

Full Length Research

Alienation versus Attachment in the Short Fiction of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: Three Representative Short Stories

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Alienation has a lot of meanings according to many writers. Generally, it refers to not belonging either physically, spiritually, mentally, or socially. This paper invites the reader to see the place that the theme of alienation occupies in Nigerian Literature, as reflected in the short fiction of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, which is significantly inspired by the post-colonial condition in several African countries. The paper refers to attachment or solidarity as the only solution to overcome alienation. The first short story analyzed is "A Private Experience" introducing two women with different cultures, religions and education alienated in their society. However, they managed to achieve human solidarity breaking all chains and restrictions imposed on them. The second story is "The Arrangers of a Marriage", the story of Nigerian guy travelled to America and alienated himself and his wife from Nigerian culture; he failed and lost everything. The last short story is "Quality Street", the story of Sochinne who was studying in America, but still attached to her original society in Nigeria. Unlike her mother who alienated herself from her society criticizing everything, Sochinne kept contacting people of her country. By the end of the story, she managed to achieve solidarity with the whole society while her mother was self alienated.

Key words: alienation; attachment; Private experience; arrangers of marriage, Quality Street

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INTRODUCTION

A Widely respected Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie (1977-) is known for her award winning novels *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. She is referred to as "the third generation of influential and representative African female writer" (Habila 7). However, her short stories collection *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009) has many tales of the Nigerian national imaginary and the case of Nigerian society after colonialism that

need to be analyzed. Throughout her short stories, Chimamanda Adichie depicts the characters as well as the cases of her society at this time: "her works charted a new course in the evolution of the African short story. Adichie's short fiction is a window into live experiences of contemporary African women expressed in fresh and compelling prose" (Sackeyfio 2013, 104). This paper seeks to present an understanding to three short stories

of Adichie “*A private Experience*” (2009), “*The Arrangers of a Marriage*” (2009), and “*Quality Street*” (2010). It analyzes the characters’ relationships in the three stories through the theory of alienation. It sheds light on Nigerian society as an African Post-colonial society suffering from great anarchy and strong social retardation. Nigerian society was suffering from many problems rooted in African societies: the problem of ethnicity, the problem of egoism and identity denial, and the problem of class division. Man feels insecure in his living and the inevitable result of this was alienation and great desire to leave such corrupted society. Through these short stories, Adichie introduced attachment as the only solution of alienation. By attachment, she means achieving human solidarity with others. It is attachment to others that makes us fully humans; or rather we are things not humans. She depicted her characters in a perfect way, and managed to provide the suitable atmosphere that supports her ideas. Adichie managed to get the attention of the reader without more boring details; she was neutral and at the same time deep in her analysis.

Alienation: An Overview

The Theory of “alienation” emerges in contemporary literature through many literary works all over the world. The word alienation has a lot of definitions and meanings in different dictionaries, but *Dictionary of Unfamiliar Words* gives the most expressive definition as:

The separation of the individual from important aspects of the external world accompanied by a feeling of powerlessness or lack of control. A person may feel alienated from themselves or from society. It is a state in which a person feels detached from the outside world and sometimes from his or her own feelings. (Diagram Group 2008)

Many philosophers and writers defined and explained alienation. The German philosopher Hegel refers to alienation as the process by which ‘finite spirit’ the human self ‘doubles’ itself, and then faces the other being created as opposed to it. Hegel did not believe in the idea that self has a nature that is prior to society, and that nature succeeds out of social restrictions. For Hegel, the self develops through a process of alienation and overcoming this alienation, a ‘fall’ into division and reconciliation. Hegel explains that spirit

Is bounded and restricted by its opposite, namely nature. This restriction...the human spirit in its existence... overcomes, and thereby raises itself to infinity, by grasping nature in thought through

theoretical activity, and through practical activity bringing about a harmony between nature and the spiritual idea, reason, and the good. (Aesthetics 1975, 454)

So, Hegel emphasizes that human self is: first, alienated from itself; second, it recognizes this alienation; and finally, the self comes together with itself.

Hegel believes that self is able to overcome its alienation throughout the process of social performance. He believes that self must have social performance, but at the same time, it must have the ability to choose and reflect. Human self must be free in order to have its will to decide.

The Russian Karl Marx’s theory of alienation followed to a great extent that of Hegel. He concentrated on economic side, and he discussed four aspects of alienation of labour: first, alienation from the production of labour. second, alienation from the activity of labour; third, alienation from one’s own specific humanity; fourth, alienation from others, from society.

Unlike Hegel who believes that modern social problems and divisions don’t prove the falseness of the idealized picture of the present, Marx attacks civil society through his theory accusing it of supporting egoism and leading to man’s alienation in his society. He explains that capitalism corrupted the relationship between the labour and the product that the labour can no more possess the product he produces. He refers to alienation as the process in which labour’s activities and products are his main enemies.

Though he agrees with Hegel that self-alienation is a social and historical phenomenon that is to be overcome with historical development and process, but he is against Hegel’s view that alienation has already been overcome in modern society. Marx insists that in modern society, alienation could never be overcome unless social and economic status of society has been repaired. However, he still realizes that alienation is a necessary stage in the process of self-development and realization.

Not only Hegel and Marx, but a lot of writers gave an explanation to alienation and its meanings. Melvin Seeman, in his essay “On the Meaning of Alienation” presented five meanings of alienation: Powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. Reading Melvin’s analysis to the five meanings, we can explain them as follows: First, powerlessness is about Marx’s theory of alienation from the product of labour. In capitalist society, what is produced by a worker is lost to the producer. The labour loses control over the product he makes and he even produces something hostile to him.

The second meaning is meaninglessness. This type of alienation is about the sense of human’s understanding of the events in which he is engaged. Karl Mannheim, in his book *Man and Society in an age of Reconstruction*,

indicates that there is a decline in “capacity to act intelligently in a given situation on the basis of one’s own insight into the interrelations of events”(59).

The third meaning is normlessness. It means “anomie” and it refers to the case of society where the conduct of humans completely collapses, and the noble values of love and fidelity are prostituted to the lusts of hate and fear. R.K.Merton comments “in such a society [a society suffering from anomie] people tend to put stress on mysticism: the workings of Fortune, Chance, Luck” (qtd. in Seeman 787).

The fourth meaning is Isolation. Isolated man is that one who is estranged from his society and as Seeman describes “the alienated in the isolation sense are those who, like the intellectual, assign low reward value to goals or beliefs that are typically highly valued in the given society”(789).

The last meaning of alienation Seeman explains is self-estrangement. In such kind of alienation, man is estranged from another man, and later on, he is estranged from himself too. Melvin continues “to be self-alienated, in the final analysis, means to be something less than one might ideally be if the circumstances in society were otherwise to be insecure, given to appearances, conformist”(790). This kind of alienation imprisons man in himself leading him to catastrophic view of life. Self-alienated man is like exiled man who is in bad need of contacting others; the only solution to him is attachment and achieving solidarity to be one of all.

Alienation vs. Human solidarity in Adichie’s stories

The post-colonial Nigeria is divided into three parts depending on religions and ethnicity: the north that was inhabited by Hausa Fulani, the east by Igbo, and the west by Yoruba. This post-colonial division led to social destruction, isolation and self alienation as in such corrupted society “man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin, but from inner problems [...] a conviction of isolation, randomness, and meaninglessness in his way of existence” (qtd. in Abdulsaleem 3). In his essay “A Measure of Alienation” G.A. Nettler defines alienation as “A psychological state of an individual and alienated is the person who has been estranged from, made unfriendly toward his society and the culture it carries”(2). Thus, self alienation is the absence of self awareness or even a complete loss of it. Erich Fromm considers self alienation “Pertaining to feelings” (qtd. in Abdulsaleem 8).

Nigerian authors responded to oppressive post-colonial structures with works that encouraged national unity and solidarity. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is one of those writers who wrote about the experiences of her society in her literary works in an attempt to provide solutions to them. Though she studied and lived in America, but every

while and then, she travels to Nigeria out of feeling alienated. She asserts that “I’ve never felt; and I know I never will feel, American. I am a Nigerian who spends time in US.” (Kara 2). She explains that she likes to be out of Nigeria sometimes “I actually feel the need to be away from Nigeria I’m writing about. I need a certain detachment to write to see it clearly” (Forna 54). This is clearly what Hegel explained when he emphasized on the importance of self-alienation or detachment, and its overcoming. The Palestinian writer and critic Edward Said rightly explains that: “Exiles feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of triumphant ideology or a restored people” (141).

Adichie defended the cases of Nigerian females suffering in their societies when she said “I am interested in writing about women who are weak, who are not independent, who make poor choices [...] this is the reality of their lives” (Forna 57). She was interested in restoring justice, freedom, and human dignity. Adichie managed to depict her characters and employ them in a perfect way to serve her ideas. She depicted different characters with different attitudes, some managed to overcome their alienation and achieved human solidarity being one of “the larger I”¹, and others did not accept society and alienated themselves.

In her short fiction analyzed here, Adichie draws three different lines of relationships: first, the relationship between two women of counter cultures, education, and religions in “A Private Experience”. Second, the relationship between husband and wife and how they failed to achieve human solidarity and the wife was alienated in American society. Finally, the relationship between mother and daughter; the mother insisted on alienating herself while the daughter insisted on social solidarity.

The first short story, “A Private Experience” is the story of two women of counter cultures and religions in Nigeria who escaped a violent riot in the street and took refuge in a deserted small store. The first is Chika, a young Christian Igbo, and the other is Muslim Hausa who was not given a name “to evoke an identity based on biology rather than ethnicity” (Campbell 15).

Adichie starts the story by creating two different worlds: one inside the shop with two women of different religious groups, and the outside world with battles, violence and riots in the street. The riot started because of a Christian man who ran over a copy of the Holly Quran and Muslims immediately cut his head. So, we have Chika inside the store as a representative of Christians, and the woman as a representative of Muslims. Adichie chose two characters that are not involved in any struggles and put them together in the shop to give them a chance to enter the world where they can speak and recognize each others. She detached them from the polluted world of conflict and hatred to a new world where they can

achieve human solidarity.

The difference between the two women starts from the physical appearance; the Muslim woman was described as “a Northerner, from the narrowness of her face, the unfamiliar rise of her cheekbones; and she is Muslim, because of her scarf” (44), while Chika was known by the woman to be Christian as she looks Igbo and without scarf. The events of the story take place in the city of Kano where Chika went with her sister to visit their aunt. She was in the market for shopping. The woman was selling onion as usual in the market. Salamone emphasizes that the city of Kano “is vital links in the state and even international” (2), so, it is a place where Muslims, Hausa, and Igbo meet.

When the riot started, Chika was shocked and frightened; she dropped her bags and ran away. She did not know where to go as everyone around her was running and crying. When she passed the small shop, the Muslim woman asked her to enter the shop. She tried to calm her by few words “them not going to small-small shops, only big-big shop and market [...] this place safe” (44). Chika was afraid at the beginning to be avenged by the Muslim woman as she is Christian. The woman’s few words conveyed a lot of messages to Chika, messages of safety and security. She realized that she won’t be alienated in danger at this place with that woman. The woman managed since the beginning to establish a good start with Chika; her words managed to segregate them, even for a while, from the outside world of destruction and suffering. Chika did not ask the woman about her name as “she does not want a conversation of naming names” (49).. The woman realized very well that both of them are attached to the highest rank represented in humanity. To her nothing is important but being human

Both Chika and the woman established a kind of bond. They have things in common now as they have their families outside. Chika has her sister Nnedi, and the woman has her daughter Halima. The two have the same fate as the riot never distinguishes Igbo or Hausa, Muslim or Christian, “it will strike her that she cannot tell if the partially burned man is Igbo or Hausa, Christian or Muslim, from looking at the charred flesh” (53). All are equals and even in death all bodies achieve human solidarity as humans and nothing but humans. The woman told Chika that her sister is going to be O.K. and that Nnedi was not lost in the riot, but would be safe somewhere (47). Chika then felt she was not alienated anymore. She had someone else to care for her and her sister’s fate even if she was from a counter culture and religion.

The two women forge a solidarity, and share their stories and fears, a solidarity that is contrapuntal to the raging madness outside the dusty, smelly abandoned space that has become their place of refuge from danger. (TTAYN 9)

After this conversation between Chika and the woman, solidarity had more than one side: first, Physical solidarity when the woman showed her breast to Chika having ascertained that Chika is a physician. The woman was complaining of severe pain “my nipples is burning like peppers” (49). Uncovering her breast, the woman conveyed a message of trust and peace to Chika “a willingness to engage with the other [...] aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences” (Hannerz 239). Chika forgot about her study and she told the woman that her mother had the same problem after her five children, so no need for her to worry. Though Chika was lying as her mom did not have five children, nor did she suffer in her breast as Chika claimed, but she did not want to lose this chance to achieve attachment with the woman. Chika felt that she owes the woman a favour after the woman’s words about her sister; she wanted to pay back the favour through her unreal story to calm the woman down. She realized that without attachment and solidarity, man will live in an ocean of insignificance. Man is going to be separated even from the closest people to him.

Another form of solidarity between Chika and the woman is social solidarity. After this kind of physical connection, Chika and the woman “created a bond” (51). Again, human attachment is stronger than cultural or religious boundaries; the Muslim woman prayed for the Igbo Christian, “Allah keep your sister and Halima in safe Place” (51). The time passed and the two women overcame their alienation and they started to melt in the crucial of humanity where no religion, tribe, or ethnic group required.

The woman’s scarf is employed in the story in a very professional way by Adichie. It is described as “long, flimsy pink and black, with the garish prettiness of cheap things” (44) giving a description to the economic case of the woman. It indicates her great poverty and shows her identity as a Muslim. The woman is alienated in her society and her alienation could not be overcome, as Marx states, unless social and economic status has been repaired. The woman used the scarf for two purposes: first, the scarf is used religiously by the woman to cover her head to be known as a Muslim. Second, she used it on the ground to pray in the dusty store. Being upset and worried about her daughter and being hurt in her breast, she insisted on telling her prayers on time. But the scarf had a new job that was not made for; when Chika went out of the shop before the end of the riot looking for her lost sister, she was injured. She returned immediately to the shop bleeding, and the woman did not hesitate to wet her scarf and use it to clean the wound of Chika. She also tied the scarf around Chika’s leg to cover her wound. The woman sacrificed the symbol of her purity and religious identity to make it play another role. She knew that she would not be able to pray on the scarf again, but she cared for the human more than anything else. Her

strong desire to achieve solidarity and her insistence on being one of “the larger I” tempted her to sacrifice what was on her head to be on other’s leg if it would be more useful. Though the scarf was old and tattered, but it was the woman’s tool to play her social role required in the process of self development and realization. Knotting the scarf around Chika’s leg is in fact attaching the two hearts, the two cultures, and the two religions. Actually, it is a bond between them as human beings. The woman kept the chain of humanity that knits together all the innumerable hearts; it is the chain of fidelity, love, and tolerance. Chika and the woman managed to achieve human solidarity and they managed to live in “the larger I” breaking the chain of alienation though they came from opposite cultures. Campbell emphasizes “Adichie’s characters bond because of their expressions of mothering, compassion, and generosity” (24).

By the end of the riot, the woman opened the window of the shop to be sure that it is suitable to go out. Everything stopped and she had to go out looking for her daughter. Chika asked the woman “may I keep your scarf” (57), and the question was not expected by the woman. Chika wanted the scarf to keep her connection with the other culture. She wanted to stress her attachment to humanity regardless of all other aspects prevent this affection. For the woman it was dangerous, Adichie comments “there is perhaps the beginning of future grief on her place, but she smiles a light, distracted smile before she lands the scarf back to Chika and turns to climb out of the window” (57). The future grief about which Adichie speaks is that one caused by going outside the store without her scarf. The woman will be without head cover that means she will be thought Christian not Muslim. This will increase the danger that she will be hurt by Muslims themselves. Masquelier is in the right track in explaining that the scarf is something “safely anchor their selfhood” (2016). In her comment, Carly Campbell emphasizes that:

The women show us that while cultural and social constructions of others in society are inescapable, we all have the freedom to recognize the limitations and dangers of structures and can consciously choose how to respond to them. (32)

The last words of the woman to Chika “wash your leg well-well. Greet your sister, greet your people” (60), besides Chika’s request to keep the woman’s scarf are clear evidences that Chika overcame the idea of alienation. Her feelings moved as if taken by hand to “the larger I”, and she realized the fact that she is one of many. Her speech changed to suit the culture of a poor ignorant woman. Catherine Acholonu elaborates that Chika displays a desire for “love, tolerance, and service rather than antagonism and violent confrontation” (111),

the two women work in “partnership...co-operation...and tolerance” (112). The two women managed to achieve solidarity physically, spiritually, and socially. They broke all barriers of alienation, hatred, ethnicity, and struggles. The two women kept the noble values of love and fidelity because “we are all in this together” (Arana 277).

Through the second short story “The Arrangers of a Marriage”, Adichie draws three lines of relations: first, the relationship of Dave and America after he left Nigeria, as an example of social alienation. Dave insisted on penetrating the American society and American culture sacrificing everything and abandoning his own culture. He believed that Americans are superior in everything. He even changed his name from Ofodile into Dave, and he believed that the only way to fit in America is “to talk LIKE American’s, eat like them, drink like them, use their words and erase any cultural differences” (168), otherwise he would be rejected in society and treated like immigrants. Confronted with both cultures as in Zimmermann’s two-dimensional ethnosizer, there are four distinct combinations of commitments migrants can choose: Assimilation, integration, marginalization, or separation. Zimmermann emphasizes, “The more migrants become similar to natives, the more they relinquish and abandon their own culture” (5). Dave fell a prey to marginalization which is described as “a weak dedication to or strong detachment from either the dominant culture or the culture of origin” (Zimmermann 6). In the case of Dave, he detached himself from his native culture and even rejected it completely. He married an American woman to get the Green-Card, and he did not tell any one about this marriage even his later wife Chinaza. Dave isolated himself completely from his own Nigerian culture, and as Fahim explains “Sometimes, man’s attempts end in failure that result in an exalted feelings of further alienation which cannot be escaped for being a fate”(52). Though Americans could understand him now, and he was more polite speaking the language of America, but alienation from his culture, language and customs made him ignorant, close minded, and he looked so artificial. He broke the sacred chain of fidelity and patriotism to his native land.

The second relationship is that of Dave and Agatha. After getting the Green-Card Dave decided to marry a Nigerian girl and take her to the states. Chinaza accepted to marry him after her aunt and uncle told her about his life in America: “a doctor on America! It is like we won a lottery for you” (170). Chinaza had her vindications to accept this marriage as she was long for better life out of slavery of Nigeria, and as Edward Said states “Exile is sometimes better than staying behind or not getting out: but only sometimes” (141). But her dreams went away. Second, the husband she was told to be a doctor was only a resident and he makes very little money. Third, she knew about the ex-wife of Dave. Fourth, she discovered the real personality and selfishness of Dave

who did not take care of her needs. He even forced her to go by her English name, Agatha, though she did not like it “my English name is just something on my Birth Certificate. I have been Chinaza okafor my whole life” (175). Dave was an ego; he was gradually alienating her from her rooted culture imposing the American culture on her mind. He forced her to use some words instead of others, like “cookies” not “biscuits” and “elevator” instead of “lift”:

You should say ‘Hi’ to people here not ‘you’re welcome’ I’m not called Ofodile here, by the way. I go by Dave...the last name I use here is different, too...it’s Bell...if you want to get any where you have to be as mainstream as possible...if not, you will be left by the roadside. You have to use your English name here. (172)

Affrey, Ijah is in the right track in explaining:

Disappointments in this short story are twofold: the insecurity, the callous and deceitful machination of the arrangers of marriage and the entire deceptive appearance and illusion of America, and the highly pretentious nature of Ofodile’s behavior completes the picture of emptiness of entire America concept. (17)

Dave’s oppression to Chinaza was also in door; he did not even want her to cook the Nigerian food not to be smelled by neighbors. She was like the pawn used and moved by him regardless of her own feelings or requirements. When a neighbor liked the food of Chinaza, Dave was upset to be known as not American. In her essay “of French Fries and Cookies: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Diasporic short Fiction” Daria Tunca explains “The woman’s clumsy comments seem to reflect ignorance more than hostility, but the single fact of being singled out as an outsider is too much to take for Ofodile” (303). Tunca stressed on him as Ofodile not Dave in order to stress his attempts to alienate and detach himself out of his roots. The woman’s speech proves his failure to be accepted in the American society and to sly himself out of his Nigerian identity.

Dave destroyed his life because of egoism, and egoism is the inside real cause of disaster. He destroyed the chain of faithfulness and love with his wife, the chain that knits together all the hearts. He betrayed her feelings of security and trust and instead of protecting her he was the main cause of her suffering. He aimed at turning her to an American machine or they would be rejected by society:

Look at the people who shop here; they are the ones who immigrate and continue to act as if they are back in their countries [...] they will

never move forward unless they adopt to America. (175)

After the great self destruction and detachment from society with Dave, Chinaza was like the lost ship in the deep wide sea of frustration, lassitude, and alienation. Dave alienated her completely from her society, her people, her culture and even herself. Iris Young states that this kind of marginalization “also involves the deprivation of cultural, practical, and institutionalized conditions for exercising capacities in a context of recognition and interaction” (20). Edward Said asserts that “exile is a solitude experienced outside the group: the deprivations felt at not being with others in the communal habitation” (140). Now, she is in bad need of attachment and she has to be restored to “The Larger I” once again. She was thinking about returning again to Nigeria, but she was not fully convinced with the idea. Though she did not fulfill her wishes in America, and her life is not better than that in Nigeria, but she had not to be blamed for anything. Tunca asserts:

In Nigeria, she was not allowed to pursue higher education and was forced into a loveless union with Ofodile [...] towards the end of the story; she realizes that she can’t go back to Nigeria, because her relatives would condemn her choice. Her prospects in America are equally limited, since she cannot support herself. (305)

She suffered from alienation till she recognized her Afro-American neighbor Nie; a Nigerian girl who immigrated to America with her husband and children long time ago. Nie became American citizen, but she did not deny or forget her Nigerian origin and she insisted on keeping it. Nie is among individuals who

Actually do not have the aspirations to abandon their roots and habits while living in the new country and re-negotiate language and cultural practices by using multilingual communication (English, Igbo, Nigerian Pidgin English) or creating spaces for identifiable community of Nigerian or Africans (barber shops, beauty and hair salons, grocery shops with so called ‘African’ food). (Koziel 101)

Nie and her family achieved human solidarity with Chinaza; they constituted small society and she restored herself again. Chinaza felt for the first time that she loved and beloved not used or exploited by others. So, unlike Dave who failed to be attached to his society, his neighbors and his wife, Chinaza managed to attach herself. She managed to achieve human solidarity with Nie and her family and she succeeded in restoring herself again.

The last short story analyzed is “Quality Street” where Adichie discusses the issue of alienation and attachment through two characters: Mrs. Njoku and her daughter

Sochinne. Mrs. Njoku is a rich aristocratic Nigerian woman who did her best to alienate herself from her society. She sent her daughter to study in America with the desire of being Americanized. Njoku believed in western society and its culture blindly. She is one of the groups who “claim to be considered more Western and educated and come back to home country in order to be given a name “Americanah” by their compatriots” (Koziel 101). She believed that Nigerians and Nigeria are inferior to Americans and America.

Unlike her mother who alienated herself from her original society, Sochinne insisted all the time to keep her Nigerian culture. Despite her study in America, she was not involved in the American culture. She returned to Nigeria on vacation to prepare for her marriage to a Kenyan guy, not American one. This alienated her mother even from Sochinne herself; Fahim emphasizes “man’s alienation from other people results in an alienation from himself as well. He refuses to take an active part in society even if this will be for his own good” (53-54). According to Hegel, Njoku failed in the process of self-alienation and self-reconciliation. She failed to overcome her alienation and she could not redeem her ‘fallenness’ (Sayers 2009).

Sochinne’s character derives many characteristics from Nigerian girls in real about whom Adichie says: “I’m interested in writing realistic fiction set in Nigeria that I know” (Forna 52). Though her mum wanted to alienate her from her original Nigerian society, but she rejected all attempts and kept solidarity with her native people. Ian Watt asserts “It is solidarity which gives both the individual and the collective life what little pattern of meaning can be discovered in it” (270). Through solidarity, man is able to distinguish between right and wrong. Among the four distinct combinations of the concept of ethnosizer defined by Zimmermann, Sochinne chose integration, which is “achieved when an individual combines, incorporates, and exhibits both strong dedication to the origin and commitment and conformity to the host society” (5). Her insistence on achieving solidarity is represented in many situations: First, when she refused to drink the imported milk that was not drunk by people of her country. Though she had money, but she was attached to her poor community. Second, she decided to marry a Kenyan guy against the desire of her mother who wanted her to marry American one, and she made her wedding party in The Country House. Third, she discarded her mother’s behaviour when she gave money to the bank employee who did not need them “Mum, in my opinion is unethical and you don’t have consideration [...] Don’t you think about the people who really need that money” (3). Fourth, she denied the maltreatment and disregard of her mum to the beggars who were asking for money to eat “Don’t you think about the beggars who made their ways from car window to car window in the traffic” (4). Fifth, Sochinne’s request for the

driver to get down of the car and eat with them at Chicken Republic is a clear indication of her belief in social solidarity. She could not imagine eating with her mother while the driver who was working the whole day waiting for them hungry. Her mum’s speech:

You think if you take the driver into chicken republic to eat at the same table as you then you have done a good thing for him but you have not because it is not about his own well being but about your own well being [...] you will only make him uncomfortable and you will change nothing in his life. (5)

This speech indicates the great arrogance, superiority and discrimination Mrs. Njoku believes in. Again, she decided on marginalization, alienating herself from the whole society. She was ashamed even to speak the Igbo language and she was only speaking English.

In a final attempt to restore her mother again, Sochinne reminded her mum with few memories in their past holidays with her dead dad, but Njoku hated those days because “ their friends were in London while her husband insisted they stay at Amarachi” (7).

Adichie depicts two characters, that of Njoku who alienated herself from her daughter, her friends, the driver, and poor people of her native land. She imprisoned herself in western world mentally and spiritually, and the character of Sochinne who refused to be Americanized and managed to achieve human solidarity with her poor friends and the whole society. Sochinne managed to be a member of “The Larger I”.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper, the researcher has attempted to explore the concept of alienation versus attachment in three modern short stories by Chimamanda Adichie as a famous post-colonial writer in Nigeria. The paper starts defining alienation with its kinds according to different philosophers. Also, it introduces attachment as the only remedy of alienation. The stories chosen here draw different lines of relationships and provide various types of alienation including social and self-alienation.

The first short story “A Private Experience” is about two alienated women with different colors, religions, and counter cultures. However, they managed to overcome their alienation and achieve human solidarity. They succeeded in constructing what their society failed to construct. Each one sacrificed for the sake of the other one. They broke all barriers before them and they created a bond, a human bond where no religion, color, or culture required. They managed to attach themselves to humanity.

The second story “The Arrangers of a Marriage” provides

another type of alienation. Ofodile, the protagonist, failed to conquer himself and he lived in a big circle of self-alienation. On the contrary, Chinaza restored herself to society again. Being alienated for a long time in America by Ofodile's egoism and his desire to be Americanized, Chinaza was in bad need of solidarity. She managed to achieve solidarity with her Nigerian neighbor Nie and her family. So, the hero was a prey to alienation, while the heroine managed to achieve solidarity and restored herself again.

In the third story "Quality Street", there are two characters analyzed in this paper, Mrs.Njoku and her daughter Sochinne. The mother alienated herself from her original society and culture denying her people. On the other side, the daughter kept her strong connections with her people and her original culture. The result was that, the mother lost everything even her daughter, while the daughter gained everything and the most important she gained herself.

To sum up, it is quite clear that alienation by all means is the strong enemy of humans. It comes out of egoism that tempts man to suffer and lose everything. Man cannot live alone and he/she must do his best to attach himself to society and to achieve human solidarity regardless of place, religion, belief, or thoughts. Chielozona Eze emphasizes:

Community is no longer restricted to the people of the same ethnic group. Community becomes a group linked by a common concern for humanity irrespective of ethnic origin. (104)

If man fails to achieve human solidarity, he will live isolated in an endless frightening world of fear, egoism, despair and suffering. Man will be hit by strong waves of depression and agony. Attachment is the only solution and the best remedy for man's problems whenever and wherever he lives. Man without society is like a drowned boat in an ocean.

Notes

¹ This term is mine as it indicates that the whole society is like one body with different organs that cannot be separated. If man manages to achieve human solidarity and be one of society, he is going to be a part of this body that moves as one piece and each organ helps and supports the other one.

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