of feminist theory. This action was necessitated by her desire to construct a framework for reading women's writing on its own terms, while focusing on the history, themes, genres, and structures of literature by women. Unlike the feminist critique, which analyses how women are portrayed in male-authored texts, gynocriticism investigates the female literary tradition, the psychodynamics of female creativity, and the evolution of a distinct female aesthetic. Showalter emphasises how feminist literary criticism and theory were perceived as inferior and inadequate in literary academia. In justifying the need for a distinct tradition for women, she adds that during the 1970s, literary academia was completely dominated by men. As also observed by Pallavi Singh, *"almost all prominent literary critics such as Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton, Fredric James, Roland Barthes, Stuart Hall, Northrop Frye, Harold Bloom, etc. were men. Feminist theorists and critics were extremely isolated and misunderstood. Male critics often expected feminist critics to fit into the masculine and traditional academic norms and become indifferent and rigid"* (literatureandcriticism.com).

As a result of such discrimination, Showalter's three phases of development of women's literature in her essay emerged, thus: the feminine, feminist and female phases. The feminine phase is characterised by adherence to male literary conventions and the suppression of female subjectivity. The feminist phase emerged with explicit protest against patriarchal structures and the articulation of demands for equality. The third, which is the female phase, signifies a movement toward the exploration of female experience and language, independent of male referents (13).

Showalter categorises feminist literary theory and criticism as either woman as a reader, also known as the feminist critique, or woman as a writer, which is known as gynocriticism. According to Showalter, when a woman is a reader, she absorbs all the works produced by men. Hence, feminist critique focuses on how women are depicted in literary texts written by men. It studies women's characters, conditions, and experiences as written by men. It also highlights traditional misconceptions, misogyny and marginalisation of women that are prevalent explicitly or implicitly in literature.

Gynocriticism, on the other hand, goes beyond feminist critique. Woman is no longer a reader but becomes a writer. Showalter points out that although feminist critique is a significant kind of feminist criticism, it is limiting. She states that, *"If we continue to focus upon the portrayal*

of women in literature produced by men, we will never be able to learn about women's internal experiences and will continue to know women as seen by men" (14). Showalter's submission indicates that in gynocriticism, it is the woman who creates history, text, its meaning, structure, themes, genre, and characters. Gynocriticism no longer sees women in relation to men. Rather, it attempts to focus on unearthing and creating a tradition and sub-culture that belongs to women and it is entirely about them without the influence of conventional male literary codes. This submission obviously renounces the male conventional norms. As Singh rightly observes, by renouncing conventional patriarchal norms about literature, history, society, and language, gynocriticism creates a subculture that includes interactions and consciousness of women, one that creates a subculture that portrays women as their authentic selves (literatureandcriticism.com). Besides creating a subculture, gynocriticism also unearths solidarity and sisterhood of women that stem from their marginalisation by a patriarchal society.

Critical to note is that, besides Showalter, there are significant American feminist scholars whom Showalter mentions in relation to the development of gynocriticism as a theory. The feminist scholars have attempted to explore new ways to study and understand 19th-century female culture through literature. First is *Carroll Smith-Rosenberg* for her path-breaking scholarship of women's gender and history in the United States. Her article titled '*The Female World of Love and Ritual*' explores society and emotions through numerous archived letters between women. *Nancy Falik Cott* is the second gynocritic mentioned for her book '*The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England*'. This book focuses on solidarity and the sisterhood that develops among women through their shared exploitation and cultural bondage. Also is *Ann Douglas*, who is another significant gynocritic known for '*The Feminization of American Culture*'. In this work, Douglas explores and traces the development of American mass culture that is found in women's sentimental literature and clergymen. The fourth American gynocritic is *Nina Auerbach*, known for '*Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction*'. This book explores the bonds of women through the fictions of Louisa May Alcott and Elizabeth Gaskell, Muriel Spark, Sylvia Plath, and Dorothy Sayers. According to Showalter, these gynocritical works by feminist scholars are extremely significant for a complete development of feminist literary theory (literatureandcriticism.com).

3.3.2 African Gynocriticism/Womanism

While Showalter's model of gynocriticism originates in a Euro-American context, African scholars have developed a culturally specific approach to women's writing. The discussion of this approach in this article is significant because of the relationship it shares with the Western approach, and how they complement each other in the analysis of the text. Chikwenye Ogunyemi's concept of African womanism argues that African women writers focus on survival, community and negotiation with tradition rather than outright rejection of it. She defines African womanism as "*a philosophy that celebrates black roots, the ideals of black life, while giving balanced presentation of black womanhood*" and stresses that it "*is not antagonistic to men*" (93). A clarification which Showalter also makes by stating that "*Gynocriticism aims to reconstruct theory linguistically as well as methodologically, in order to include women's issues, perceptions, culture, and experiences, and give them adequate space in literary theory and academia*" (literatureandcriticism.com), which is clearly devoid of any antagonism. For Ogunyemi, African

womanists recognise that “*the survival of the community is dependent on the survival of the individual*” (93).

Molara Ogundipe-Leslie makes a similar point to those of Showalter and Ogunyemi, through her concept of STIWANISM, or Social Transformation Including Women in Africa, which seeks to involve women in national struggles, rather than separating them from it. She argues that “*our issues are not the same as those of western women, and our priorities are different*” (34).

Going by the positions of Ogunyemi and Ogundipe-Leslie, one can conveniently accept that African gynocriticism exists and, as a branch of feminist literary criticism, was developed by African scholars to read women’s writings in Africa on its own cultural terms. The branch developed because African scholars argued that western model lacks the capacity to cater for the peculiarities of African women, such as polygamy, extended family systems, and communal values. The core values are community over individualism, motherhood and mothering, negotiation, not confrontation, and reclamation of indigenous values. In spite of this divergent position from the western feminist literary criticism, there is a convergent point: that women should be writers of texts and should be allowed adequate space in literary theory and academia. It is on the premise of this that the analysis of Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* finds expression and will be interrogated through a gynocritical lens.

4. Synopsis of *Purple Hibiscus*

Purple Hibiscus is told from the perspective of the 15-year-old Kambili Achike. Kambili is an Igbo girl living in Enugu with her parents and older brother Jaja, in the early 1990s, during the military coup in Nigeria. Her mother is Beatrice, and her father is Eugene Achike, a wealthy, devout Catholic and newspaper publisher. Eugene is a respected figure who lends his voice against the military dictatorship, but in his family, he is a strict, abusive family head. He enforces silence and extreme religious discipline, even physical punishment, on his family. His children will only speak when spoken to, and his wife endures beatings without reacting. Kambili and Jaja’s life only changes slightly when they visit their Aunt, Ifeoma and her three children in Nsukka. Ifeoma is a widow and a university lecturer, intellectually sound, politically critical and a strong woman. She encourages questioning, free speech and fun in the house. In her house, Kambili and Jaja experience a different kind of life. Her meeting with Father Amadi, a young priest, also affects Kambili’s life positively. She begins to speak freely and grow beyond her fears. As Achike’s violence escalates, his family begins to rebel against him. Jaja stops going to Mass; his wife poisons him to protect the children. Eugene’s family is broken, but Kambili and Jaja soon begin to find their voices.

5. Gynocritical analysis of *Purple Hibiscus*

5.1 Silence vs Voice in *Purple Hibiscus*

The theme of silence vs voice as presented in the novel is significant to the narrative. In Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*, there is a movement from silence to being vocal; this movement is central to the coming of age of Kambili. As the novel opens in the household of Achike, the reader observes that everyone operates under the absolute authority of Achike. The silence in his home is

imposed as both religious and patriarchal discipline. Achike is a strict Catholic, and his extreme Catholicism equates obedience with holiness, such that any form of deviation arising from questioning, laughter or opposition attracts physical punishment. The effect of this brutality, especially on the women in the house, is immediate and harsh. Beatrice, Kambili's mother, shrinks back in fear, which can be interpreted as both a survival strategy and psychological torture. When Achike beats her after he discovers that she visits Papa-Nnukwu, the narrative records that: "*she never spoke again that day*" (186). Kambili did not choose to be silent; it was rather one enforced by fear of what her father would do next. Over time, Kambili's silence becomes a part of her being. Her speech becomes fragmented, her sentences short; she stammers even outside the house. This enforced silence corresponds to what Showalter identifies as the "*feminine phase*" of women's writing, where women adopt the language and values of the dominant male culture and suppress their own experience. In Achike's house, this phase is obvious; the women speak only when spoken to. Beatrice's body becomes the object of suffering, and her voice is suppressed. Even the house reflects this suppression, as it is orderly, quiet, and cold, as revealed in the narrative: "*Our house was always silent*" (19), says Kambili. From a gynocritical perspective, such is the condition against which a female voice must struggle to emerge.

There is, however, a shift to the scenario in Achike's house. Kambili and Jaja's visit to Auntie Ifeoma's house in Nsukka displays this. The household operates on a different principle; it is noisy, crowded, marked by freedom of speech and open debate, and children are free to argue and question adults. All of these are encouraged by Auntie Ifeoma as a form of intellectual and even spiritual freedom. For instance, she tells Kambili, "*You can pray to God in your own words*" (144). This statement challenges Achike's doctrine of decreed prayer and silence. In Ifeoma's house, voice is perceived as a right and a responsibility. The space allows Kambili to hear her own thoughts aloud for the first time; she begins to laugh again as she states: "*I laughed... I had not laughed in a long time*" (132). Laughter becomes a precursor to voice in the novel. Kambili's full articulation emerges gradually. She finds her voice in Nsukka in the company of her aunt and cousins. When she finally speaks to her father about staying in Nsukka, her voice sounds decisive: "*I want to stay*" (256). This moment shows a reflection of Showalter's "*female phase*", where the female begins to articulate her desires. African gynocriticism complements this with Ogunyemi's argument, that African womanism is concerned with "*the survival of the community*". and recognises that "*the survival of the community is dependent on the survival of the individual woman*" (94). Kambili's found voice is not a rejection of her family but can be interpreted as finding a place within it that allows for growth and transformation of Achike's family.

Furthermore, the contrast between the two households gives additional clarification. Achike's house represents the failure of the "*feminine phase*" to produce an authentic voice. The silence that resonates there leads to death: Beatrice's near death (243), Jaja's imprisonment (284), and Achike's death (280). By contrast, Ifeoma's house shows how voice contributes to survival. Even when Ifeoma loses her university job for speaking out against corruption (255), her willingness to speak aided her children's ability to think critically, as heard in Obiora's submission: "*She will get the visa. We should be positive*" (257). Ogunyemi-Leslie's concept of STIWANISM helps explain this as viewed in her argument that "*African women's struggles are*

embedded in national and community struggles", and that *"our issues are not the same as those of western women, and our priorities are different"* (25).

From the foregoing analysis of the theme of silence vs voice, one can deduce that *Purple Hibiscus* tilts towards African gynocriticism. While Showalter's concept helps to identify the stages of the movement from silence to voice, Ogunyemi and Ogundipe-Leslie's concepts provide the background for understanding why voice emerges through community rather than through isolation. Kambili transforms her father's world, suggesting that the female entity in the African novel is powerful when it works to shape both the family and nation.

5.2 Motherhood, a tool for Resistance

The concept of motherhood in Western feminist criticism has mostly been interpreted as a tool of patriarchal control that stifles the woman's autonomy and muzzles her voice. This view is challenged by African gynocriticism, by interpreting motherhood as a source of power, survival, and resistance. In affirmation, Ogunyemi states that African womanism *"is not antagonistic to men"* but caters for the survival of both the woman and community where *"the survival of the community is dependent on the survival of the woman"* (94). Similarly, Ogundipe-Leslie's concept of STIWANISM insists that women must be a part of the social transformation of Africa. In the novel, and through the characters of Beatrice Achike and Auntie Ifeoma, Adichie demonstrates how motherhood becomes a form of quiet but deliberate resistance within a violent patriarchal household.

More so, Beatrice Achike's motherhood in the house of Achike started off as a passive endurance of her husband's physical abuse and enforced silence, leading even to a miscarriage, yet she remains in the marriage. Western feminist calls it complicity, while African gynocritics see it as strategic mothering, aimed at protecting the children. The actions of Beatrice throughout the plot reveal, like the typical African woman, a calculated choice to keep her family intact until she grabs an opportunity to strike; she confesses to Kambili in the narrative, *"I did it for Jaja and for you"* (291). The act of poisoning Achike can be considered violent, but the motive is maternal. The reader can perceive her act as a way of putting an end to the violence that becomes a threat to the survival of her children, while still a mother and a wife. Beatrice's miscarriage, which results from Achike's beatings, and her final act in reaction can be seen as an assertion of control over her body and children's future. In gynocriticism, this moves her from the *"feminine phase, where women accept male-defined roles. Her resistance is expressed not through speech but action."*

Auntie Ifeoma's resistance is more visible. As a single mother, widow, and university lecturer, she creates a household that allows for questions, laughter, and debate. Her role goes beyond her children to include Jaja and Kambili during their visit to Nsukka. Besides feeding them, she teaches and gives them the voice to speak out. A social transformation of Kambili and Jaja is supported by STIWANISM. Even after losing her job for voicing out against corruption, Ifeoma refuses to be silent. She continues to teach the children forms of spiritual and intellectual responsibility that counter Achike's authoritarian Catholicism. This is seen when she tells Kambili, *"you can pray to God in your own words"* (144).

Ogunyemi's point that African womanism is *"not antagonistic to men"* (1-2), but seeks balance, comes to the fore when Ifeoma argues openly with her brother, Achike; she opposes his authoritarianism, though maintains family ties and mourns his death. Her firmness is

transformative, creating a community where children, especially girls, can think critically and act independently while maintaining their roots. This is demonstrated in the character of Kambili; her gradual ability to speak, laugh, and make choices shows the impact of motherhood.

Adichie highlights two modes of maternal resistance in the novel. Beatrice's resistance, in contrast with Ifeoma's, is internal, protective, and ultimately destructive to the culprit. That of Ifeoma is external, pedagogical and generative. They both demonstrate that motherhood in the novel is not a trap but a strategy. The two mothers use their roles to ensure survival and continuity of their children. Their actions are in alignment with the core of African gynocriticism, as Ogunyemi states that African womanist recognises "*that the survival of the community is dependent on the survival of the woman*" (94). It is evident from the novel that the survival of Achike's children depends on Beatrice's hidden resistance and Ifeoma's open nurturing. They both interpret motherhood as a tool for care and transformation. Consequently, the effect is seen at the end of the novel with Kambili's emerging voice reflecting the success of maternal resistance. Kambili's ability to speak, write, and imagine a future stems from the teaching she receives from both women. The author's presentation of motherhood is therefore, a central space where African women negotiate patriarchy, preserve culture, and foster change.

5.3 Women's Friendship and Sisterhood

In Western gynocriticism, the theme of female friendship functions by allowing women to share experiences. African gynocriticism adds a communal dimension whereby, sisterhood is less about separation from men and more about building networks of care and survival within the community. Emphasising the concept of sisterhood, Ogunyemi's womanism stresses that African women's liberation is tied to the survival of the group. In *Purple Hibiscus*, the author uses the relationships between Kambili, Amaka, and Auntie Ifeoma to demonstrate how female solidarity creates a space where voice and self-hood become possible.

A significant form of sisterhood in the narrative is the bond between Amaka and her cousin Kambili. At the beginning, their relationship is not smooth, which is heard in Amaka's voice when she first met Kambili on their visit to Nsukka: "*I'm sure you think Nsukka is uncivilised compared to Enugu*", "*why do you lower your voice*", "*you lower your voice when you speak*" (116-117). "*I'm sure that back home you flush every hour to keep the water fresh, but we don't do that here*" (121). Amaka views Kambili as a product of her father's wealth and strictness, while Kambili sees Amaka as loud and disrespectful. Their conflict is a clash between Achike's oppression and imposed silence, and Ifeoma's culture of openness. As Kambili spends more time in Nsukka, however, the clash gives way to gradual friendship. Amaka introduces Kambili to secular music, slang and the act of questioning authority. She mocks Kambili, not to humiliate, but to teach her the language of youth. This gradual shift amounts to what Showalter calls the move into the "*female phase*", where women begin to speak to each other in their own terms rather than in male-defined codes. For instance, Amaka's teasing in the narrative: "*You sound like a Catholic hymn book*" (152), is both a ridicule and also an invitation. It is an attempt to force Kambili to recognise her speech and to use a more authentic voice. This friendship is also significant because it happens within the family. Ogunyemi corroborates this by arguing that African womanism is concerned with "*the accommodation of Africanness and womanhood*," not with rejecting cultural

roots. Kambili, for instance, does not find sisterhood by abandoning her community; she finds it through her cousin,

The same network of female solidarity is found in the character of Ifeoma. As a single mother, she displays a pattern of sisterhood that is both maternal and peer-like. She treats her children as partners, not subjects; she includes Kambili and Jaja in her space. Her house becomes a space where women support each other toward emotional growth. When she loses her job, for instance, her children and Kambili are supportive, both emotionally and financially: *"she will get the visa. We should be positive"* (257). A contrast to this supportive female bond is what is noticed in Achike's house. Beatrice is isolated; she has no female friends, no network outside the church. This isolation makes her vulnerable to violence. Female friendship also becomes a survival strategy in the narrative. Where such friendships exist, women can laugh, question, and imagine alternatives.

Importantly, Adichie avoids presenting sisterhood as a perfect bond, in order words romanticising it. The relationship between Amaka and Kambili does not grow to perfection. Amaka is often harsh to Kambili, and the reconciliation is not total by the end of the narrative: *"Do you want him to leave the priesthood?" "He will never leave"* (275). Amaka continues to tease Kambili, a reflection of Ogunyemi's point that African womanism acknowledges conflict within the community but seeks negotiation rather than destruction. Essentially, therefore, the value of sisterhood and friendship does not lie in perfection, but in the creation of a space where the woman can begin to speak for herself, as demonstrated in the character of Kambili. This is why Kambili's growing independence is made possible by the sisterhood she experiences at Nsukka. Her voice develops by engaging with other women, thereby, corroborating the African gynocritical argument that female agency emerges through networks.

Obviously, therefore, women's friendship functions as a form of resistance to patriarchal silence. Through Kambili's bond with Amaka and Ifeoma's household, Adichie shows that female solidarity provides the language, courage, and care needed for voice to emerge. Also, this sisterhood is not about separation from men or culture but about building alternative spaces where women can survive and grow holistically.

6. Conclusion

Purple Hibiscus by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie qualifies as a domestic fiction, a human-angle story, as well as a novel of coming of age. As a domestic fiction, the reader observes that most of the actions take place within two households: that of Achike and Auntie Ifeoma. The silent, violent compound contrasts with the noisy, loving flat. This places the novel in the realm of family dynamics, motherhood and family politics. As a human-angle story, the novel focuses on Achike to show a bigger picture of patriarchal violence. Also, Kambili's coming of age follows her as the narrative unfolds from the time when she is fifteen to seventeen years of age. She moves from being quiet, fearful and obedient to breaking her silence, thinking critically and self-definition.

The article highlights the concept of gynocriticism, which is Western, as coined by Elaine Showalter. The African colourations such as STIWANISM and African womanism are also employed to aid the analysis of the text and the themes discussed. In the three themes discussed-

silence vs voice, motherhood, a tool for resistance, and women's friendship and sisterhood, there is an agreement that the woman's struggle and survival is dependent on combined efforts, however, there is the point which they differ, -that western model lacks the capacity to cater for the peculiarities of African women, such as polygamy, extended family systems, and values. In the female phase of the theory, Adichie presents Ifeoma as a strong woman; her strength is derived from her love for her children, her sense of eternity even in times of crisis, and her ability to live by herself and establish solidarity and companionship with other women. She loves men, but she is neither dependent on them nor lonely without them. She is able to manage her life with or without them. It is her bond with other women that keeps her going even without the man. Thus, through the character of Ifeoma, Adichie unfolds a women's world which can, if needed, function smoothly without men and their support, drawing from her own and women companions' strength. Ifeoma stands out as an example of womanhood because it signifies courage to speak to her brother. She speaks to him in a quiet but firm tone.

In her style of presentation, though set in eastern Nigeria, Adichie rises above a region and country's story and history to that of all people around the world, tilting toward realism. More so, Adichie employs imagery and symbolism in the narrative. The colour red symbolises Achike's violence and patriarchal control. The breaking of the figurine by Jaja, symbolises the breaking of silences, and the purple hibiscus is a symbol of defiance, freedom and Kambili's new voice. For a narrative perspective, the story is told in the first person, by a fifteen-year-old Kambili. Another touch she gives to the narrative is the interjection of code-switching or hybrid language in the novel, a combination of Igbo and English, unveiling an aesthetic texture of language, which permeates the plot from the first to the last chapter. Besides, a deliberate use of simple but standard English gives the novel a memorable quality. Lastly and importantly, the prose is sensory and lyrical. While reading, one is able to see, smell, taste and hear. Portions from the text that unveil this are: *"the sky was the colour of a dusty mango"*, *"I could taste the pepper in the soup"*, *laughter spilled out of Ifeoma's flat"*.

In sum, this article unveils that women's friendship and sisterhood function as a form of resistance that counters patriarchal silence. Through the bond of Kambili, Ifeoma and Amaka, Adichie shows that female solidarity provides the courage and care needed for voice to emerge. As domicile in African gynocriticism, this sisterhood is not about separation from men and culture but about building spaces where women can survive.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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