

## STORY AS HISTORY, HISTORY AS STORY IN CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE'S *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN*

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### ABSTRACT

A story is a modest attempt by the writer to make sense of experience. It represents an illumination of social reality. It is also in this sense that we can begin to perceive literature as a national biography, depicting social conditions of certain periods in our history. The artist is a conduit through which old things or issues (the past) are recovered or reconfigured.

Stories illuminate the past and offer an insight into its understanding. The world that the writer has created is what we want to savor and enjoy, but we cannot deeply appreciate it unless we comprehend its relevance to the other two worlds, the writer's world and our world. It is within the context of the foregoing that an attempt is made in this essay to highlight the relevance and power of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* in the understanding of the Nigeria/Biafra war of 1967-1970. The Nigerian/Biafran war like other wars destroyed hopes and aspirations alongside resources of the people. The Nigerian nation, will for a long time feel the destabilizing impact of the war as both human and infrastructural damage was gargantuan in size and scope.

Reading critically into the text with a view to locating and commenting on issues and activities that characterized the war which Adichie tries to reconstruct in her novel, the essay explores the relationship between history and story and concludes on the note that in Africa, given her circumstances, African writers are historically bound to take recourse to their history. In the case of Adichie with the novel under consideration, she ends up producing a work of "faction" in all its materiality pointing out the unsustainable nature of war(s).

**Keywords:** Story, History, Human Development, Sustainability, Social reality, 'Faction', Nigeria/Biafra

### INTRODUCTION

*An artist has a synthetic idea of an object and remakes the whole as he conceives it. This means that he places the object before us with a well defined artistic structure, a re-creation of the object that is not identical with itself. For the structure of the model also reflects the ideological structure of its creator, a work of art being simultaneously a model of the phenomena of reality and of the personality of the creator (Kopesi, 1972: 375 ).*

The implication of the above is to the effect that an artist does not merely illustrate a reality but tries to impose his/her own conscious structure on the public. As Okri (2007: 70) has hinted, there is "a lot about the past that we can't know except by

stories”, a story being a modest attempt by the writer to make sense of experience. It represents an illumination of society’s reality. It is also in this sense that we can begin to perceive literature as a national biography, depicting social conditions of certain periods in our history. The artist is a conduit through which old things or issues (the past) are recovered or reconfigured.

The world that the writer has created is what we want to savor and enjoy, but we cannot deeply appreciate it unless we comprehend its relevance to the other two worlds, the writer’s world and our world. Literature becomes a series of historical documents because the vital elements of inspiration are manipulated in such a manner that gives maximum effect to the reader. In other words, there can be no literature without a history. There is a delicate and subtle connection between literature (story) and life (history). Literature and life can never be far apart. It is this intricate relationship between Literature and life (history) that one sees Chimamanda Adichie exploring in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

The question can then be posed: What is history? This question may appear redundant especially to a historian considering the fact that E.H Carr had raised and provided an answer to this question in his book first published in 1961 with the title *What is History?*. To Carr, History consists of a corpus of ascertained facts. These facts are available to the historian in documents, inscriptions and so on. The historian collects them, takes them home, and returns them in whatever style that appeals to him. According to Carr, following Collingwood, history is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his/her facts in an unending dialogue between the present and the past. What this translates to in clearer terms is that the essence of history is to understand the society of the past, with a view to increasing the mastery of the society of the present. History, as Ike Okonta (2008) has written “may be the study of past events, but it is also very much a tool to name and shape the present” (250) The present can be understood in its comprehensiveness when serious attention is paid to the past.

Writers, especially in neo-colonial societies act as historians in special ways by distilling from the experiences of the past and narrating them in the shape of stories. The history of Neo –colonial society shows that colonialism undermined their development. African writers, given their experience try as much as possible in their narration, to address issues that affect African development and how it can be sustained for the benefit of the people of Africa. Asked why he wrote, Amos Tutuola (1997), one of the pioneers of Nigerian literature written in English, provided an explanation for his craft and his artistry, defending himself as a preservationist of his own culture: “I don’t want the past to die. I don’t want our culture to vanish. It’s not good. We are losing [our customs and our traditions] but I’m still trying to bring them into memory” (410). Chinua Achebe (1975) has also provided an explanation as to why he wrote *Things Fall Apart*. According to him, his culture was changing rapidly after the Second World War so much so that the background material for his story was included in order that his people would have a record of life as it once was, before it disappeared and forgotten. In his much quoted and celebrated essay, “The Novelist as Teacher”, he submits:

*I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past with all its imperfections was not one long night of savagery from which*

*the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them. Perhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure (45).*

This accords with what Kolawole (2005) describes as “a new way of *hystorifying* reality in African fiction” (21). This new way of historifying reality takes into account what had happened in the past. In doing this, the writer tries as much as possible to open the eyes of the readers to certain realities with a view to teaching and enlightening. Nigerian creative writing has tried as much as possible to represent and refract Nigeria's social realities in their various forms and shapes.

## **BIAFRA IN NIGERIAN LITERATURE**

Nigeria's civil war occasioned by the secession of the Eastern part of the country in 1967 has thrown up an avalanche of writings (fiction and non-fiction). On the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 1967, the then Eastern Region of Nigeria seceded from the Federal Republic of Nigeria and took on the name, Biafra (from the Bight of Biafra, now Bight of Benin). Alumona has argued that “the remote causes of Biafra's declaration of independence can be traced to Major Chukwuemeka Kaduna Nzeogwu's coup d'etat of January 15, 1966” The immediate causes of the Biafran secession were the pogrom in the Northern part of the country and the thwarting of the Aburi Accord for salvaging the Nigerian situation in the aftermath of the July 29, 1966 counter-coup and the pogrom.

Many commentators have taken sides either for Nigeria (the federal forces) or for Biafra. This is natural as people are expected to take positions based on convictions or other considerations. A Newspaper columnist who writes for one of the national newspapers (Nigeria's *The Nation*), Sam Omatseye (2007) has this to say about Odimegwu Ojukwu, the leader of the Biafran secession and the war:

*...But Ojukwu was pursuing a selfish ambition which coincided with the agitations of the intelligentsia. That is what the Americans call double whammy! It was also a double jeopardy. I always wondered how many great talents dissolved in the flames of that war on both sides. I have always contemplated poet Christopher Okigbo, perhaps the best poet this continent has ever produced (72).*

The Igbo of Nigeria are known for their ingenuity and creativity in the world of business and financialism. They are seen to be very visible in all parts of the country pursuing one trade or the other. This has attracted varied responses from other ethnic groups. A coup led by any officer from this ethnic group would definitely lead to all kinds of interpretations with dire implications for the country.

Scholars and witnesses to the crisis that led to the secession and the consequent declaration of Biafra tend to see the issues differently from the like of Omatseye. Chinua Achebe (2009), one of the most influential supporters of the Biafran cause has written a lot about these matters. According to Achebe, “as every one knows Nigeria was upset in January 1966 by five

young army Majors. Nigerians were wild with joy at the fall of the corrupt and hated government of the federation”(83). The counter-coup reversed the gains of the coup and made the latter appear as a well-thought out agenda of the Igbo to dominate and entrench themselves into all the commanding heights of the Nigerian society. What followed has become part of Nigeria’s history producing in the process a massive literature that is robustly engaging.

As Uwasomba (2011) has indicated in an article titled ‘War, Violence and Language in Ken-Wiwa’s *Sozaboy*’, the Nigeria/ Biafra crisis has led to the promotion of a large quantum of texts representing both historical accounts of the war and fictional creations. Ezenwa-Ohaeto (2007) has made the point that those who were in the enclave of Biafra have produced the majority of works on the Nigerian civil war. In fact, a young Nigerian literary critic, Onyerionwu (2012), has recently argued that the ghost of the Nigeria/ Biafra war is a major generator of Nigerian literature and that it is still insatiate. Most of the writers from the Biafran enclave played active roles on the part of Biafra during the 1967-1970 civil war in Nigeria. Some of them were physically involved in the war as soldiers, intelligence officers, diplomats, propagandists, advisers, consultants, etc. Writers like Achebe, Gabriel Okara, Cyprian Ekwensi, Onuora Nzekwu, Okechukwu Mezu, Vincent Ike, Flora Nwapa, Nkem Nwankwo, Christopher Okigbo, Elechi Amadi, Kalu Okpi, Eddie Iroh and many others too numerous to mention in this essay wrote to expose the brutalities of the war from the point of view of Biafra. There are also works that try to interrogate the crises and contradictions within the Biafran state even while the war was going on.

I.N.C. Aniebo’s works especially *The Anonymity of Sacrifice* and *Rearguard Actions* subject the Biafran leadership to serious criticisms. As Koroye (2009) has noted, the works are regarded as “a collection of stories suggesting allegorical parallels with unresolved issues in the relationship between power centers and margins, as they were in Nigeria and Biafra, and as they still are in Nigeria”<sup>16</sup>No doubt, Biafra was seen as a movement that was supposed to propel the people to greater heights by emancipating them from the brutalities and suffocation of Nigeria. According to Aniebo (2009), this was not to be in the end:

*Biafra was a movement that was supposed to be for the people and by the people subverted into becoming a movement by one man for himself. In Biafra, we had a virtual dictatorship. I don’t think any one who was in Biafra will tell you otherwise. Anything you wanted to do in Biafra, even though we were fighting for freedom, had to emanate from or be known to the head of state (68).*

#### **HALF OF A YELLOW SUN AS A CONTINUATION OF THE STORY OF THE NIGERIA – BIAFRA WAR**

As Oladitan (1979) has noted, “literary imagination is not bound by factual “accuracy”, it may deliberately confuse, distort, invent and even falsify” (10). African writers, particularly the novelists, have consistently exercised these poetic liberties over the collective experience of their society in a rich skilful and purposeful manner. In this novel as will be presently demonstrated, Adichie skillfully “re-narrates” the civil war pointing out its damning effects on all classes of people living within the enclave of Biafra. In this novel, context is as telling as the content. War is always a very traumatic experience, and it always has serious effects on society. It is therefore difficult for writers to ignore the effect of war on the society in which they live.

Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a human as well as a social novel, dealing with the character of the war and the individuals who are pitched in a war that led to deaths, destruction of ideals, values, personal friendship and national bonds. The novel is structured on four parts. The first and second parts are during the early and late sixties respectively. The third part is a switch back to the early sixties while the last part focuses on the late sixties.

In the first part of the novel which is set in Nsukka, a town that harbors the first indigenous Nigerian University, the civil war had not begun even though there were hints of an impending crisis in the land. Ugwu has just been brought as a house boy by his aunty to live with Odenigbo who teaches and lives on the campus of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Ugwu is every inch a local boy who confesses that he stopped school at standard two. He prefers to call Odenigbo Master but the latter refuses insisting that he should be called Odenigbo. Ugwu is a special house boy as he is loved and treated with care by Odenigbo and his mistress, Olanna.

From all indications and accounts at this point in the novel there is no doubt that Odenigbo's house is a bee-hive of activities with his circle of friends including Richard and Sussan (two foreigners), Lara Adebayo, Okeoma, Professor Ezeka and Dr. Pated. Beyond merry-making which usually comes with bouts of alcoholic drinks and food, the group usually engages in serious academic and social issues. The group is a close-knit one whose activities are sustained by its engagement in intellectual discourses each time it meets in Odenigbo's house.

In the second part of the novel there is a coup led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu. Master (i.e. Odenigbo) who has been listening to the radio informs Olanna that a coup d'état has occurred. From the way and manner he responds to Nzeogwu's announcement of the coup, it is obvious that he supports it as the people might have been expecting a change of government: "Nkem! Master called out, *O mego!* It has happened! 'There has been a coup', Master said, and gestured to the radio" (p. 123). In the end, the Nzeogwu's coup turns out not to solve the problems of the country as wheeler-dealers like Chief Ozobia, a business man who had run away during the coup has returned to the scene of power and influence. Kainene the twin sister of Olanna says thus of Chief Ozobia her father:

"Daddy has n't wasted any time ingratiating himself. He ran off until things calmed down, and now he's back to make new friends" (p. 134).

A counter coup takes place with the BBC reporting that Igbo officers in Kaduna are being killed. But the Nigerian Radio is not saying any thing about the killings. The ENBC Radio Enugu recounts eye witness accounts from the northern part of the country about the killings of Igbo people in Kano, a major commercial and industrial centre of the North. There are shouts and chanting of "the Igbo must go. The infidels must go. Araba, araba!" (p. 147). These gory killings and taunts against the Igbo have become so pervasive that Olanna who has just returned to Nsukka from Kano narrates to her husband, Odenigbo the grim story of how she escaped being killed and the killings of Igbo people in Kano.

It is with the foregoing background that we can understand the agitation from many quarters demanding secession which Odimegwu Ojukwu declares. The declaration speech deserves to be quoted:

*Fellow country men and women, you the people of Eastern Nigeria; conscious of the supreme authority of Almighty God over all mankind; of your duty over posterity; aware that you can no longer be protected in your lives and in your property by any government based outside Eastern Nigeria; determined to dissolve all political and other ties between you and the former Republic of Nigeria; having mandated me to proclaim on your behalf and in your name that Eastern Nigeria be a sovereign independent Republic; now therefore I do hereby solemnly proclaim that the territory and region known as and called Eastern Nigeria, together with her continental shelf and territorial waters, shall henceforth be an independent sovereign state of the name and title of the Republic of Biafra (pp. 161-162).*

Odenigbo is asked by the students to address them. According to the narrator, “Odenigbo climbed up to the podium waving his Biafran flag: swaths of red, black, and green and, at the centre a luminous half of a yellow sun” (p. 163). With the declaration, Biafra becomes a reality as people respond to Ojukwu’s speech with: “Yes! Yes! Ojukwu, nye anyi egbe: Give us guns” (p. 171).

With the declaration of Biafra fewer and fewer people visit Odenigbo and in the evenings the campus streets look ghostly as many people are running for safety. Odenigbo, like others returns to Abba with his family. After a series of meetings in his village, Odenigbo is to move to Umuahia with his family to work in the Manpower Directorate of Biafra. The people of Abba are also on the run because the war has reached their village.

Apparently disenchanted with the story of the war, in part three of the novel, the narrator takes the reader back to the early 1960s when Odenigbo’s mother comes visiting with a village girl called Amala in the absence of Olanna. Odenigbo sleeps with Amala and impregnates her in the process. Olanna in anger lures Richard her twin sister’s boy friend to make love to her. Amala gives birth to a baby girl named Baby. Olanna who does not have a child for Odenigbo adopts Baby as her child despite her mother’s advice to the contrary.

Part four of the novel which is in the late 1960s resumes the story of the war and its debilitating effects on the people of Biafra. There are no medicines to attend to the sick and the dying. The state of the hospital where Baby who is coughing is taken to is very pathetic. The relief centre is filled with people who have come in search of non-existing relief materials. The war is very devastating but the people are hopeful that in the end Biafra will be a success as can be seen in their song: “Biafra win the war/Armoured car, shelling machine, fighter and bomber/Ha enweghi ike Imeri Biafra” (p. 275).

Olanna who has become a teacher teaches her students the symbol of the Biafran flag. Red is the blood of the siblings massacred in the North; Black, for mourning them; Green for the prosperity of Biafra and that of a yellow sun, the glorious future. The Biafran national Anthem always bursts out:

*Land of the rising sun, we love and cherish,  
Beloved homeland of our brave heroes;*

*We must defend our lives or we shall perish;  
We shall protect our hearts from all our foes;  
But if the price is death for all we hold dear,  
Then let us die without a shred of fear... (p. 277).*

These teachings are aimed at deepening the nationalist feelings of the citizens of the new nation. The determination to win the war is captured in the resounding view of a strong believer in the ideals of Biafra: "Biafra will win the war; God has written it in the sky" (p. 289).

In spite of the deep commitment of the people to the Biafran nation, there is every reason to believe that at this stage in the prosecution of the war suspicion has set in among the people especially the Biafran war elite. Check points have been erected on all the major roads. Everybody is suspected to be a saboteur. Kainene (Olanna's twin sister) and her boy friend Richard get their raw deal in the hands of soldiers as they are moving to and from Port-Harcourt and Orlu. Doubts begin to mount about Ojukwu's leadership credentials. Hear Kainene:

*Do you know how many officers he's locked up? He is so suspicious of his officers that he's using civilians to buy arms...Really, when Biafra is established, we will have to remove Ojukwu (p. 313).*

Expectedly, the war rages on with bombings and strafings thereby increasing the level of casualties and misery on the Biafra side. Odenigbo the yesterday revolutionary has completely changed for the worst and even proves incapable of paying his house rent. Young boys including Ugwu are conscripted into the army. Those who can afford bribe money are allowed to go. The soldiers are abrasive and brutal as they forcefully seize people's cars and other belongings. Young girls also become targets of rape by soldiers. The refugee centers are swelling with people with kwashiokor and other debilities.

The fall of Umuahia, the capital of Biafra is symbolic because it marks the end of the rebellion. Odenigbo, Olanna, Ugwu and Baby are forced by circumstances to relocate to Orlu to stay with Olanna's twin sister, Kainene who is now involved in buying and selling. She goes to the Ninth Mile Market to buy things. This business is popularly known as "Attack Market". At this time in the prosecution of the war all kinds of things begin to happen. Otherwise decent people like Reverend Father Marcel begins to sleep with most of the women before he gives them the crayfish meant to be shared to them. Odenigbo and his household are forced to leave Umuahia to his home town Abba and from Abba they finally go back to Nsukka only to notice to their chagrin the piles of books burnt by the Nigerian soldiers.

The war comes to an end leaving Odenigbo flustered; Kainene's house taken over and declared as Abandoned property; Kainene is declared missing and from all indications she must have been killed leaving Olanna devastated. Olanna says thus about her sister: "when I come back in my next life, Kainene will be my sister" (p. 433).

## **ODENIGBO ET AL AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WAR**

War, viewed from whatever perspective is a needless exercise. It is an act of sustained aggression. It brings out the beast in man and destroys hopes and aspirations. It should be recalled that before the advent of the war, Odenigbo was such an academic who enjoyed his trade as a sound Mathematics researcher and teacher. His friends who usually came made his house an extension of the classroom where informed debates and intellectual disputations were the order of the day. University of Nigeria as can be discerned from the novel was known for its attraction to other scholars other than people from Odenigbo's ethnic formation. The implication of this is that were it not for the war the University would have become one of the platforms that would have aided the bringing into being the national values and ethos that the country so direly needs but the war becomes a hindrance. With the advent of the war everybody runs for his/her dear life.

With the war Odenigbo becomes an ethnic jingoist who suddenly denounces his 'Nigerianity' thereby becoming a fan of the new Biafran nation. And in his bid to offer his professional services to the new nation he loses his sanity engaging in life styles that he would not have indulged in were things normal. According to Emmanuel Obiechina (1970), "out of every social crisis in the life of a people there comes a deepening of insight into the true nature of man and of human society" (vi). This insightful statement is true of Odenigbo, Ugwu, Olanna, Kainene, Alice and other characters in the novel. The war and its effect on them can be clearly noticed in the abhorrent behavior that each of them displays in the course of the war. Odenigbo, the revolutionary freedom fighter with endless certainty and self-belief, succumbs to alcohol and despair, while the seemingly compliant Olanna draws strengths from her teaching and organizational activities as an owner of a school where children are taught.

Olanna, the London educated daughter of an extremely rich businessman in Lagos endures the descent into a one-room squalor, food-aid queues and air raids without self-pity. Tending her adopted daughter Baby in the modest of poverty and deaths Olanna tries her best to ensure that she offers service to her nuclear family, her students and others as can be observed in her assistance to Mrs. Muokelu who she employs as one of her teachers. But there is anger at the bleakness of bombing hungry people, children, kwashiokored people and the general hopelessness that has gripped the people. The deadly kwashiorkor occasioned by malnutrition is dubbed "Harold Wilson Syndrome" because of the alleged complicity of the then British Prime Minister who was said to be the personal friend of the late Prime Minister of Nigeria. Achebe (1975) alludes to this in his "The African Writer and the Biafran Cause".

Ugwu's forced conscription exposes him into engaging in an atrocious behavior whose legacy is a lasting shame. The narrator captures the rape scene thus:

*The bar girl was lying on hr back on the floor, her wrapped bunched up at her waist, her shoulders held down by a soldier, her legs widen wide ajar. She was sobbing. Please, please, biko. Her blouse was still on. Between her legs, High-Tech was moving. His thrusts were jerky, his small buttocks darker-coloured than his legs. (82).*

Ugwu pulled his trousers down, surprised at the swiftness of his erection. She was dry and tense when he entered her (p. 365).

This gang rape which Ugwu is involved in is one of the numerous wicked activities that come with war. And to think that High-Tech, a mere thirteen year old boy is part of this heinous crime is to say the least reprehensible. It is also a great irony that soldiers whose claim for fighting the war is anchored on liberation of their people are the ones subjecting them to all sorts of unimaginable torture and harassments. Conscripts are forced to take wee-wee and gin thereby arousing the worst of their animalistic instincts.

Ugwu's return from the war front to Orlu where his Master Odenigbo and Olanna have retired to for safety gives him an opportunity to review his life of debauchery and even his devotion to the Biafran cause. He becomes a changed person and no longer listens to the Radio Biafra with its loud propaganda about the war exploits of the Biafra soldiers. As Alumona (2011) has argued in his paper on the Ahiara Declaration, the Biafran war propaganda machinery was aimed at firing the imagination of the beleaguered people of Biafra with a view to sustaining their perseverance to ultimate victory in the Nigerian civil war. Ugwu has loosened himself from this hypnotism. When others listen to the Radio Biafra, Ugwu will get up and walk away. A particular incident clearly shows how Ugwu has in his mind renounced the war. When Harrison in a fit of enthusiasm alerts Ugwu about His Excellency's speech which is about to be aired, angrily retorts: "Turn that thing off". "Turn it off or carry it away" (p. 399). When persuaded further by Harrison that it will be a great speech, Ugwu responds with the clincher: "There is no such thing as greatness" (p. 399).

Predictably, His Excellency's speech is not by any stretch of the imagination great. The speech is a mere announcement by His Excellency that he is going abroad in search of peace. This is immediately followed with rumors making their rounds to the effect that His Excellency has run away. Of course, His Excellency's speech brings the war to an end with deaths of children, diseases, and a complete loss of everything that the Igbo held onto before the advent of the war. Baby is said to be wiser but has not grown taller since the advent of the war like other children. Kainene is missing, meaning that she must have been killed in her search for a meaningful livelihood. Kainene represents thousands or even millions who were wasted during the war. These people were mainly civilians who in the process of trying to eke out a bare existence were killed abruptly. It is apt to state that at the end of the war everybody would have learnt their lessons.

## **FICTION AS HISTORY**

According to Hippolyte Taine(1975), in his *History of English Literature*, literature is "a transcript of contemporary manners and customs and sign of a particular state of intellect"(52). The English novel between about 1840 and 1895 provides a very rich source of social comment as instantiated in the works of Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell and Thomas Hardy. Chinweizu (2007) is of the view that "to be a good African writer, you have to get yourself immersed in the history and story of the people" (44-45). Cyprian Ekwensi (2007), arguably the father of the Nigerian novel asserts that one of the functions of a novelist is "to hold a mirror up to nature" (46). But it is important to note that the world of the writer is not a photographic copy of the real world. The writer must effectively understand his/her material, master it, distill it and in the

end defamiliarize it. This is because all said and done, literature is expected to defamiliarize. After all, it is a ‘fiction’, an artistic verbal imitation of life. No wonder, Biodun Jeyifo (1985) describes it as a truthful lie.

*Half of a Yellow Sun* is a historical novel which self-consciously recreates specific moments in Nigeria’s recent or pre-independence history. Biafra was and is still a social reality. The literary text as a mediator always points to the significance of context. In African literature, this context is both historical and cultural. This is what Adichie has attempted to do in the novel under study. Most of the characters are drawn from the social environments where the real events being mirrored took place. Ugwu is a name common to the people from the Nsukka axis of Igboland; Odenigbo, an Mbaise; Olanna and Kainene from the Anambra belt; Richard and Sussan are foreigners caught up in the war. Charles the plumb and Charles the redhead are two American journalists who are visiting Biafra to have on-the-spot information about the war and its impact on the people.

In all the historical accounts about the war the advent of the concept of “Saboteur” is seen to be one of the major blows to the Republic of Biafra. This among other contradictions weakened the Biafran state and led to its disintegration. This account is given serious attention by General Alexander Madiebo, an Igbo who fought on the Biafra side but tried to be as factual as ever in his book titled *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafra War*. The overbearing influence of Ojukwu is also reflected in the book I.N.C. Aniebo, an artist of international repute who was a Major in the Biafran Army says much about His Excellency and his overbearing influence in an interview with Koroye and Ikechi (2002). Aniebo was to be executed in accordance with the orders of His Excellency but for the abrupt end of the war.

The novel is closely bound to reality to the point of almost appearing like a faction. Third generation Nigerian writers are too “factional” in their literary creativity. This does not allow for good literature. The writer of genius does not copy reality and should not teach truths. A character in a novel or drama must differ from a historical figure in real life. Time and space in a novel are not those of real life. Adichie allows too much of historical reality to dominate the scenes and contours of the novel. There are artistic conventions that guide literature. These distinguishing traits or elements of literature are: fictionality, invention, or imagination. A writer must see a work of art as something possessing self-containment and as Amuta (1983) has elaborated, “this essential self-containment of the art work must require its characteristic identity because of its aesthetic essence which in turn derives from the quality of the writer’s transposition of historical reality” (89).

In all, Adichie, using the Nigeria /Biafra war story casts insights into the human feelings of characters, young and old; rich and poor; educated and uneducated; local and foreign; male or female; righteous or sinner; good or bad; soldier or civilian. The war as can be seen from her narration brings out the worst and the best in the individuals in their efforts to negotiate meaning in their struggles for survival in the heat of the war.

The human catastrophes on both sides of the divide speak volumes about the savagery of war in general and the Nigeria/Biafra war in particular. This novel is a confirmation of the status of literature as that art which reflects society in all its realities.

## CONCLUSION

Any reader of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* who has even a faint idea of the 1967-1970 civil war is bound to see the work as a rehash of the events of those years. The civil war was spiraled by the 1966 coup which was seen at its initial stage as a nationalist move but like everything Nigerian, it became ethnicized. The counter-coup by Northern officers eliminated the Head of State who was an Igbo and many other Igbo officers and citizens living in the North were killed. The response of the Igbo to these events led to the war. From all indications, *Half of a Yellow Sun* shows clearly that the Biafran/Nigerian Civil War was an unsustainable event with dire consequences for the unity and development of Nigeria as an indivisible entity. As can be seen in the novel, the war destroys hopes and aspirations, leading to killings of all sorts and those who managed to survive are seen to be affected with one type of disease or another.

In Ken Saro-Wiwa's experimental novel titled *Sozaboy*, the hero of the novel, Mene makes the point that 'war is war'. This circular statement is a deep acknowledgement of the futility of war and the fact that human beings lose a lot when they plunge themselves into war. War of any sort does not and cannot lead to sustainable development. It annihilates both the present and the future of a country. For development to be sustainable, anti-social activities like war must be prevented at all costs.

As noted in the body of the essay, Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* shows that there is a thin line between fiction and reality. Adichie weaves the story of the war focusing on the monumental effects it had on individuals and the latter's capacity to survive in the midst of the hostilities.

The essay also observed that no matter how detached or distant Adichie appears to be from the story, one notices that the events surrounding the war are captured as they were in their starkest realities thereby making the novel another work of fiction. She rewrites the Biafran history into a story of how not to waste human resources of a country.

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