

A Feminist Stylistic Analysis of Resisting Patriarchal Hegemony in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

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Received 12 June 2024; accepted 26 July 2024
Published online 26 August 2024

Abstract

This study identified the forms of language of resistance in *Purple Hibiscus*. The feminist tools employed by the writer to portray resistance to patriarchal hegemony were examined and the writer's representation of women characters which depict resistance was described. The study aimed primarily to examine the writer's utilisation of feminist tools to defy hegemonic control.

The study employed Mills' concept of feminist stylistics, which is based on the analysis at the word, phrase or sentence level, and discourse level. The data for this study were obtained from primary sources. The primary data were derived from the hardcover edition of *Purple Hibiscus*, with relevant excerpts carefully selected and analysed, in addition to insights from five respondents who participated in the research study. The selected excerpts were analysed using specific nuances at the levels of analysis, which accounts for relevance to the thematic preoccupation of the study. The study showed that feminist tools used to resist hegemony are assertively visible, daringly bold, and brazenly defiant through the writer's creation of women characters as bold, daring, and defiant. Additionally, the study also highlighted a contrast in the writer's predisposition on the varied resistance strategies to patriarchal hegemony revealing that resistance does not always have to be visible and daring rather it could also manifest through subtle and non-confrontational ways, conveyed similarly through the representation of women characters. In all, the study filled some gap in the prevailing dearth of feminist stylistic research on resistance. It also indicated the need for further study to be conducted on children's resistance to hegemonic control in the selected text by researchers.

Key words: Feminism; Patriarchal hegemony; Language of resistance

Onyedinda, O. (2024). A Feminist Stylistic Analysis of Resisting Patriarchal Hegemony in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 29(1), 99-107. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/13557>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/13557>

INTRODUCTION

Patriarchy has evolved and has its roots linked to different sources in history. In Nigeria, patriarchy seems to have its roots in hierarchical social structures, which were institutionalised by colonial rule (Oyeronke, 1997) and have endured in the postcolonial state through institutions of religion, culture, and social life. Normative patriarchal norms have affected the presentation of the social image of women, leading to stereotypical gendered notions and narratives revolving around their femininity as wives, mothers, and rebellious figures. Over time, patriarchy has consistently accorded positions of authority and dominance to men, while women have been subjected to oppression ranging from self-negation, self-erasure, silence, and even violence.

As part of the patriarchal privileges granted to men, the dominance of literature by men has contained narratives of women's reality from a male-oriented perspective. In the depiction of women by male writers, save a few such as Osofisan and Ike, who are post-colonial writers, they are underrepresented and are portrayed as dependent, domestic, weak, voiceless, subordinates, submissive, and passive characters who have no ambition for themselves but fuel the ambitions of their husbands. Conversely, men present themselves as independent, heroes, sole providers, assertive, and ambitious.

Consequently, to challenge the stereotypical depictions of women in literature, female writers speak back by

reclaiming and reconstructing their femininity, thus, leading to observable differences in the representation of men and women in literature when comparing works authored by women to those by men. These varied representations, manifesting in several forms as male-female dichotomy, subject-object dynamics, and domination-subjugation dynamics, stem from patriarchy and are an effect of the patriarchal order. Women also seek to challenge the demeaning status bequeathed to them by the patriarchal order enshrined in literature. Thus, they create female characters that embody assertiveness, self-affirmation, ambition, and subversion to societal expectations that limit their autonomy.

The misrepresentation of women and perpetuation of gender imbalances by male writers such as Tutuola's *The palm-wine drinkard* (1952), Achebe's *Things fall apart* (1958), Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* (1961) spurred a movement of women writers who sought to redress these negative biases by presenting female characters entirely different from the passive stereotypes created by men. Pioneer female writers and texts like Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966), Emecheta's *Second class citizen* (1974), Solofa's *The sweet trap* (1977), Alkali's *The stillborn* (1984) critiqued the limitations and prejudices placed on women in the prevailing male-authored narratives and offered perspectives that affirm the agency of women. Their depiction of female characters as resilient, independent, and voiced, elevating them above their male counterparts, who are presented with masculine flaws, question the standards that culture and society hold men to. Therefore, resistance to patriarchal hegemony by women writers is reflected in their texts through self-affirmation and self-assertion, characterisation, female solidarity, silence, language, and exploring the connection between women and nature. A case in point is Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), Atta's *Everything good will come* (2005), Okparanta's *Under the Udala trees* (2015), and Odafen's *Tomorrow I become a woman* (2022).

Adichie has been very vocal about the dynamics of patriarchal hegemony and its emotional and psychological effects on women in her works. In her essay *We should all be feminists*, she argues that there are stereotypical gendered biases that affect women's assertion of their autonomy and, hence, suggests the need for gender inclusivity and equality that will lead to the subversion of these gendered biases. Her text, *Dear Ijeawele: A feminist manifesto in fifteen suggestions*, presents new perspectives on gender roles and challenges the societal and cultural expectations that have been traditionally ascribed to specific genders. *Purple Hibiscus* reflects patriarchal hegemony within the family unit and traditional expectations of women as being women, and depicts subtle methods of resistance to oppression. Adichie's works are an embodiment of resistance to patriarchal oppression. They serve as a motivation for

women to resist and transcend societal expectations and gender constructions that have been made to restrict their self-assertion and self-affirmation.

Finally, patriarchy is a core theme that Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* addressed and has garnered attention in the academic sphere. Yet, few studies have focused on a feminist stylistic reading of oppression in the text; however, the act of linguistic forms of resistance and the writer's depiction of women's methods of resistance have been neglected by studies. Against this backdrop, this research was decided upon, to study and analyse how language is used to resist patriarchal hegemony in *Purple Hibiscus* from the perspective of feminist stylistics. This research aims to conduct a feminist stylistic analysis of resisting patriarchal hegemony in *Purple Hibiscus*. The specific objectives are to identify the forms of language of resistance in the text; examine feminist tools employed by the writer to resist hegemony and; and describe the writer's representation of women characters which depicts resistance.

METHODOLOGY

For effective management of this research, it will focus on analysing selected excerpts from the four sections in *Purple Hibiscus*: Section One: Breaking Gods: Palm Sunday; Section Two: Speaking with our Spirits: Before Palm Sunday; Section Three: The Pieces of Gods: After Palm Sunday; Section Four: A Different Silence: The Present. These four sections comprise the seventeen chapters of the novel. The selection of the aforementioned text is motivated by Adichie's alteration of stereotypical gendered norms and the subtle methods of resistance to patriarchy she embeds in her text. In this vein, the qualitative method of analysis was employed, with particular attention paid to the writer's depiction of forms of language of resistance to patriarchal structures and women's methods of resistance to these structures. Additionally, it employs the feminist stylistic framework, a linguistic tool that examines how the use of language reveals power dynamics either of oppression or resistance.

Patriarchy and its Manifestation in Literature

Literature has played a significant role in reinforcing and perpetuating patriarchal ideologies throughout history. Literary canons written by African men and women have typically reflected gender imbalances and gross representations of women by portraying women as characters with subordinate roles, having no dreams and ambitions, but rather, existing and functioning as supporters furthering the ambitions of men. Yero (2018) opines that,

It is impossible to discuss African literature without talking about patriarchy. African women pay attention to the ways that patriarchy – that is the psychological and political system that values the male higher than the female – use laws, traditions,

force, ritual, customs, education, labour (etc.) to keep women governed by men in both public and private life (p. 122).

While depicted as passive characters trapped in their domestic roles, Achebe's novel *Things fall apart* highlights the perpetuation of gender roles and patriarchy in the Igbo culture while also depicting cultural clashes between African culture and European culture, thereby placing women at the receiving end of these clashes. Women in the text are presented as second-class citizens, nameless shadows whose existence is tied to their relations with men in traditional Igbo society. The characters of Nwoye's mother and Ekwefi reflect the marginalisation and subjugation of women in a society of patriarchs. His presentation of Nwoye's mother, Okonkwo's first wife, as nameless, and his choice to identify her by her son's name portrays his mind style on the stereotypical notion of women as extensions of their husbands rather than individuals in their rights. This is typical of Ekwefi, who is initially portrayed as a loose woman who absconded from her first husband to get married to Okonkwo. In affirmation, Suparna (2021, p. 2) asserts that 'the construction of women in Achebe's work is nothing more than their relation to men'. Thus, wielding women to men as their possessions, domestically as well as politically.

Conversely, Emecheta's novel, *The joys of motherhood*, is a reflection of the archetypical societal and cultural wisdom that motherhood is a joyful privilege that all women aspire to embrace. It revolves around the typical identities of women as vessels seemingly created for marriage, childbearing, and nurturing. The character of Nnu Ego portrays the life of women in patriarchal societies as they struggle to conform and navigate their societal roles as 'women' 'mothers' and 'wives'. Through Nnu Ego, Emecheta questions the individuality of women being suppressed by societal roles imposed on them and the sacrifices they are compelled to make to meet societal expectations placed upon them. These compelling instances are a truism of the widely held belief that literature is an enabler of culture.

Having given the details of African women's oppression in marriage in a patriarchal society, the result of this, Nyanhongo (2011) says women become as commodities that appeal to the owner whilst still new. Through these manifestations, the perpetuation of patriarchal norms over women has been enabled. It has become apparent how traditional literary canons have, over time, soiled the representation of women and reinforced gendered power imbalances. Having discussed literature as the means through which patriarchal ideologies are reinforced and reflected, the act of resistance to patriarchal hegemony is also evident in literature. Literary canons, while depicting the effects of patriarchal influence on women, also portray women's efforts, which might be subtle or violent, in breaking free from the grips of patriarchy.

Literature has been instrumental in the subversion and resistance of patriarchy. Its instrumentality in opposing patriarchal structures centres on recurring themes of resistance, liberation, independence, empowerment, identity of voice, and the use of symbols, which portray the experiences of disempowered individuals and challenge oppressive gender norms and power structures steeped in our societies. By exploring how literature confronts and defies patriarchy, we broaden our horizons on the importance and potential of storytelling and its capacity to challenge dominant ideologies representing and limiting the identity of women while offering alternative narratives that portray gender balance and assert the agency of women. In Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, Beatrice struggles with her husband's domineering attitude as the patriarch of the family. As the story progresses, she becomes aware of societal stereotypes, limitations, and conventional norms that have confined her to a life of oppression within her home. Her resistance to patriarchy stems from her sister-in-law, Aunt Ifeoma, a symbol of willpower, who encourages her to be assertive. In subverting patriarchy, *Purple Hibiscus* challenges the notion that patriarchal domination complements culture and gives a different viewpoint that recognises the assertiveness of women, resilience, independence, and inclusiveness of women. Concerning Adichie's text, Azuike (2009) says:

Adichie's works wholly indict the patriarchal oppression of women and also encourage women to assert themselves irrespective of cultural norms and archaic traditions which have denied them their human rights and have largely promoted their subordination (pp. 80-81).

Ultimately, the manifestation of patriarchy in literature is an unending discourse that has continued to be explored, raising concerns for discussion. From time immemorial, literature has served as a reflection of societal norms, portraying the divergent thoughts and attitudes of the collective, gender norms, and power structures, challenging assumptions that, however, construct and affect the identity of the misrepresented sex. While literature perpetuates these norms, it does not fully uphold patriarchy. Rather, it serves as a powerful medium for the critique and resistance of patriarchy.

Section one: The Resistance of Patriarchal Hegemony in Purple Hibiscus

Section one of the text is titled Breaking Gods: Palm Sunday. It is symbolic of the turn of events in the novel as it is narrated from the *in-media res*. Told by the homodiegetic character - Kambili, it is an outright rebuttal to conform to the habitual demands and impositions of patriarchy, which leads to a display of violence as a resort to oppose the rebuttal by the father figure. Thus, Kambili says:

Excerpt 1

Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the etagere. (p. 3)

Papa's violent behaviour, characterised by flinging and breaking, which results in the destruction of the figurines, exemplifies the use of material processes – physical actions. The transitive verbs 'flung' and 'broke' occur as the effects of Jaja's refusal to attend communion. Symbolically, these verbs represent the temperamental physical action carried out by Papa exerting his toxic masculine traits of aggression, dominance, and control, as expected of him as a man. In post-colonial Nigeria, leadership positions and authority within the family and wider community rested on men's shoulders. This accordance of power conveys a gender-based power disparity at play, where women and children are subjected to the oppressive control of male figures. Papa's violent and oppressive behaviour exemplifies that of the colonialists, whom he admires. Prepositional phrases such as 'across the room' and 'on the etagere' introduce where the action takes place, thereby suggesting that male dominance and violence brews from and within the family unit unchecked. Ultimately, Papa's deployment of violence emphasises the embodiment of toxic masculine traits or actions, conveying the exertion of patriarchal authority that is encouraged and normalised culturally.

The opening lines of the text, a figurative language – 'things started to fall apart' allude to Achebe's *Things fall apart*. Its allusion to *Things fall apart* lends a voice to the prototypical depiction of masculinity in Achebe's text, which entails wealth, violence, authority, physical power, and polygamy. Through the opening gambit, the writer challenges the rigid sense and portrayal of masculinity exerted by male figures by empowering her female teenage character, Kambili, as the narrator with the bird's eye-view, thereby shifting from monovocality to multivocality. Further, it also suggests that previously there was a state of conformity to established orders. Previously, Jaja attended communion, and the figurines were well-rested on the etagere. By employing the verb 'started,' which means the beginning of an action or a process, the narrator hints at the characters' awareness of the looming sensation of falling apart, which is a conscious, mental, and emotional realisation of the would-be struggles for freedom, voice, self-assertion, and self-affirmation. However, this realisation of the struggles for asserting their autonomy further implies the characters' understanding of the need for liberty.

In the same vein, the telegraphic clause – 'things started to fall apart', which consists of a verbal group, to begin the initial paragraph of the text simultaneously represents the gradual shattering of the gripping hold of patriarchy. The verbal group 'started to fall' is a metaphor for defiance against oppression. This language choice depicts the looming resistance against oppressive religious

impositions and also symbolises the initial disintegration of the family unit that was once united by oppressive structures. Metaphorically, it indicates a rupture or rebellion against the oppressive forces striving to uphold control and dominance, which suggests the idea of the characters' blooming resistance to patriarchal routines and habits restricting them from asserting their autonomy and voice.

Ironically, Palm Sunday in Christendom symbolises Christ's entry into Jerusalem. However, in the Achike household, it marked the turning point of the end of oppression, which heralded defiance. Jaja's absence from communion, which seems to be an intentional refusal, depicts his resistance to the stringent claws of religious falsehood that upholds and justifies patriarchal oppression. His refusal to participate in the ritual represents an act of self-assertion and presents him as one who challenges the stereotypes of conformity and obedience to expectations and norms set by the patriarchal institution and consequently imposed on him by religion and his father. The negative verbal process 'did not go' implies nonconformity, which is a form of the language of resistance, and suggests Jaja's definiteness to not succumb to the prescribed ritual of going to communion, which Papa believes is life. However, Jaja's defiance in abstaining from attending communion, thus alluding to his choice for death, signifies his brewing desire to dismantle the strongholds of religious patriarchal dominance which imposes strict adherence to religious routines of subservience and conformity.

Excerpt 2

"Jaja, have you not shared a drink with us, gbo?"
"Have you no words in your mouth?"
"Have you nothing to say, gbo, Jaja?" Papa asked again.
"*Mba*, there are no words in my mouth," Jaja replied.
"What?" ... (ellipsis mine)
"I have nothing to say," Jaja said. (p. 13)

In the discourse, Papa functions as the utterer, while Jaja is the recipient. In this case, the utterer and recipient are intertwined because it is a talk exchange deserving of responses from the participants engaged in the discourse. The discourse is an instance of a verbal process that indicates the power relations between Eugene and his son through the use of the questions: 'have you not shared a drink with us?', 'have you no words in your mouth?', 'have you nothing to say?' and assertive statements '*mba*, there are no words in my mouth' and 'I have nothing to say', which reflect the conflict in their relationship, which seems to be Eugene's preference for his ego to be stroked; seeking validation, admiration, and flattery to enhance his narcissism and sense of superiority.

Furthermore, Eugene and his son's talk exchange reflects patriarchy's authoritative and cohesive nature. The use of the interrogative inversion form of imperative by Papa with the 'have you?' structure conveys the chokehold

of domination over freedom in his parenting attitude. It also conveys the authority of a parent over their child. Subsequently, Jaja's responses to his father's questions, which begin with the negation 'Mba' which means 'no' in Igbo, reflect his growing assertiveness over timidity in the heat of conflict between hegemony and resistance. His straightforward responses show his assertion and affirmation of his right to withhold information, attempting to seek conformity to expectations placed on him. Thus, this is seen in the use of further negations such as 'no' and 'nothing,' as it emphasises his voice in the subjugation of oppression. His refusal to comment on his father's factory production drink expresses his defiance in inflating his father's ego, upheld by the privileges of patriarchy. Also, his repetition of the negation 'I have nothing...' strongly emphasises his stance on refusing to succumb to the whims of patriarchy. This is seen in his use of the subject-verb assertive 'I have'. Through this linguistic choice, he affirms his agency as a child in the subversion of dominance imposed upon him and reaffirms his negligible contribution to the reinforcements of patriarchal oppression and defiance to binary extremes of masculine dominance such as power versus powerlessness, agency versus passiveness, oppression versus freedom, and voice versus silence.

The analysis of this discourse reveals the subtle nature of resistance to patriarchal hegemony. For Jaja, resistance begins simply by verbal assertion: asserting his voice of non-conformity or defiance to imposed patriarchal norms through the use of the language of subversion – which implies negation 'no' and 'nothing', direct and concise responses without justification for defiance to patriarchal routines, and assertion of autonomy and self-awareness of the oppressive structures around him.

Section Two: Speaking with our Spirits: Before Palm Sunday

This section of the text delves into the initial suppression and violence exerted on Beatrice, Kambili, and Jaja by Eugene, which are fuelled by patriarchal order in a politically dysfunctional country coupled with extreme religious impositions and cultural stereotypes against women.

Excerpt 3

"But you are a woman. You do not count."

"Eh? So I don't? Has Eugene ever asked about your aching leg? If I do not count, then I will stop asking if you rose well in the morning."

Papa-Nnukwu chuckled. "Then my spirit will haunt you when I join the ancestors."

"It will haunt Eugene first."

"I joke with you, *nwa m*. Where would I be today if my *chi* had not given me a daughter?" Papa Nnukwu paused. "My spirit will intercede for you, so that *Chukwu* will send a good man to take care of you and the children."

"Let your spirit ask *Chukwu* to hasten my promotion to senior lecturer, that is all I ask," Auntie Ifeoma said. (p. 83)

This conversational interchange between Auntie Ifeoma and her father, Papa-Nnukwu reflects and then challenges the stereotypical beliefs about the existence of women. Papa-Nnukwu's initial utterance starkly perpetuates sexism by emphasising the lesser significance of women and dismissively reducing their worth to a point of insignificance. His utterance is metaphorical for the reflection of patriarchal beliefs, which diminish the significance of women in comparison to men. In reaction, Auntie Ifeoma's quick confrontation of her father's misogynistic statement through the exclamatory interjection 'eh' and the conjunct 'so' accompanied by a questioning of personal reconfirmation – 'I do not count', infused as a means to seek validation of significance or insignificance, incites questions on the horrendous scent of non-value perceived of women. It is in her pursuit of equal validation in comparison to her brother, Eugene, that she strongly threatens Papa-Nnukwu, respectively, with the use of the first-person personal pronoun and modal auxiliary 'will' as well as commits herself to future obligations of withdrawing her care from him. Her withdrawal of care, which would become visible to her father, is an overt pointer of her resistance to oppressive ideologies that perpetuate gender biases. Hence, Auntie Ifeoma's pursuit of equal significance that ought to be placed on men and women is symbolic of her stance on resisting patriarchal ideologies that misconstrue the significance of women and allude women incapable of being incomparable to and below men. In addition, it further portrays her character as an activist who advocates gender equality and represses any form of gender inequality.

Furthermore, it is against Auntie Ifeoma's resolve to not care for Papa-Nnukwu anymore that he affirms that his spirit will haunt her upon his death. However, her disapproval of his declaration for herself, followed by her pronouncement that Eugene should be haunted first, subtly symbolises and references the patriarchal hierarchy, where men hold the predominant position. This act reflects sarcasm in that she attempts to mock the flawed patriarchal system by making Eugene the first victim of their father's proposed spirit haunting. Additionally, her act is humorous as she seeks to disrupt the male-centric structure of society by making a joke that reflects the harsh realities and attitudes of the patriarchal system with the resolve to evoke reflection and cause social change. On humour, Adegoju (2022) says that '[h]umour is a hallmark of the digital revolution and creativity in the deployment of communicative artifacts to serve social and political goals.' Thereby, subscribing to Brock's (2018) claim that jokes provide insights into how society works, not by functioning as social thermostats regulating and shaping human behaviour but as social thermometers that measure, record, and indicate what is going on.

To appease Auntie Ifeoma, Papa-Nnukwu declares that his dismissal of her worth as a woman is only a joke. Realising his gaffe of dismissal due to her gender, he then proceeds to glorify the importance and value of having her as a daughter by rhetorically asking his would-have-been whereabouts had he not been given a daughter by his *chi* through the use of the 'Wh-interrogative', which connotes his attempt at reflection and introspection while highlighting the relevance of her being and also challenging his earlier dismissive utterance. As part of his act of appeasement, Papa-Nnukwu offers a heartfelt prayer for his daughter, seeking a suitable man to take care of her and her children. This subtly emphasises the idea that she is incapable of providing for her home independently and needs the presence of a man to handle her responsibilities, thus aligning with a dependence on traditional gender roles that emphasise the role of men in providing support and questioning the ability of women to manage their household independently.

Conversely, Auntie Ifeoma's response to Papa-Nnukwu's prayer is perceived as disapproval. Rather than endorse the prayer, she assertively tells him to direct the prayer into her career, which is on the verge of promotion. Her disapproval of his prayer accentuates her resistance to traditional expectations of women, which confine women to domesticity and the authority of men. Therefore, by placing her career advancement over the societal expectation of the need for her to be under the authority of a man in her home, she further challenges the stereotypical notion that the success of women is dependent on the presence of men in their lives and also defies the need for women's dependency on men by rejecting the notion of being 'taken care of'. Auntie Ifeoma's resistance to her dependency on men for survival and upliftment implies her self-sufficiency as an individual and then as a woman enclosed in the grime of patriarchy.

Excerpt 4

"Eugene gave you a schedule to follow when you're here? *Nekwanu anya*, what does that mean?" Auntie Ifeoma laughed some more before she held out her hand and asked for the sheet of paper...

"I will keep them for you until you leave."

"Auntie..." Jaja started.

"If you do not tell Eugene, eh, then how will he know that you did not follow the schedule, *gbo*? You are on holiday here and it is my house, so you will follow my own rules." (p. 124).

Auntie Ifeoma's opposition to Eugene's regimental subjection of Jaja and Kambili to schedules dictating their daily moves and actions in her household despite their spatial location affirms her voice and authority as an individual and a woman in enacting household decisions. Her exclamation in Igbo, which when translated indigenously means *see me, see wahala*, expresses her shock at the unthinkable and further implies her level of astonishment at her brother's stifling grip of domineering behaviours towards his children, which has resulted in

their emotional, social, and psychological starvation. It also expresses her disbelief at how oppressive Eugene's parenting method is compared with hers, which extends grace to her children and gives them the liberty to express their thoughts and challenge ideologies.

The use of the rhetorical question 'what does that even mean?', further expresses her disdain towards the height of patriarchy within the first point of socialisation for every individual - family, that ought to be a more civilised setting, a saner terrain of empowerment and growth, and alludes to her thorough questioning of the stereotypical notion of men presumed to be the sole holder of power and authority in the family unit, of women as passive and docile who submit to the orders of the male figure, and avers the position of women as individuals of equal importance and voice, who are capable of speaking and thinking for themselves, making better decisions as well as choices than their male counterparts within and outside the family unit. In addition, the inclusion of the discourse marker '*gbo*,' an Igbo word, when translated, means 'listen', adds a warning effect and emphasises to Jaja and Kambili that Eugene's chokehold of control over them ends in her house. In other words, they would have to comply with her expectations of them in her house instead of sticking to their father's. So, rather than shrink at the extension of Eugene's coercive behaviour in her home, through the use of the inferential conjunctive 'so', she tells Jaja and Kambili explicitly, 'you will follow my rules', which is the result of their stay in her house. Thereby, alluding to the popular saying - *when you are in Rome, do as the Romans do*.

The use of the compound declarative sentence 'you are on holiday here and it is my house', which first emphasises Jaja and Kambili's purpose of visit - 'holiday', and asserts Auntie Ifeoma's ownership of the house with the use of the possessive pronoun 'my', implies her subtle defiance to Eugene's means of external control, the adherence to schedules, in her home marked by the deictic adverbial expression 'here', thereby emphasising the importance of one's personal space. By emphasising the purpose of their visit, Auntie Ifeoma reawakens their thoughts and implicitly hints to them to defy oppressive rules that could sabotage their holiday while provoking their minds to embrace the pivotal fun-fare activities that are to be enjoyed during holidays.

To free Jaja and Kambili from Eugene's suffocating grip over their lives, Auntie Ifeoma makes them aware of the choices they have through the use of the 'If-conditional' - 'if you do not tell him', to empower Jaja and Kambili to take a stance in asserting their autonomy and prompt them into the realisation of alternative perceptions on how they ought to independently take charge of their lives and experiences without conforming mindlessly to their father's exaggerated expectations of them. To fully achieve this, she follows up the 'if-conditional' statement

with the use of the 'Wh-interrogative' – 'how will he know that you did not follow the schedule?' Through this rhetorical question, Aunty Ifeoma challenges their extreme docility and lack of awareness concerning the degree of individual power they wield to influence situations to their benefit and subtly reminds them that their self-identity has been subdued to the patriarchal whims of obedience and conformity expected of them as children while also affirming to them to assert their autonomy as they navigate their lives. Its use further alludes to the cliché 'what a person does not know cannot kill the person', which suggests that ignorance about an action can save a person from the possible harm associated with it, thereby implicitly implying to them that their silence to their father in not adhering to the schedules he set for them will protect them from lurking punishments should they tell him that they had derailed from the routines he had accustomed them to.

Excerpt 5

"Where would I go if I leave Eugene's house? Tell me, where would I go?" She did not wait for Aunty Ifeoma to respond. "Do you know how many mothers pushed their daughters at him? Do you know how many asked him to impregnate them, even, and not bother paying a bride price?" "And so? I ask you – and so?" Aunty Ifeoma was shouting now (p. 250).

This excerpt portrays the limited choices available to women in patriarchal societies and also questions the notion of marriage as a do-or-die affair for women while depicting their helplessness and dependence on men for sustenance, fuelled by traditional gender roles. Beatrice's use of the 'Wh-interrogative' – 'where would I go?' suggests her subjugation and perceived responsibility as an African woman to sustain her marriage. It further shows her refusal to leave the oppressive system that has failed her in its duty to protect her. This refusal could be a result of societal pressures, mockery, and judgements that might await her if she were to break away from her marriage to Eugene. Through the use of the rhetorical question containing the past tense verb 'pushed' – 'do you know how many mothers pushed their daughters at him?', she resorts to clinging onto the awareness that being Eugene's wife is a worthy title that mothers and daughters have aspired to attain coercively simply because of social benefits in terms of recognition and priority attached to marriage. She further holds onto the fear that her position as his wife is threatened and might be taken by another through an alleged pregnancy as soon as she leaves the marriage. To this, she asks another rhetorical question – 'do you know how many asked him to impregnate them, even, and not bother paying a bride price?'. These rhetorical questions asked by Beatrice query the implications of leaving her marriage, as this conversation between herself and Aunty Ifeoma takes place after her husband, Eugene, breaks a small table on her six-week-old pregnancy.

In addition, it also depicts her as the typical African woman who is expected to receive and endure all sorts of oppressive behaviours from the male figure and fulfil her traditional gendered expectations as a woman. Hence, she unconsciously absolves and projects patriarchal ideologies and seems to glorify and make excuses for patriarchal hegemony dominant in her terrain.

Beatrice's reluctance to acknowledge the effects of patriarchal hegemony, masked in the form of spousal abuse, and her excuses for not wanting to leave Eugene's abode for her sanity were refuted by Aunty Ifeoma. By employing the contrasting conjuncts 'and so?' she refutes the validity of Beatrice's concerns and challenges the traditional gendered expectations of women to be sustained by marriage and die in marriage. Her tone depicts what seems to be a nonchalant attitude about the consequences Beatrice fears of leaving her marriage.

Aunty Ifeoma further questions women's assertion of their independence and autonomy in patriarchal societies. The use of 'I' – a personal subjective pronoun, conveys her stance on resistance to being confined by patriarchal stereotypes imposing limitations on women and dominating and influencing every core of their choices. The verb 'ask' in its base form, which succeeds 'I', thereby making it a declarative sentence, suggests she is questioning the wrong choices women are prone to making when it comes to making decisions in situations that require the assertion of their voices and autonomy or conforming to societal expectations because of repercussions they cannot bear. Also, including 'you', a second-person objective pronoun that succeeds 'ask' points to intimacy, relatability, and connection to Beatrice as an African woman and other African women trapped in patriarchal hegemony but find excuses to remain in them.

Further repetition of the conjunct 'and so' heightens the capability inhibited in Beatrice in subverting patriarchal hegemony. Through this, Aunty Ifeoma hopes to reawaken Beatrice into asserting her agency as a woman, as she has been overly compliant with Eugene's oppressive behaviour towards herself. In addition, the question mark placed behind the conjunct raises further questions about the dependence of women's identities on their relationships with men.

The excerpt portrays Aunty Ifeoma as independent, outspoken, liberal, and fearless. This is seen in the writer's representation of Aunty Ifeoma as one who was 'shouting' in her response to Beatrice. The constant evocation of an assertive 'I' that 'wants', 'can', and 'asks' also positions her as a strong-willed agent who does not feel the need to subordinate herself to the claims and demands of a patriarchal order. Simultaneously, it also depicts the mind style of the writer on the stance that women are to be heard and not silenced, to speak up against oppressive behaviours and ideologies imposed to subdue them.

Section Three: The Pieces of Gods: After Palm Sunday

This section of the text depicts resistance to patriarchal hegemony.

Excerpt 6

When Mama asked Sisi to wipe the floor of the living room, to make sure no dangerous pieces of figurines were left lying somewhere, she did not lower her voice to a whisper. She did not hide the tiny smile that drew lines at the edge of her mouth. She did not sneak Jaja's food to his room, wrapped in cloth so it would appear that she had simply brought his laundry in. She took him his food on a white tray, with a matching plate. (pp. 257-258).

Mama's apparent transition from being described as speaking in whispers before Palm Sunday to speaking loudly after Palm Sunday is symbolic of her resistance to hegemony. It indicates her stance on the need to be heard and her refusal to succumb to the impositions of silence and conformity by patriarchal hegemony. Symbolically, whispers depict silence, timidity, secrecy, oppression, and compliance, and this was Mama's mode of speaking when 'things had not fallen apart.' However, the aftermath of 'things that had fallen apart' is Kambili's affirmation that 'she did not lower her voice to a whisper' which connotes that Mama had begun to assert her autonomy and affirm her individuality. The use of the verb 'lower' implies that Mama's retort to not speaking in whispers is conscious and intentional, as it is preceded by the auxiliary 'did' and negation 'not' which implies defiance. Also, the use of 'did not' to convey that Mama no longer hid her smile suggests that she had begun to embrace self-assertion and self-empowerment, thereby denouncing patriarchal effects of worthlessness, shame, timidity, and silence.

In retrospect, it is not a coincidence that Mama's refutation of hegemony comes to the fore after Palm Sunday. To Christians, Palm Sunday serves as a time of reflection on one's journey in the faith, to plead for forgiveness in the case of erring, and to be accepted into the heavenly fold. This, therefore, is often marked through the Holy Communion – eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ, respectively. However, to Mama, her brewing resistance to oppressive norms and gendered expectations was the aftermath of the precogitation of Palm Sunday, as further depicted through the use of the auxiliary 'did' and negation 'not' to further deconstruct passiveness and compliance to patriarchal hegemony. In lieu of this, the first thing that asserts her resistance is her voice pitch, from speaking in whispers to speaking loudly.

Also, Mama's shift from sneaking food to Jaja's room to openly taking his food to him attests to her inclination towards resistance. The use of the verb 'sneak', a material process and behavioural process, connotes the sensation of fear in a patriarchal environment. It indicates how oppression moulds women to invisibility, not to be seen and heard, as this was Mama's regimen before Palm Sunday. This act of sneaking is what Scott (1985) refers

to as 'everyday forms of resistance', which is perceived as an invisible, quiet, nonconfrontational form of resistance that the subaltern and oppressed employ to subsist and execute their agency as the dominated in cases where rebellion is risky. By sneaking food, Mama is defying her husband's esteemed dominance and asserting her role and voice concerning the welfare of her children without being confrontational in their home. Conversely, the use of the verb 'took', which is also a material process, portrays Mama's awareness of the assertion of authority, autonomy, and voice, thereby redefining her role as a liberated woman rather than an oppressed woman. This act of 'taking' as opposed to 'sneaking' pronounces Mama's resort to visibility as well as assertiveness after a series of spatiotemporal shifts which led to an awakening of a newfound order of familial integration. Thereby, also showing her character development from being a passive and compliant woman to being an assertive woman who has consciously refused to keep cowering to subordination.

In addition, Mama's use of a 'white tray' with a matching 'white plate' to deliver Jaja's food is symbolic of a new beginning of independence in the Achike household. It further represents her departure from compliance to defiance and from timidity to assertion.

Section Four: A Different Silence: The Present

A different silence reflects the psychological trauma of patriarchal hegemony on women while simultaneously depicting defiance against patriarchal social norms to which women have been made to conform. This section also depicts the current realities of the Achike household as they shift from being a family suppressed under their father figure to being a family living with the consequences of their actions of resistance to patriarchal hegemony due to the death of their patriarch. These consequences signal healing, redemption, acceptance, hope, and the birth of a new family dynamic devoid of control, oppression, guilt, and shame.

CONCLUSION

This study has identified the forms of language of resistance embedded in the text through linguistic representation and the salient actions of the characters. These representations decode the subtle methods of resistance, such as defiance, noncompliance, mockery, disobedience, silence, and assertion. The study reveals that the forms of language of resistance ingrained in the text resonate with Scott's (1985) *Everyday forms of resistance*, which is a departure from the conventional concept of resistance. Similarly, Adichie equips her female characters with qualities that silence repression and foster their self-development from subaltern individuals to empowered individuals through the use of feminist tools such as questioning, voice, metaphors, solidarity,

empowerment, and assertion, which holds a double entendre; first, signifying women's vocal empowerment and affirmation of their voices; second, as a feminist tool of resistance, aiding female characters in their defiance against oppressive structures that seek to silence them. The writer's employment of feminist tools in the text resonates with Hooks's (1984) feminist tools of resistance.

While Adichie's expression of feminist tools of resistance as seen in *Purple Hibiscus* is intertwined with narratology and focalizer experiences, emphasising individual character journeys and personal growth, Hooks' concept extends beyond the scope of individual stories and involves a broader range of principles emphasising collective action and inclusiveness in challenging patriarchal hegemony. Despite their differences, Adichie and Hooks prioritise awareness and empowerment as foundational and pivotal tools in resisting patriarchal hegemony.

Lastly, the writer's representation of women characters depicting resistance is brought to the fore through their subtle strategies of resistance to hegemonic authorities. In the course of the analysis, it is revealed that Adichie's representation of Aunty Ifeoma as an independent, outspoken, liberal, as well as assertive woman who loudly and defiantly opposes patriarchal oppression, constantly making use of compelling declarations infused with power and assertion, depicts her tenacity as an agent for social change, thus establishing her character as a central figure in spearheading the narrative's themes of resistance. Even so, Adichie's representation of Beatrice as a silent character who subtly resists the hegemonic figures through her silence and non-confronting strategies is a demonstration of the testament that resistance can also manifest passively and inconspicuously, diverging from the expectation that it must always be overt and vociferous.

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