

From Subjugation to Rebellion: a Postcolonial Reading of Identity and Resistance in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Novels

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ABSTRACT

This article offers a comparative postcolonial reading of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), and *Americanah* (2013), arguing that her fiction represents identity as a contested process produced through encounters with coloniality, patriarchy, religion, ethnicity, war, race, migration, and cultural memory. Drawing on Frantz Fanon's account of colonial psychology, Edward Said's critique of imperial representation, Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and ambivalence, Stuart Hall's understanding of cultural identity as a process of becoming, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concern with voice and representation, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's analysis of linguistic and cultural domination, the article traces a movement from subjugation toward forms of individual and collective resistance. In *Purple Hibiscus*, coloniality is reproduced within the domestic sphere through Eugene Achike's authoritarian Catholicism, patriarchal violence, and rejection of indigenous cultural practices; Kambili and Jaja gradually develop alternative forms of agency through speech, mobility, cultural encounter, and dissent. *Half of a Yellow Sun* shifts the analysis to the Nigerian-Biafran War, where ethnic identity, nationalism, violence, gender, and historical memory become sites of struggle. *Americanah* extends the inquiry into transnational space, showing how Ifemelu's encounters with American racial formations transform her understanding of Blackness, Africanness, gender, language, and belonging. The article contends that Adichie's distinctive contribution to postcolonial fiction lies in representing resistance not as a simple reversal of domination but as an unfinished process of reclaiming voice, memory, embodiment, and interpretive authority.

Keywords: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; postcolonialism; identity; resistance; hybridity

INTRODUCTION

Postcolonial literature is concerned not only with the history of colonial occupation but also with the afterlives of colonial power. Political independence may transfer sovereignty from a colonial administration to a national government, yet the categories, hierarchies, institutions, and habits of thought produced by colonial rule can persist. Language, religion, education, racial classification, cultural prestige, gender relations, and representations of the colonised may continue to organise social life long after formal colonialism has ended. Contemporary African fiction is particularly important to this inquiry because it can place historical memory beside the intimate experiences through which inherited structures become visible.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie occupies a significant place in this literary field. Her fiction repeatedly connects the historical legacies of colonialism with domestic patriarchy, religious authority, military repression, ethnic nationalism, civil war, migration, racism, class, and transnational belonging. Her novels do not treat the postcolonial condition as a single political problem. Instead, they demonstrate that power operates simultaneously at intimate, national, cultural, linguistic, and global levels. This complexity makes her fiction especially productive for a comparative study of identity and resistance.

This article examines *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), and *Americanah* (2013) as a connected body of fiction in which the problem of subjugation expands from the domestic and psychological sphere to the national-historical and transnational spheres. The argument is not that Adichie presents a straightforward progression from oppression to liberation. Rather, the novels depict resistance as a negotiated and uneven process involving silence and speech, obedience and dissent, displacement and return, memory and forgetting, bodily discipline and bodily reclamation, cultural inheritance and cultural revision.

The study addresses three questions. First, how does coloniality shape individual and collective identities in the three novels? Second, through what cultural, linguistic, bodily, intellectual, and political practices do characters resist subjugation? Third, how does resistance transform identity rather than merely restore an allegedly authentic identity that existed before domination? These questions are important because postcolonial identity cannot be adequately understood as a choice between a pure indigenous self and an equally pure colonial other. As Bhabha (1994) argues, colonial encounters generate ambivalent and hybrid cultural locations, while Hall (1990) understands identity as a matter of historical positioning and becoming rather than a fixed essence.

Existing scholarship has already established that Adichie's fiction is deeply concerned with power, gender, migration, race, history, and cultural identity. Wallace (2012), for example, reads *Purple Hibiscus* through the

paradoxes of postcolonial redemption and the intersection of religious and patriarchal authority. Nwokocha (2019) highlights subversive responses to oppression in the novel. Akpome (2017) situates *Half of a Yellow Sun* within a wider literary negotiation of Nigerian history and nationalism. McCoy (2018) interprets Ifemelu's position in *Americanah* through the figure of the "outsider within," while more recent work has examined the novel's representation of race, transnationality, and identity formation (Motahane, 2025). Recent scholarship also continues to approach the three novels through decolonial feminism, particularly the relationships among gender, race, migration, war, and agency.

The contribution of the present study lies in bringing these strands together through a comparative trajectory: domestic coloniality, national-historical violence, and transnational racialisation. Such a trajectory makes it possible to see continuity without collapsing the three novels into a single story. The nature of domination changes across the texts, and so does the form of resistance. Kambili's emerging voice, Ugwu's movement toward authorship, Kainene's practical agency, and Ifemelu's public writing are distinct responses to distinct structures of power. Yet they share an underlying struggle over the authority to define the self.

The article therefore proposes that Adichie's novels understand rebellion primarily as the recovery of interpretive authority. Characters resist when they cease to accept imposed identities as natural and begin to question who has the right to determine the meaning of their culture, bodies, history, language, and belonging. Resistance is thus epistemological as well as political: it is a struggle over who may speak, remember, narrate, and define.

Theoretical Framework: Coloniality, Identity, and Resistance

The analysis draws on complementary strands of postcolonial theory rather than treating postcolonialism as a single explanatory model. Fanon's (2008) account of colonial psychology is important because domination can become internalised. The colonised subject may evaluate the self through categories established by a dominant culture and consequently experience alienation, self-surveillance, and divided identification. In literary terms, this insight is useful for examining characters who reproduce hierarchies that they themselves inhabit.

Said's (1993) analysis of imperial culture shifts attention from psychology to representation. Colonialism depends not only on military and administrative power but also on systems of knowledge that distinguish the supposedly rational, modern, and civilised West from its constructed Others. Representation is therefore a political act. Whoever possesses the authority to describe a society, its history, its religion, and its people also possesses a form of cultural power. Adichie's novels repeatedly return to this problem, especially when characters encounter outsiders who claim to interpret African experience.

Bhabha's (1994) theory of hybridity and the "third space" complicates a simple coloniser/colonised binary. Cultural contact produces ambivalence, mimicry, translation, and new identities that cannot be reduced to either side of the encounter. The colonial subject may imitate the dominant culture while simultaneously altering it. This concept is particularly valuable for reading Eugene's Western Catholic identity in *Purple Hibiscus* and Ifemelu's changing cultural location in *Americanah*.

Hall's (1990) formulation of cultural identity as a matter of becoming rather than being further supports the analysis. Identity is constituted through history, difference, representation, and positioning. It is not simply an inherited substance. This perspective makes it possible to understand why migration does not merely reveal a pre-existing identity but actively changes how a person understands race, nationality, language, and belonging.

Spivak's (1988) question concerning the subaltern and representation adds an ethical dimension. The problem is not merely whether marginalised people are allowed to speak, but whether dominant structures determine in advance how their speech will be heard and interpreted. Adichie's fiction responds to this problem by distributing narrative attention among characters whose social positions differ significantly. The novels consequently resist the idea that there is one authoritative African voice.

Finally, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) work on language and cultural domination illuminates Adichie's use of English. English is the language of the novels, but it is repeatedly transformed by Igbo vocabulary, syntax, names, proverbs, food, religious references, and Nigerian speech rhythms. The colonial language becomes a resource for representing a world that exceeds colonial categories. Adichie's practice demonstrates that linguistic resistance does not necessarily require rejecting English; it can also involve appropriating and provincialising it.

These theoretical perspectives produce an analytical framework with five dimensions: psychological internalisation, representational authority, cultural hybridity, identity as becoming, and linguistic appropriation. Together they support a reading of resistance as multidimensional. Resistance may occur through open political action, but it can also occur through speech, memory, bodily presentation, cultural practice, refusal, alternative community, and narrative authorship.

METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive methodology based on close textual reading and comparative literary analysis. The primary corpus consists of Adichie's three novels *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and *Americanah*. These works were selected because they represent three distinct but interconnected narrative configurations of Nigerian and diasporic experience: the authoritarian family and postcolonial religious sphere;

the historical trauma of the Nigerian-Biafran War; and transnational migration and racialisation in the United States and Britain.

The analysis proceeds thematically rather than chronologically. Passages and narrative situations are examined in relation to four recurring analytical categories: identity formation, mechanisms of subjugation, forms of resistance, and narrative authority. The study also considers how gender, class, ethnicity, religion, language, and mobility modify the experience of domination. The novels are treated as literary texts rather than as transparent historical documents. Historical references are therefore interpreted primarily in relation to how Adichie constructs memory, identity, and representation.

The comparative method is particularly important because each novel modifies the meaning of resistance established by the previous text. *Purple Hibiscus* locates power in the intimate sphere; *Half of a Yellow Sun* demonstrates how private lives are transformed by collective political violence; *Americanah* shows how identities formed within Nigeria are reclassified through transnational racial systems. The comparison therefore reveals both continuity and transformation.

The study does not claim that the three novels exhaust Adichie's literary treatment of postcolonial identity. Nor does it suggest that all characters experience coloniality in the same manner. Instead, it examines how different social positions produce different relationships to power. The resulting interpretation is attentive to contradiction: resistance can coexist with complicity, mobility can generate both freedom and alienation, and cultural recovery can coexist with criticism of inherited traditions.

PURPLE HIBISCUS: DOMESTIC COLONIALITY AND THE AWAKENING OF AGENCY

Purple Hibiscus provides the most intimate representation of subjugation in Adichie's fiction. The novel places the political instability of postcolonial Nigeria alongside the authoritarian household of Eugene Achike. Nigeria is experiencing military repression, censorship, and political uncertainty, while Eugene governs his family through schedules, silence, religious discipline, surveillance, and physical punishment. The two forms of authority are not identical, but their juxtaposition establishes an important postcolonial paradox: opposition to public authoritarianism does not necessarily prevent the reproduction of authoritarian power in private life.

Eugene is presented as a successful businessman, newspaper proprietor, philanthropist, and devout Catholic. His newspaper challenges military rule, and his public identity is associated with civic courage. At home, however, his authority becomes coercive. He disciplines Kambili, Jaja, and Beatrice according to an uncompromising religious order. The novel therefore refuses a simple moral binary in which a character who opposes state repression is automatically emancipatory.

The colonial dimension of Eugene's authority emerges most clearly in his attitude toward indigenous religious practice. He rejects Papa-Nnukwu's spirituality and treats traditional Igbo practices as incompatible with legitimate Christian life. His Catholicism is not presented as intrinsically colonial; rather, Adichie exposes the historical process through which Christianity can become associated with European cultural superiority. Eugene's problem is his insistence that his particular interpretation of Christianity authorises him to deny the cultural and spiritual legitimacy of others.

Fanon's (2008) account of internalised colonial values helps illuminate this dynamic. Eugene's authority is partly sustained by his conviction that proximity to European religious and cultural norms represents moral superiority. The violence he exercises is therefore not merely personal anger. It is embedded in a system of values through which certain practices are marked as civilised and others as backward.

Kambili initially internalises this system. Her silence is one of the novel's most important representations of psychological subjugation. She is not simply a quiet child by temperament; her speech has been conditioned by fear. She learns to anticipate Eugene's expectations and to regulate herself accordingly. Fanon's account of the colonised subject's psychological fragmentation is relevant here because the external authority of the father becomes internal self-monitoring.

Aunt Ifeoma's household in Nsukka introduces an alternative social order. Conversation is noisy, disagreement is possible, children are encouraged to think, and religious practice is less rigid. The significance of Nsukka is therefore spatial as well as social. It creates what may be called a counter-space: a setting in which Kambili can experience forms of interaction that reveal the contingency of Eugene's rules.

Papa-Nnukwu is particularly important because Kambili encounters him outside Eugene's interpretive framework. She begins to see that indigenous spirituality cannot simply be reduced to the category of "heathenism." Her developing awareness does not require a complete rejection of Catholicism. Instead, she acquires the capacity to recognise multiple cultural and religious meanings.

Jaja's rebellion is more visible. His refusal to conform to Eugene's expectations gradually develops from small acts of dissent into explicit defiance. The purple hibiscus becomes a fitting symbol for this transformation. Unlike the conventional red hibiscus, it represents an unusual possibility that has been cultivated through experimentation. It therefore parallels the emergence of a form of agency that the household previously treated as impossible.

The novel's treatment of Beatrice adds a gendered dimension to resistance. Her position illustrates how patriarchal power can be naturalised within religious and domestic structures. Her long accommodation of Eugene should not be read simply as passivity. It reflects the constrained choices available to a woman whose economic, emotional, and familial circumstances are shaped by a violent authority. When she ultimately acts against Eugene, the action emerges from accumulated experience rather than a sudden ideological conversion.

The distinction between Kambili's, Jaja's, and Beatrice's resistance is important. Resistance is not a universal script. Kambili's initial resistance occurs through consciousness and speech; Jaja's through refusal and open disobedience; Beatrice's through an extreme act generated by prolonged domestic violence. Adichie therefore avoids presenting rebellion as a single heroic gesture.

The novel also connects domestic and national power without claiming that they are equivalent. The military government suppresses political dissent, while Eugene suppresses familial dissent. Both systems depend on control over speech. Yet the comparison is most productive when it reveals a structural similarity rather than a literal identity: both ask subjects to accept authority without question.

The development of Kambili's voice is consequently the novel's deepest movement. At the beginning, she struggles to speak even when speech is safe. By the end, her consciousness has expanded sufficiently to imagine a future beyond Eugene's authority. The ending does not promise complete liberation. Jaja remains imprisoned, Beatrice carries trauma, and the family remains fractured. Nevertheless, a new capacity for self-definition has appeared.

Purple Hibiscus thus presents resistance as a process of decolonising perception. Kambili does not become free merely because Eugene's authority disappears. She becomes capable of freedom because she has learned that another way of speaking, believing, relating, and interpreting is possible.

Half of a Yellow Sun: War, Ethnicity, and the Recovery of Historical Voice

Half of a Yellow Sun moves the problem of subjugation from the household to the nation. Set against the Nigerian-Biafran War, the novel examines how colonial histories, ethnic identification, nationalism, political violence, gender, class, and international power shape personal experience. The war is not presented as an isolated eruption. It emerges within a political landscape already marked by the unresolved consequences of colonial rule.

The novel's historical significance lies in its challenge to a single authoritative account of the conflict. Ugwu, Olanna, Odenigbo, Kainene, and Richard occupy different social and ideological positions. Their experiences demonstrate that history is not simply a sequence of public events; it is also the accumulation of unevenly distributed memories.

The question of who may represent Biafra is central to Richard's character. As a British expatriate, Richard initially seeks cultural belonging and hopes to become a writer on Igbo art and Biafran experience. His desire is not simply malicious, but it contains the problem identified by Said (1993): the outsider may assume that sympathetic observation grants representational authority. The novel gradually reveals the limits of this assumption.

Richard's difficulty is not resolved by deciding that outsiders can never write about other cultures. Instead, Adichie raises a more complex question: what happens when the person who wishes to represent a community recognises that the community's suffering cannot be made an extension of his own self-image? The narrative's shifting perspectives prevent Richard from becoming the sole interpreter of Biafra.

Ugwu's trajectory offers a counterpoint. At the beginning he is a young village boy employed as a houseboy. His social position limits his access to formal education and intellectual authority. His relationship with Odenigbo introduces him to political discussion, books, and the language of nationalism. Through war, however, his transformation becomes morally complicated. He acquires power but also participates in violence.

This complexity is central to Adichie's representation of resistance. The oppressed subject is not automatically virtuous, and political liberation does not guarantee ethical liberation. Ugwu's later movement toward authorship therefore contains both empowerment and guilt. His experience demonstrates that resistance can reproduce the violence it seeks to overcome.

The novel's representation of ethnicity is similarly complex. The category "Igbo" becomes politically powerful during the crisis, but the characters do not experience it identically. Their class backgrounds, gender, education, and geographical histories differ. National and ethnic identity are therefore simultaneously sources of solidarity and sites of contestation.

Odenigbo's intellectual nationalism demonstrates the power of ideas in political crisis. His confidence in Biafra is partly a response to violence and insecurity. Yet the novel also reveals the limits of intellectual abstractions when confronted with hunger, displacement, sexual violence, and death. Political concepts become meaningful through their effects on bodies and everyday life.

Women occupy a particularly important place in this transformation of political abstraction into embodied experience. Olanna and Kainene do not remain peripheral observers of war. They participate in survival, relief, economic activity, family care, and political decision-making. Kainene's organisational competence challenges

conventional assumptions about women's roles, while Olanna's experiences reveal the vulnerability of the female body under ethnic violence.

The representation of violence against women is significant because it exposes how national conflict is gendered. The female body becomes a site on which collective hatred can be enacted. Yet Adichie refuses to make women merely symbols of national suffering. Their actions continue to shape the course of events.

Kainene's disappearance at the end of the novel is particularly significant because it prevents narrative closure. Her absence becomes a permanent wound in the characters' lives and in the historical imagination of the conflict. The missing body cannot be converted into a neat ending. Memory remains unfinished.

This unfinished quality connects the novel to the politics of historical remembrance. To write about Biafra is to resist historical disappearance. Literature becomes a form of counter-memory because it preserves experiences that may be marginalised by official national narratives.

Akpome (2017) situates *Half of a Yellow Sun* within a wider process of re-historicising Nigerian postcolonial experience. This function of the novel is also connected to Adichie's use of multiple perspectives. The narrative does not merely tell readers what happened; it asks them to consider how different people remember what happened.

The novel therefore shifts resistance from the level of individual defiance to the level of narrative memory. Remembering becomes political when forgetting has become structurally convenient. By reconstructing Biafra through intimate experience, Adichie challenges the idea that national history belongs exclusively to state archives or political elites.

At the same time, the novel does not idealise Biafran nationalism. Its characters experience contradiction, disappointment, jealousy, class conflict, sexual violence, and moral failure. The postcolonial nation is not presented as an innocent space corrupted only by external forces. Adichie examines internal hierarchies as well. Resistance in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is consequently double-sided. Characters resist political violence and ethnic persecution, but the novel also resists the simplification of history itself. Its deepest rebellion is against the reduction of complex human experiences to a single authorised narrative.

Americanah: Transnational Race, Migration, and the Reconfiguration of Self

Americanah relocates the postcolonial subject into transnational space. If *Purple Hibiscus* examines the domestic reproduction of colonial authority and *Half of a Yellow Sun* examines historical and national conflict, *Americanah* explores what happens when a Nigerian subject enters a society in which race operates through a different historical vocabulary.

Ifemelu's migration to the United States changes the meaning of her identity. In Nigeria, she does not generally experience herself through the American racial category of "Black." In the United States, racial classification becomes unavoidable. She discovers that her Nigerian identity does not protect her from racism and that African and African American experiences of Blackness are related but not identical.

Hall's (1990) theory of identity as becoming is especially useful here. Ifemelu does not uncover a fixed racial identity that was already present. Rather, the social environment produces new forms of identification. She becomes aware of Blackness through encounters with institutions, workplaces, relationships, popular culture, and everyday interactions.

McCoy (2018) describes Ifemelu through the concept of the "outsider within." This position is analytically productive because Ifemelu is sufficiently familiar with American society to interpret its structures but sufficiently external to notice assumptions that insiders may overlook. Her distance becomes a source of critical knowledge. Her blog is consequently one of the novel's most important sites of resistance. Through writing, Ifemelu converts individual experiences into public interpretation. She refuses the expectation that an immigrant should remain silent or assimilate without criticism. Her observations about race challenge colour-blind assumptions and expose the social production of racial hierarchy.

The blog also complicates the idea of authenticity. Ifemelu does not speak as the representative of all Africans or all Black people. Her authority derives from situated experience. This corresponds with Spivak's (1988) concern that marginalised voices can be appropriated or homogenised by dominant discourse. Ifemelu's writing insists on specificity.

Hair provides another powerful site of identity negotiation. The politics of hair links race, gender, beauty, employment, class, and cultural belonging. When Ifemelu changes her hair to conform to dominant expectations, the transformation is not merely cosmetic. It demonstrates how racial norms become embodied.

Her later embrace of natural hair can therefore be read as a form of bodily resistance. Yet Adichie does not present this as a simple return to an authentic African self. Ifemelu's choices remain shaped by the American environment in which she has learned to understand race. The body becomes a site of negotiated identity rather than a repository of an untouched essence.

Language performs a similar function. Ifemelu learns that an American accent can influence how she is perceived. Speech becomes a form of social capital. The adoption of an accent can facilitate belonging, while the

abandonment of it can become an assertion of difference. This linguistic negotiation recalls Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (1986) argument that language is deeply connected to power and cultural identity.

The title *Americanah* itself captures the ambivalence of return. In Nigerian usage, an "Americanah" can refer to someone who has spent time in the United States and returns with altered speech, habits, and tastes. The label can carry admiration, irony, or criticism. Ifemelu's return demonstrates that migration changes not only how others see her but also how she sees Nigeria.

Her return is therefore not a restoration of an original identity. She has become a transnational subject. Her American experience gives her a new perspective on Nigeria, while her Nigerian background allows her to remain critical of American racial assumptions. She occupies an interstitial position comparable to Bhabha's (1994) third space.

Obinze's migration experience in Britain reinforces the novel's argument. His trajectory demonstrates that mobility does not necessarily produce freedom. African migrants may encounter legal precarity, racial exclusion, exploitative labour, and the pressure to perform identities acceptable to host societies. The former colonial centre remains structured by unequal relations even after formal colonialism has ended.

Americanah consequently broadens postcolonial analysis beyond national borders. Coloniality can persist through global systems of race, migration, cultural prestige, and economic opportunity. The postcolonial subject may physically leave the former colony without escaping the historical categories that structure global mobility.

The novel also makes gender central to this process. Ifemelu experiences race through the gendered body, and she experiences gender through racialised expectations. Romantic relationships, beauty standards, workplace behaviour, and hair politics all intersect. Her resistance is therefore necessarily intersectional.

Recent scholarship similarly emphasises the relationship among race, transnationality, and identity formation in *Americanah*. Motahane (2025) argues that the novel represents Black African transnational identity as a process of negotiation in racialised Western environments. Adeyelu and Roux (2023) likewise demonstrate how embodiment and racial prejudice intersect in the novel.

Ifemelu's return ultimately illustrates the unfinished nature of resistance. She does not achieve a final identity in which all contradictions disappear. Instead, she acquires greater authority over the contradictions themselves. She can acknowledge being Nigerian, Black, African, transnational, female, and culturally hybrid without reducing herself to any single category.

This is one of Adichie's most important postcolonial insights: liberation may involve not the elimination of difference but the ability to negotiate difference without surrendering agency.

Language, Representation, and the Politics of Voice

Language connects the three novels at a deeper level. English is the language in which Adichie writes, yet it is repeatedly reshaped by Nigerian linguistic and cultural realities. The novels therefore complicate the assumption that the use of English necessarily indicates cultural assimilation.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) argues that colonial education can sever subjects from indigenous cultural worlds by privileging the coloniser's language. Adichie's practice demonstrates another possibility: appropriation. English can become a vehicle for representing experiences that colonial discourse historically marginalised. Igbo names, expressions, proverbs, food terms, religious concepts, and patterns of dialogue transform the language from within.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, the conflict between Eugene's religious vocabulary and the cultural world represented by Papa-Nnukwu shows that language is connected to authority. Naming something as "pagan" or "civilised" is not merely descriptive; it places the object within a hierarchy.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, political language similarly shapes collective identity. Words associated with Nigeria, Biafra, ethnicity, nation, and betrayal acquire emotional force because they are embedded in historical conflict. The novel demonstrates that political categories become powerful through the stories people attach to them.

In *Americanah*, accent becomes a particularly visible marker. Speech can indicate nationality, class, race, education, and cultural adaptation. Ifemelu's changing accent demonstrates that language can be a form of performance through which people negotiate social belonging.

The novels consequently treat voice in both literal and metaphorical senses. To speak is to participate in social meaning; to remain silent can be a consequence of domination; to write can be to establish interpretive authority. Kambili's movement from silence to speech and Ifemelu's movement from private experience to public blogging are therefore structurally related.

Representation is equally important. Richard's desire to write Biafra, Ifemelu's blog, and Adichie's own narrative practice all raise the question of who can tell whose story. The novels resist the idea that representation is politically innocent.

Said's (1993) account of imperial representation and Spivak's (1988) concern with mediated voice converge here. The issue is not simply giving marginalised subjects more opportunities to speak. It is also examining the institutional and cultural conditions that determine which forms of speech are treated as authoritative.

Adichie's narrative strategy addresses this problem through plurality. Her novels contain multiple voices and perspectives rather than a single authoritative African consciousness. This plurality is itself a form of resistance to the homogenisation of African experience.

Gender, Embodiment, and Intersectional Resistance

The relationship between postcolonial identity and gender is fundamental to Adichie's fiction. Colonial and postcolonial power do not operate independently of patriarchal structures. The female body, in particular, becomes a site where religion, culture, race, nationalism, and social expectations intersect.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Beatrice's experience demonstrates how patriarchal authority can be legitimised through religious and familial structures. Kambili's body is similarly disciplined through food, schedules, punishment, and expectations of obedience. The domestic sphere therefore becomes a political space.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, war intensifies the vulnerability of women while simultaneously expanding the forms of agency available to them. Olanna and Kainene participate in economic, social, and political activities that challenge conventional gender roles. Their experiences demonstrate that women are not simply passive casualties of national history.

In *Americanah*, embodiment becomes explicitly racialised. Hair, skin, beauty, sexuality, and professional appearance become sites through which racial hierarchy is experienced. The politics of hair is especially important because it connects apparently personal choices to institutional expectations.

An intersectional approach is therefore necessary. A character's experience cannot be explained by gender alone. Kambili is a girl, but she is also a member of a wealthy Nigerian Catholic family. Ifemelu is a woman, but she is also Nigerian, Black, an immigrant, educated, and mobile. Kainene's gender interacts with class privilege and wartime conditions.

Adichie's treatment of embodiment also complicates conventional definitions of resistance. Resistance does not always involve public political action. It can involve refusing a hairstyle, rejecting an accent, speaking in an alternative register, choosing a relationship, leaving a household, or creating a space where others can speak.

The body becomes a form of text on which social power is written, but it can also become a medium through which identity is rewritten. This is one reason why Adichie's fiction remains relevant to contemporary postcolonial feminist criticism.

From Subjugation to Rebellion: A Comparative Discussion

The three novels can be read as a widening map of postcolonial power. *Purple Hibiscus* begins with the intimate structure of the family, *Half of a Yellow Sun* expands the analysis to national history and collective violence, and *Americanah* extends it to transnational racial and cultural systems. The movement is spatial, but it is also conceptual.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, subjugation is most visible as the regulation of everyday life. Eugene controls time, speech, religion, food, movement, and family relationships. Resistance begins when alternative spaces make his authority appear contingent.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, individuals are subjected to political violence that exceeds the family. Identity becomes inseparable from ethnic classification and national conflict. Resistance includes survival, political participation, care work, and memory.

In *Americanah*, the postcolonial subject encounters a global system of racial classification. The challenge is no longer simply to escape a national authority but to understand how identity changes when one crosses borders. Resistance takes the form of writing, linguistic choice, bodily reclamation, and critical mobility.

The following comparison summarises the principal trajectory:

Table 1: A Comparative Trajectory of Three Novels			
Novel	Primary Site of Subjugation	Central Identity Conflict	Major Forms of Resistance
<i>Purple Hibiscus</i>	Family, religion, patriarchy	Child/adult; Igbo/Catholic; silence/voice	Speech, cultural encounter, refusal, alternative community
<i>Half of a Yellow Sun</i>	State violence, war, ethnic nationalism	Igbo/Nigerian; individual/collective; insider/outsider	Survival, political action, care, memory, narration
<i>Americanah</i>	Race, migration, cultural hierarchy	Nigerian/Black/American; insider/outsider	Blogging, linguistic agency, bodily reclamation, return

The comparison shows that Adichie's conception of resistance becomes increasingly concerned with interpretation. Kambili must learn to interpret her world outside Eugene's categories. Ugwu and Richard confront the question of who may narrate history. Ifemelu transforms personal experience into public commentary.

This suggests that the deepest continuity among the novels is not a common political programme but a common struggle over meaning. Domination attempts to make particular identities appear natural. Resistance exposes their historical construction.

At the same time, Adichie refuses to romanticise the resistant subject. Ugwu becomes capable of violence. Biafran nationalism contains exclusions. Ifemelu experiences alienation after return. Kambili's freedom remains incomplete. These contradictions strengthen rather than weaken the postcolonial reading because they prevent resistance from becoming another rigid moral binary.

Bhabha's (1994) hybridity is therefore more useful than a model of simple reversal. Adichie's characters do not simply replace colonial identities with pure indigenous identities. They construct new positions through negotiation. Hall's (1990) idea of identity as becoming similarly explains why these positions remain unfinished. Resistance is thus best understood as reconstitution. The subject does not return to an untouched precolonial self. Instead, the subject acquires greater authority to negotiate inherited categories. This is why the movement from subjugation to rebellion is not a straight line. It involves loss, contradiction, memory, adaptation, and return.

CONCLUSION

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and *Americanah* collectively provide a sustained literary examination of how coloniality continues to shape identity after formal colonial rule. The novels demonstrate that domination does not survive only through governments or institutions. It can be reproduced through intimate relationships, religious authority, cultural prestige, language, racial classification, gender norms, migration systems, and historical memory.

The movement from subjugation to rebellion is consequently neither linear nor absolute. Kambili's silence gives way to speech; Jaja's obedience gives way to defiance; Ugwu's marginality develops into narrative authority; Kainene's gendered position does not prevent economic and political agency; and Ifemelu's racial disorientation becomes the basis for a more critical understanding of Blackness and transnational belonging.

The central contribution of Adichie's fiction is the insistence that identity is a site of struggle. Colonial and postcolonial power seek to determine who the subject is, what the subject should believe, which language the subject should speak, how the body should appear, whose history should be remembered, and who has the authority to represent reality. Her characters increasingly challenge these determinations.

Yet the novels also caution against replacing colonial binaries with equally rigid alternatives. Adichie does not suggest that liberation requires the rejection of everything Western, just as she does not idealise every indigenous institution. Her characters occupy complex cultural locations in which Christianity can coexist with cultural questioning, migration can produce both freedom and alienation, nationalism can provide solidarity while generating exclusion, and hybridity can create both agency and uncertainty.

This is where the dialogue among Fanon, Said, Bhabha, Hall, Spivak, and Ngugi becomes especially productive. Fanon helps explain internalised domination; Said clarifies the politics of representation; Bhabha illuminates hybridity and ambivalence; Hall explains identity as becoming; Spivak foregrounds the problem of voice; and Ngugi demonstrates the political significance of language. Adichie's fiction does not merely illustrate these theories. It places their abstract questions within ordinary human experiences of family, love, migration, war, work, faith, and memory.

The most significant form of rebellion in these novels is therefore the reclamation of interpretive authority. Characters resist when they cease to accept imposed identities as natural and begin to determine for themselves how their lives should be understood. To speak, write, remember, move, return, alter one's appearance, question inherited beliefs, or refuse an imposed category can become an act of resistance.

Adichie's postcolonial project ultimately suggests that political liberation is incomplete without epistemic and cultural agency. The end of subjugation is not achieved when one hierarchy is simply replaced by another. It is approached when individuals and communities acquire the freedom to negotiate identity without surrendering their capacity for self-definition.

From Kambili's emerging voice to Ifemelu's public writing, Adichie's fiction charts a movement from being interpreted by others toward interpreting oneself. That movement is never finished. Resistance remains an ongoing practice of remembering, speaking, questioning, and reconstituting identity. In this sense, rebellion is not merely a response to subjugation; it is the continuous creation of alternative ways of being.

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