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*A Companion to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie* ed. by Ernest E. Emenyonu (review)

Grace A. Musila

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our understanding of the presence of Southern powers in Africa. Moreover, this timely book presents a comprehensive overview of the evolution of development policy planning which could offer a road map to those countries that seek to increase their influence in Africa for development purposes. However, a minor shortcoming is that the author overlooks Sino-Indian rivalry in Africa. China and India have competed for influence in Africa over the past decades, and it is obvious that their involvement on this continent is different in terms of intent, methods and outcomes. The inclusion of a chapter focusing on these issues more comprehensively, with an eye to China's and India's competitive tendencies in Africa, would have made this book more interesting.

By bringing together discussions on China's and India's development strategies in Africa, Mthembu identifies the patterns of cooperation that could affect bilateral and multilateral relations between developing and developed countries. Furthermore, the book is interdisciplinary in nature and useful for those scholars interested in political economy and development studies.

*Behzad Abdollahpour*

Faculty of World Studies, University of Tehran

[b.abdollahpour@ut.ac.ir](mailto:b.abdollahpour@ut.ac.ir)

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Ernest E. Emenyonu (editor), *A Companion to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*. Woodbridge: James Currey (hb £30 – 978 1 84701 162 6; pb £17.99 – 978 1 84701 241 8). 2017, xii + 300 pp.

To say that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is one of the most influential contemporary African writers is to state the obvious, except to readers unfamiliar with her phenomenal interventions in African letters and thought. But even these readers will need little persuading after working through the twenty-seven-page bibliographic list of Adichie's works in all genres, compiled by Daria Tunca, in the closing chapter of *A Companion to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*. As the editor of this timely collection – renowned literary scholar Ernest E. Emenyonu – observes in his introductory essay, the novelist, essayist and social commentator has 'bridged gaps and introduced new motifs and narrative styles which have energized African fiction since her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003)'. This distinction alone makes this essay collection an opportune intervention – and, one hopes, the first of many to come. The very range of perspectives in this volume points to the scope for further essay collections and monographs on Adichie's work. In a global academy notorious for single-origin tables of contents – often smugly featuring all-white or all Northern-based contributors to entire edited books or journals on Africa – it is refreshing to read an essay collection that honours the cross-cultural resonance of Adichie's writing by showcasing interventions by scholars based in different corners of the world, beyond the ubiquitous US and Europe. In this regard, this essay collection doubles up as a mapping of responses to Adichie's writing from places as diverse as Cameroon and India, Italy and a Catholic diocese in Owerri, Nigeria.

This volume contains seventeen essays organized in chronological order according to the publication dates of Adichie's works, starting with six essays on *Purple Hibiscus*, four on *Half of a Yellow Sun*, two on *The Thing Around Your Neck* and four on *Americanah*. Essay collections on a single author often present a structuring dilemma for editors, and each possible structure inevitably comes with its own affordances and expenses. The choice of a chronological structure here makes for a

reader-friendly encounter that should be welcomed by those familiar with Adichie scholarship and new readers alike, but it also comes at the expense of comparative analyses across her oeuvre. With the exception of a couple of essays that briefly nod to the other texts, most of the essays offer close analyses of only one of Adichie's works. More troubling, though, is the inevitable tautology of examples that often attends edited volumes on a single author, as different authors revisit the same scenes albeit from different analytical angles. It might have been useful at the editing stage to encourage paraphrasing, and, where possible, alternative excerpts, as well as encouraging contributors to read each other's papers and cross-reference each other's takes on Adichie. In the absence of such strategies, only an inattentive reader will be spared repetitive excerpts.

Luckily for readers, though, the level of rigour and perceptive insight across the essays overshadows the repetition of excerpts, and even renders the handful of proofreading oversights insignificant. This reader found particularly thought-provoking Edgar Fred Nabutanyi's perceptive sketch of the parallels between the rituals of Catholicism and Eugene's equally ritualized abuse in *Purple Hibiscus*; Jessica C. Hume's exploration of the intersections between food-related spaces and female bodies in the same novel; as well as Chikwendu PaschalKizito Anyanwu's tracing of the intertextual conversations between *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*. The collection features a tapestry of prominent and new scholars, convening a multigenerational conversation that mirrors the multigenerational appeal of Adichie's work, spanning as it does the domestic and public politics of the Achike family in *Purple Hibiscus*, the Biafra war and its aftermaths in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and contemporary diasporic experiences of America in *Americanah*.

The opening cluster of papers on *Purple Hibiscus* foreground different facets of characterization, primarily focusing on Papa Eugene (Janet N. Ndula and Nabutanyi), Beatrice (Jane Duran and Iniobong I. Uko) and Kambili (Nabutanyi and Oluwole Coker), while Hume reads the novel through the lens of food. Hume's foregrounding of culinary dimensions in the novel and Nabutanyi's take on Papa Eugene's abuse as perversely mirroring the ritualized patterns of his distorted Catholic faith are particularly rewarding for the new interpretative vistas they open for Adichie's debut novel. In grappling with questions such as Olanna's melancholia, the evolution of the domestic space during the Biafra war, gender roles and corruption, the essays on *Half of a Yellow Sun* confirm this novel's widely touted position as Adichie's most accomplished text yet. Like *Americanah*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* continues to yield fresh insights as it journeys through the academy and encounters critics' curiosities.

On *Americanah*, Mary Jane Androne's 'Adichie's *Americanah*: a migrant *Bildungsroman*' skilfully grafts discourses of migrancy and debates on the *Bildungsroman* to make a compelling argument for reading Ifemelu and Obinze's migrant experiences and shifts in consciousness that mark their journeys of departure and return as narratives of growth, change and ambivalence. Read alongside Rose A. Sackeyfio's mobilization of W. E. B. Du Bois' concept of double consciousness in reading *Americanah* and Gichingiri Ndigirigi's astute exploration of the same novel through the lens of transnationalism and forms of what he calls reverse appropriations, this cluster of papers convene provocative meditations on what is Adichie's most deceptively playful novel yet. Particularly productive for debates on the novel – and, broadly, African migrant narratives – is Ndigirigi's deployment of James Clifford's question: 'What happens when the traditional ethnographic informant becomes a traveller to the metropole?' (p. 199). In some respects, this question preoccupied Adichie long before *Americanah*. The two essays on *The Thing Around Your Neck*, by Silvana

Carotenuto, Maitrayee Misra and Manish Shrivastava, both spotlight Adichie's short stories as concerned with gendered encounters of migrancy. Through Ifemelu and Obinze, Adichie exorcizes this preoccupation, while resisting the prevalent tropes of victimhood and the stylized promises of the American dream, through Ifemelu's reverse gaze on American society, as Ndigirigi terms it.

It is instructive that the book is bracketed by an opening chapter by Louisa Uchum Egbunike, which locates Adichie's oeuvre within Igbo epistemologies, and closes with Cristina Cruz-Gutiérrez's discussion of hair politics across Adichie's work, locating her within a larger socio-cultural canvas on black femininity and contestations over the black female body globally. Indeed, Egbunike's opening citation of Adichie's commentary on formerly colonized people as a people located on the periphery and conditioned to seek validation elsewhere, located 'outside the centre in ways more subtle than mere politics, in ways meta-physical and psychological' (Adichie, 'The role of literature in modern Africa', *New African*, November 2010, p. 96, cited at p. 15), has powerful resonances with Cruz-Gutiérrez's meditation on the discursive policing of black women's hair as deficient. Read side by side, it is hard to overlook the continuum between Adichie's decolonial embedding of Igbo orature across her oeuvre and her meditations on black hair politics. In both cases, we see Adichie the artist-activist invested in the healing project for the scarred black and female psyche.

Egbunike's paper is one of the few chapters not restricted to one text by Adichie, and this makes for remarkably productive reflections. Readers interested in the much-noted influences and intertextual gestures between Adichie's and Achebe's work will find this essay rewarding, as it traces this cross-generational conversation not only in *Purple Hibiscus* but also in her short stories, which in turn are read alongside the question of authorship in *Half of a Yellow Sun* as extending the debate on authorship started in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. These intertextual engagements are taken in fascinating directions later in Anyanwu's chapter.

Regrettably, because the book prioritizes Adichie's fiction, her essays as well as her public presence are largely overlooked. This is ironic given the central role of her essays and public lectures, as well as her carefully crafted public persona, in the circulation of her work and ideas. Indeed, Emenyonu's introduction acknowledges that Adichie's 'talks, blogs, musings on social media, essays and commentaries, workshop mentoring for budding writers and lecture circuit discourses, enrich her as they expand and define her mission as a writer' (p. 1). Given the intense debates on the politics of publishing and circulation of African writing in the global literary marketplace, this is a lost opportunity to reflect on 'the Adichie brand' and the intersections between her writing, her public persona and its attendant choices, including fashion choices – all of which have played a not-so-small part in the circulation and legibility of her ideas beyond academic circuits, in ways that differ sharply from the patterns of circulation of fellow prolific anglophone writers such as Dinaw Mengestu or compatriot Sefi Atta, for instance.

This gap notwithstanding, weaving across *A Companion to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie* is a celebration of Adichie's work and thought as what Emenyonu terms an understanding of the writer as 'a harbinger of social awareness, truth and empowerment; with responsibilities to educate as well as challenge human actions and reactions at a point in time' (p. 12). This collection is a valuable gift to literary studies.

Grace A. Musila

Department of African Literature, University of the Witwatersrand,  
Johannesburg

[Grace.Musila@wits.ac.za](mailto:Grace.Musila@wits.ac.za)

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