

# Cultural Hybridity as a Panacea to marginalization and Subjugation: A Reading of Ogola's *The River and the Source* and Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

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**Abstract:** The under- representation of women in national, social, political and economic affairs in postcolonial African countries is a major problem. Women are marginalized and subjugated in society because of gender inequality. This contributes to women's search for identity in their societies. This representation of women's search for identity becomes a tool for enhancement of denied autonomy that is represented through writing. It is implicit that the woman is viewed within the prototype of "Self" and "Other" in the expression of personal autonomy; hence woman's search for self-identity mediates between the "Self" and "Other." These binary oppositions of "Self" and "Other" make postcolonial theoretical criticism a relevant tool of analysis with regard to the development of the female self and national identity. This is because postcolonial theory is concerned with identity, formation and construction in regard to marginalized groups. It is argued that in a colonial state, the Africans are the "Other" than the whites while in a patriarchal society women are the "Other" than men. Therefore, post-colonial theory is suitable in the interrogation of women's marginalization and subjugation in African societies such as Nigeria and Kenya, where women are viewed as relative to man and without a voice. This paper, thus, develops on the premise that cultural hybridity is the panacea to marginalization and subjugation in society. In this paper, I explore how Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Ogola in *The River and the Source*, indict patriarchal order in their societies. The paper is an investigation of the development of the female self which sets out to criticize patriarchal gendered perspectives that undermine women in society. In the paper, I analyze how the two writers deploy cultural hybridity strategies to bring women's self-perspective on board to address their identity with regard to equal gender representation, in national, social, economic and political affairs.

**Keywords:** Marginalization, subjugation, culture, hybridity, sustainable development

## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper builds on premise that cultural hybridity may be the future of post-coloniality. This is possible because culture is not stagnant but rather dynamic. It keeps evolving and things keep changing. The discussion thus, develops on Bhabha's theory of hybridity under postcolonial theoretical framework. Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Ogola's *The River and the Source* characterize the desire to expunge women's marginalization and gender inequality through reconstruction. I chose to use Postcolonial theory, because it aims at enabling the marginalized in society to find their own voice(s). The two authors' writings form the basis of

intervention in the literary world to facilitate the reconstruction. In this regard, Adichie's and Ogola's narratives are viewed as vehicles of the imaginary construction of new narrative space in which women play the formative role. This is in agreement with what Bhabha observes:

Nations like narratives, lose their origins in myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation or narration might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from these traditions that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea. (1994).

Bhabha calls members of society and literary critics to understand cultural differences as being based on dominant cultures. He contends that the series of inclusions and exclusions on which a dominant culture premises are deconstructed by the very entry of the formerly excluded subjects into the mainstream discourse. Ogola and Adichie in their novels deconstruct colonial narratives by deploying Bhabha's theory of hybridity and portray female characters who subvert the customs and traditions that marginalize women in contemporary Africa societies. However, there are claims that hybridity does not necessarily imply conciliatory and harmonious forms of cultural transformation; it can also sharpen the critique of the disruptive and exclusionary structures of global culture. From this perspective, Tomlinson (1999) argues that, "hybridity is not just a metaphor for cultural negotiation; it is also a tool for examining the inequalities and exclusions that are established in guise of cultural parity. He opines that it is more useful to track the way the power of hegemonic forces is felt within hybridity which is none of the less experienced as having its own independent culture power (1999 p.146- 147). Tomlinson further contends that, "If cultural hybridity entails a change in those meanings and actions, then attention ought to be paid to hybridity's ability or inability to empower social groups to have influence over the course of their lives (p. 151). Of primary concern in this study is how Ogola and Adichie reconstruct the image of women using different cultural hybridity strategies to influence and boost women's liberation and independence in their changing Postcolonial African societies.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Comprehensive library research formed the basic method used to gather material for the purpose of this study. As is characteristic of critical studies, broad readership of the theory of feminism was useful to this work. The emphasis is on the stratification of society based on gender and the women's struggle for equal opportunities over a period of time covering pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial times. Other sources included critical works on Ogola's writing. However, on the purpose of authentic analysis the study concentrated on the primary texts

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Adichie and Ogola in their novels engage with cultural hybridity as a strategy to gender equality in African countries; Nigeria and Kenya in Particular. They engage with notions of gender in different African localities, institutions and historical periods. They embrace cultural hybridity as a strategy to combat gender inequality and express the value of the participation of women and the tradition of African philosophy. In this paper, I developed the theme of cultural hybridity as a panacea for marginalization and subjugation through various sub-themes as indicated below:

### 3.1 Re-definition of Women's Role

In African society, many communities still have patriarchal social systems in which women are condemned to low social status. This is confirmed by Cherop in her Dissertation, when she avers that traditional practices and cultural beliefs among other factors hinder women's liberation and progress in society (Cherop 2015). Ogola and Adichie present and unlock the position and role of women in a challenging social space of male dominance. These writers deploy various cultural hybridity to reconstruct a new narrative space for the presentation of women by suppressing patriarchal conventions; the in-between space or a third space that is neither colonial nor patriarchal.

In *The River and the Source*, Ogola presents some female characters that are independent-minded. For instance, in the pre-colonial period, Ogola presents Akoko and Nyabera as leading an independent life whereas in the postcolonial era, Elizabeth, Vera, Becky and Wandia are portrayed as independent women. The protagonist Akoko, is the allusion of the source of the river that flows throughout the four generations. Her family survives because of her determination, wisdom, hard work and clarity of vision. Akoko's father, Chief Odera confirms the value of girls when he says that a girl is like a spring. (P. ). At birth, Akoko's yell makes her father think that he has had another son. He says, "[...] another rock for my sling," and later on in the novel the chief says that a home without daughters is like a spring without a source. This depicts a change of attitude towards traditional perception about a girl-child in society.

Akoko not only wins the affection of her father but also of her brothers, and their respect as well. No village girl or

boy dared cross her line. She is confident and assertive (p.15). At her marriage negotiations, Akoko walks into the room, with measured steps, head held high, and hands at her side. This was contrary to the traditional norms, whereby a girl was to come before her suitors shyly, eyes fixed on the floor and hands held over her mouth. At her marital home, Akoko owns a large herd of animals. Traditionally, African women were not allowed to own wealth. Akoko subverts the traditional stereotype and even at her old age makes a second fortune while at Aluor.

Ogola seems to be telling us that Akoko's determination and boldness was an inspiration to her daughter Nyabera, granddaughter Awiti and the subsequent generation. At Aluor, Nyabera derives inspiration from the fact that she is Akoko's daughter and as such she ought to face challenges without fear. Ogola points out that Aoro does not know the meaning of the words "giving up", because he was inspired by his great grandmother Akoko (P. 248). Akoko becomes the first woman of her generation to seek help from outside her community. She requests the white man's help when she suffers injustice in the hands of her brother-in-law, Otieno Kembo after her husband's death. This depicts a change in attitude and change in perception for women in a society where men are the decision-makers and judges of their communities. She makes a long journey through dangerous bushes and succeeds in her quest. She is pioneering and encourages Nyabera her daughter to join the new religion as well as ensuring her grandchildren get education. Awiti, Nyabera's only surviving child out of seven children, and granddaughter to Akoko, becomes the bridge between traditional life of her people and the new generation or simply put, hybridized generation. Ogola alludes the deaths of children to the river that was almost drying up, but when Awiti survives, she compares this to the river gaining momentum.

Awiti stands out as a hardworking and determined woman. When she goes to Aluor Mission School, she works hard and emerges top of her class, joins a Teacher Training College and after completing, a two-year course becomes a teacher. People of her community feel Awiti should hide her brilliance else, no man would want to marry her (P.130). This is because traditionally, the purpose of female existence was marriage, childbearing and to bring wealth to her family (P. 129). The stereotype here is that a woman should not have much education, more so be brighter than a man. In *The River and the Source*, Ogola makes clear her vision for women that they ought to be represented academically. For instance, Vera is portrayed as a brilliant girl that tops her class in primary school. She proceeds to high school, works hard and attains first division, which makes her secure a place in university, a field dominated by men. She does well and becomes an electronic expert with a lucrative job in the city with a big salary and all sorts of benefits. She refuses to get married and becomes a member of the Opus dei Community. On the other hand, Wandia becomes a challenge for Aoro who has never believed a girl could defeat him. Aoro avers, "This is the first

time I've been beaten by a girl." (P. 247). She stands her ground and asserts her position even in a group of male students. She performs well and comes at the top student in her class in campus. Wandia goes for further studies, attains a PhD in medicine, and becomes the chairperson of the Department of Pathology at the University of Nairobi. She becomes the first woman to attain such a rank in her Kikuyu community and in Kenya. This is an assertion that women given chance can do well in developmental affairs of society. They can lead and make important decisions in line with national, socio-political and economic development.

In *Half of a Yellow of Sun*, Adichie projects women characters playing a leading role. These women fight to keep their families hopeful during Nigerian civil war. Olanna and Kainene are graduates from London and are portrayed as being capable of leading and making decisions for themselves. This shows that empowered women can lead an independent life away from patriarchal beliefs that women are weak and dependent on men. The female characters take a leading role in giving direction when and where necessary and guide their men and society in times of difficulties. Women desperately search for food and medicine during the war to sustain their communities. For instance, Olanna goes to look for an alternative job for her husband Odenigbo who is withdrawn due to the woes of the war. She goes further and opens a school to teach the children so that there would be continuity after the war. Her twin sister, Kaninene, on the other hand, manages her father's businesses in Port Harcourt and does so well that her father is pleased with her. He says, "Kainene is not just like a son, she is like two" (P. 39). During the war, she takes a leading role in heading a refugee camp. She also takes the initiative of growing crops to feed the refugees when the Northerners stop supplying food to the Biafrans. Adichie and Ogola in their narratives employed cultural hybridity to re-define the role of a woman in their respective African societies as observed from the foregoing discussion.

There is evidence from the discussion above that the role of a woman has changed. She does more than just bearing children and bringing wealth for her family. The passing of time and the inevitable changes in life have greatly influenced the roles played by women in these societies. The women's roles have changed because they are empowered through education and take up different roles initially played by men. The women as portrayed in the two novels are no longer identified by their marginal roles and have become a strong force to reckon with in society. For instance, Olanna and Kainene, in *Half of a Yellow Sun* choose to lead an independent life not influenced by their parents. In *The River and the Source*, Vera chooses not to marry, Becky refuses her father's desire to make her repeat Form Four to earn a good grade to enable her join university, instead she follows the desire of her heart and becomes an air hostess.

### 3.2 Marriage and Love

In traditional African set up, parents arrange marriages. A spy goes to find out the antecedents and character of a

suitable bride, whether she is the right woman for their son or not, without consulting the girl or the boy. In *The River and the Source* the marriage of Akoko to Chief Owour Kembo, is initiated and negotiated by the parents. With colonization and other forms of western intrusions, fast paced and complex social, cultural, and economic changes occurred in communities across Africa and no less among the Igbo community of Eastern Nigeria and the Luo community of Western Kenya. These inevitable changes brought up what a typical African traditionalist terms as disruptive ways of life that are contrary to the traditional practices and beliefs of society. For instance, through these changes, women choose their marriage partners and court before marrying. This in itself is an aspect of hybridity.

In *The River and the Source*, Akoko's father and brothers choose a suitor for her and bride price is negotiated and given third head of cattle, whereas in the postcolonial period, women choose their marriage partners and court before marriage. For example, Elizabeth Awiti and Mark Sigu court before marriage. The bridegroom does not give price, but a token for appreciation. Later on in the novel, we see Wandia and Aoro Sigu courting before marriage. Wandia Mugo boldly asks Aoro Sigu to marry her.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie portrays characters that are independent and self-determined that go against the society's traditional norms. They go ahead to choose who to love and stay with by rejecting marriage proposals by their parents, thus going against patriarchal oppression. For instance, Olanna's parents had promised the Minister for Finance, Chief Okonji an affair with her in exchange for a contract (P. 39). Olanna's mother tries to convince her, Olanna could not agree with her as shown in the conversation below:

You can find work here in Lagos and travel down to see him during weekends. I do not want to work in Lagos. I want to work in the university, and I want to marry him. Her mother looked at her a little while longer [...] and said, "Good night my daughter," in a voice that was small and wounded (P. 43).

Earlier in the novel, Olanna had rejected other suitors; Igwe Okagbue's son and later on, Chief Okaro's son. (P. 43). She chooses to cohabit with Odenigbo, a professor at the University of Nsukka, Master to Ugwu. Later, they get married during the Biafra War. Likewise, her twin sister, Kainene chooses to live with Richard Churchill, a white expatriate and writer without being officially married. In both the novels, the authors deploy cultural hybridity as a path through which they emphasize an alternative imaginary nation that recognizes the space for a plural co-existence, thus reflecting the role of historical changes that have re-shaped the relationships between communities and individuals in those societies.

In matters of love, the author embraces hybridity. In *The River and the Source*, hybridity is depicted when Veronica asks her father for permission to go out on a date

with her man-friend, Tommy Muhambe. This was a thing unheard of in traditional Kenyan Luo community. Even in some other African societies today, such acts are despicable. Contrary to the reader's expectation, Vera's father gives her permission to go out on a date with her man-friend. (PP. 206-207). This marked Vera as a woman daring to stand against forces that had defined her community. She later on turns down Tommy's proposal for marriage something that had never happened before in the Luo community. (P. 215). She then decides to live an unmarried life. This signifies self-esteem and independence. Traditionally, this act would have earned her father shame or caused him to commit murder, but her father was comfortable with Vera's genuineness. Wandia Mugo goes beyond the societal norms and asks Aoro Sigu to marry her. Traditionally, society believes that a boy should approach a girl and ask her in marriage and not the girl. Aoro accepts Wandia's proposal and they get married. Ogola by bringing up the above issues wants her readers to come to the knowledge that cultural hybridity liberates the marginalized in society from oppressive patriarchal structures.

The two authors depict cultural hybridity in the novels through inter-marriages. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Kainene befriends and lives with Richard, a white man. Olanna befriends Odenigbo, but still goes to visit her former man-friend Mohammed, a Hausa man from the Northern part of Nigeria. In *The River and the source*, Becky marries a white man John Courtney, a Canadian and gets hybrid children, Alucia and Johnny. In *The River and the Source* Aoro Sigu, a Luo man marries Wandia Mugo, a Kikuyu girl. Parents from both sides agree, and even Wandia's mother does not dispute as depicted in conversation below:

So! When are we to see this man from Ruguru? Oh mother! Don't you mind that he is not of our tribe? Asked Wandia, full of wonder. (PP. 264-265).

Tribes clearly bring out their differences between during dialogues. For instance, the conversation, between Wandia and her elder sister Esther. The dialogue vividly reveals that marriage could not easily take place between the two different tribes- the Kikuyu and the Luo communities as depicted in the dialogue between the two sisters. Later that night when the sisters were alone together again, Esther enquired about Aoro:

Have you made up your mind about him?

Yes I have.

And so has he?

Do you think it will work?

Why not? He is a Kenyan [...] (PP. 264-265).

### 3.3 Formal Education: An Empowerment Tool

Formal education is one of the hybrid tools adopted by feminist writers to subvert marginalization and subjugation in

African societies. Female writers in Postcolonial African society grapple against strong and oppressive patriarchal structures that marginalize women through obsolete traditional practices and beliefs that stereotype them. Nwapa (1986) in her novel *Efuru*, portrays Gilbert as a man of education who sees it as a waste to educate a woman. She opines, "It is a waste sending girls to school. They get married before the end of their training and the money is wasted." (PP. 191-192). Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) shares similar fears with Nwapa. She identifies gendered socialization process that puts more strength and heroism to male and associates traditional roles of wife and motherhood with women. Ogundipe says that a woman's honour and dignity in most African cultures consist of strict adherence to idealized norms of wifehood and motherhood.

Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun* presents female education as a tool for their empowerment. Through education, women understand the patriarchal structures that exploit them and resist these oppressive structures. This is true when alluded to what Odenigbo tells Ugwu: "Education is a priority! How can we resist exploitation if we don't have the tools to understand exploitation?" (P. 11). Odenigbo was referring to colonial exploitation of the natives. In the same vein, education should be a priority to women's emancipation from marginalization and subjugation. Therefore, in her novel, Adichie uses education as a tool to understand and resist exploitation from patriarchy and neo-colonialism in postcolonial Africa. Adichie in her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* subverts patriarchal stereotypes by portraying women who are highly learned such as Miss Adebayo, who Ugwu says, is not the soft African woman who is quiet but rather argumentative and firm. She has vast knowledge in various fields including politics and she takes a centre stage in the conversations that are held in Odenigbo's house. She is well informed and constructively engages the professional male counterparts without fear. Olanna, Odenigbo's fiancée speaks very fluent English that Ugwu admires her speech. He says Olanna speaks 'the kind of English he hears on Master's radio' (P. 22). She has a master's degree from the University of London and is a lecturer at the University of Nsukka. When her uncle introduces her to Abdulmalik, he holds Olanna's hand with a lot of respect, with an 'expression of people who marveled at education with calm certainty that it would never be theirs' (P. 40). Even though Arize sees education for women as that which delays marriage and subsequent subordination of that institution, she at the same time shows respect and admiration for learned women as the narrator observes;

Arize's round eyes were admiring and bewildered. 'It is only women who know much book like you can say that, sister. If people like me who don't know Book wait too long, we will expire [...]' (P. 41).

What Adichie is trying to express in her book is that formal education is a powerful tool that empowers those who attain it. For as depicted by the author, those women who are not educated such as Arize, Amala, Nnesinachi, and Anulika are affected by patriarchal order whereas those women who

are educated such as Olanna, Kainene and Ifeoma are not held under patriarchal oppression.

Adichie's approach to empowerment of women is unique and different from the other writers who have written about women's marginalization and subjugation, because she does not show bias in her portrayal of male characters in her narrative. She tries to move away from narratives that lay the whole blame on men as the perpetrators of the problem of gender inequality. This is something that we should laud Adichie for. Seemingly, Adichie is

informing the reader that for us to attain a balanced society and sustainable development, both men and women need to be educated. For education is a significant tool for fighting against all forms of exploitation, such as colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism and gender inequality in any given society.

Ogola in her novel *The River and the Source* like Adichie, presents education as a powerful tool for women's emancipation and empowerment and does not exclude men in this journey to liberation and gender equality. Ogola foregrounds new images of women and at the same time puts the male characters into perspective. She reflects a changing ideology that has come with hybridization. Sondra O'Neal confirms this reconstruction of the image of black women. She observes that if the larger society does not know who black women are, or who it wants them to be; if even black men as scholars and thinkers writing in this century could not "free" the images of black women in the national psyche, it remains for black women to accomplish the task themselves [...] in drama, poetry and fiction. She contends that in most of the texts, they are women who help men accomplish their goals.' (1985, P. 25). In this study Adichie and Ogola in the two texts present men who help women accomplish their goals. For example, Aoro Sigu helps Wandia advance her studies in *The River and the Source*. Ogola incorporates male characters in her narrative to help women achieve their goal of emancipation and liberation. One may think that Ogola's inclusion of men helping women to achieve their goals implies that women are incapacitated. I'm of the opinion that for any country to attain its Millennium Development Goals, both men and women should work together. This ensures peaceful co-existence that is significant maintaining a balanced society and sustainable socio-political and economic development.

For this reason, women in Ogola's *The River and the Source* acquire new identities through urbanization. They move from self-unawareness to the reassurance and self-confidence. Ogola's female characters become central foci for testing the reconciliation of loyalty and hope as well as the likelihood of regeneration. This helps women in the novel to pursue their rights and status today. Ogola through cultural hybridity uncovers gaps and women's silences ordained by patriarchy. Ogola heeds the call by Stratton that women writers have earned a place in African literary canon when she avers that women have re-defined the African literary

tradition, uncovering gaps and silences, they have renamed it a male tradition and declared the canon an artificial construct. They altered the condition of reading African literature [...] By initiating a dialogue on gender, women writers have occasioned a change in the orientation of African literature. (1994, P. 176). Ogola deploys hybridity strategies in her novel to help in the emancipation and independence of women in Kenya. She introduces formal education by creating schools that enroll both boys and girls. The reality of the matter is that in African patriarchal societies, both male and female are oppressed by traditional practices and beliefs. Males like females are forced to adhere to community's rituals whether they like it or not. For instance, Peter Owuor Sino was to inherit the stool of rule for Sakwa according to tradition, but contrary to this expectation, he leaves his traditions behind and he is baptized into the Christian religion. Peter aspires to be a priest, but he is conflicted about going back home and taking the throne as the rightful chief of Sakwa. He decides not to go back and joins the seminary. Peter's decision to abandon his culture, identity and adopt a foreign way of life is seen today in Kenya and other patriarchal African societies is perceived as one of the adverse effects of colonialism which drove people in millions away from home to live in urban cities. Thus, ridding their rural homes of all the youth potential needed to grow a society, leaving their old parents who can't work anymore. From this point of view, we see Ogola as using this new strategy of cultural hybridity to subvert obsolete traditional practices that are oppressive to individuals and groups in Postcolonial African societies. This view is also shared by Frodwa Wahove who discusses Ogola's depiction of men and notes that men are also depicted as change agents. This is best captured through the character of Owuor, Akoko's grandson who embraces the new religion by taking to priesthood, consequently forfeiting his right to be chief. This exemplifies a change in the course of one's life from adopting the traditional cultural practices of the Luo that would have required him to marry and rightfully inherit the chieftom from the ancestry. By turning his back to these ritualistic events, Peter Owuor charts a new course of life altogether, which signifies a total break from the past, a past long overtaken by events. (2014, P. 51)

The new way of life affects both male and female; Elizabeth Awiti, Peter's cousin joins a primary school. Elizabeth Awiti is happy that she is embracing a new life and leaving behind traditional responsibilities. She excels in her studies and joins a Teacher Training College (P. 129). Ogola clearly highlights formal education as one of the most important devices of empowerment that can be used to combat exploitation against the oppressed in society. Ogola champions women's liberation through hybridity structures such as education. Her representation of the female characters regarding class performance is brought to fore and is lauded by Leslie who discusses the affairs of African women, their culture and development. Leslie notes that the right to education, expression, information and the management of production are all rights that articulate the same need for socialization. She contends that it is a perversion to imagine

that the debate on development can be limited to the satisfaction of basic material need (1994, P. 21). Hybrid ideology seems the way forward for peaceful co-existence. This perception is equally shared by Lionnet, who discusses the phenomenon of new life by highlighting that it is not assimilation that appears inevitable when Western technology and education are adopted by colonized or when migration to the metro-pole servers some of the migrants' ties to particular birthplace, forces individuals to stand in relation to the past and the present at the same time to look for creative means of incorporating useful 'Western' tools techniques or strategies into their own cosmology. Ogola deploys 'western tools' to emancipate her female characters from male dominance in her novel and at the same time, appreciates males' involvement in supporting women's emancipation and empowerment.

### 3.4 Socio-economic and Political Empowerment

Through education, women are financially and politically empowered. In *The River and the Source*, Elizabeth Awiti gets educated and earns herself a teaching job where she earns a salary and supports her family. Vera is a university graduate who becomes an electronic expert with a highly paying job in the city and gets all sorts of benefits. Becky, after her 'O' Level, gets employed as an air hostess, supports her children until she falls sick after she contracts HIV/AIDS and succumbs to it. Wandia studies and attains a PhD in Medicine; she becomes the chairperson of the Department of Pathology at the University of Nairobi. She becomes the first Kenyan woman to attain such a leadership position. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie portrays women who are financially stable and politically strong. Olanna and Kainene have degrees from the University of London. Olanna is employed at the University of Nsukka as a lecturer and is financially stable until the Biafra War breaks out. Kainene on the other hand indulges in big businesses and she becomes the manager of her father's businesses in Port Harcourt. During the Biafran War, both Olanna and Kainene take leading roles in directing society. Adichie depicts her female characters desperately and consistently searching for food and medicine during the war to sustain their communities. Olanna, apart from seeking for food and medicine for her family, goes ahead to find a job for her husband, Odenigbo who is depressed due to the effects of the war. She even goes further to open and run a school to assist children during the war, thus taking up a leadership position in the family and society. Kainene initiates the idea of planting crops to feed the victims of the war reciting in refugee camps. She goes ahead and involves in trade across the border to buy food for the refugees and she goes missing at the end of the novel. All these women achievements are realized because of the new life (hybridization) embraced by women as depicted by in the two writers. This is an indicator that cultural hybridity is inevitable in the liberation and gender equality in postcolonial African societies. It can therefore be said that cultural hybridity is the Panacea to marginalization and subjugation in African countries, in this study, Kenya and Nigeria in Particular.

### 3.5 Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, it is noted that in postcolonial African societies, many communities still maintain patriarchal systems that place women on the periphery. Among the factors and hindrances, deterring women from achieving their potential socio-political and economic empowerment are traditional practices and cultural beliefs. It is clear that African traditions and customs are the main sites of the African woman's main cause of marginalization and subjugation. Adichie and Ogola point at this when dealing with the traditional and cultural dispositions in Africa which militate against the African woman's personality. These are practices such as bride-price, polygamy, wife inheritance and demand on the capability of women to reproduce. This paper attempted to evaluate Adichie and Ogola's concern with the way identities in Nigeria and Kenya are constructed and deployed in socio-political and economic contexts. It is observed that women struggle to achieve emancipation and equal gender representation in socio-political and economic development affairs of their societies through various methods and platforms but their efforts have not born much fruit.

Adichie and Ogola on the other hand, divert from methods deployed by earlier writers in tackling marginalization gender inequality in society. They embrace cultural hybridity as a strategy of liberation and gender equality. As reflected in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *The River and the Source*, it is evident that both Adichie and Ogola are sensitive to the subordination and oppression of the African woman and they concern themselves with issues such as traditional demands on the African woman. As contemporary writers who are committed to art which has relevance to the society, the authors' sensitivity to the African woman is demonstrated in the creation and depiction of central women characters. The centrality with which women characters are treated in the works studied is notable and through their eyes, the writers provide phenomena and various developments in society. The manner in which Adichie and Ogola present their protagonists leads us to the conclusion that they portray women characters positively. Their female main characters are shown to possess positive attributes such as determination, courage, hard work, intellectual ability and wisdom. The author, however, posits that the African woman is not as helpless as she has been painted especially by male authors and Western feminist writers. From the discussion, there is evidence that the role of a woman has changed. A woman is entitled to more than just bearing children and bringing wealth to the family. The role played by women in society, particularly Kenya and Nigeria is influenced by passing of time and the inevitable changes in life due to hybridization. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* Adichie portrays Olanna as a representation of the African woman who stands firm to her own marriage decisions. In *The River and the Source* Ogola presents who stand firm to their decisions. Such women include Akoko in the pre-colonial period, Elizabeth Awiti in the colonial period and Wandia, and Vera in the post-colonial period. It is also clear that hybridized men empower women, socially, economically and politically. Women can now own

property, homes, land and get education. As Tripp (1999, p. 75) notes, education brings insights that help women to participate in matters pertaining to their lives. He confirms that the improvement in educational opportunities for girls and women has influenced the participation in politics. They are allowed to participate in national and international development affairs. Women can make decisions in matters of social, political and economic concern in their countries. Something unique and significant to note is that hybridity allows both men and women to partner in socio-economic and political spaces. From the observations in the discussion it is evident that cultural hybridity is a panacea to marginalization and subjugation. It is important to note in the eyes of Tomlinson (1999, pp. 146-147) that hybridity is not just a metaphor for cultural negotiation; it is also a tool for examining the inequalities and exclusions that are established in the guise of cultural parity. It is more useful to track the way the power of hegemonic forces is felt within hybridity which nonetheless experienced as having its own independent cultural power.

However, to be noted as Aagaard (2003, p. 3) avers, is that hybridity does not imply a harmonious fusion between people who are different but makes them aware of the difficulties that be encountered when living with such differences. This is clearly depicted by the Adichie and Ogola in their works when the present women characters who are against their hybridized daughters-in-law. The contentions that are experienced between the different parties show that

hybridity is not a smooth path to marginalization and subjugation in postcolonial African countries, Nigeria and Kenya in particular.

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