

NIGERIA TODAY, POLITICS AND IDENTITY IN THE LIGHT OF TWO SELECTED NOVELS

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Abstract

This study is based on the dynamics of Nigerian politics as portray in the two selected post-colonial works of Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Adichie. The research considers the role of identity in the post-colonial era and narrows it down to the Nigerian Biafra civil war of 1967-1970. It sets out to reveal the problem of identity that was prevalent in Nigeria during the civil war and the state of Nigeria's politics during the period of the war. The study is based on different research materials such as internet sources, journals, textbooks and interviews. Achebe's book is the most accurate, recent and comprehensive prose that has discussed the past, present and the possible future of Nigerian politics. Adichie, though never experience the war, skillfully constructs a tragic story that depicts accurately the event of the civil war. The findings of this research is based on the fact that, if the political leaders of the country will be able to compromise their diverse identities and the ethnic groups in the country come together to believe in a common identity, then the strife and disagreement will be in its best minimum. Finally, conclusion are drawn on how to address the problems of national disunity and selfish politics in Nigeria.

Keywords; Politics, Post Colonialism, Ideality, Alienation and Natioanlsm, Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Adichie

Introduction

The concept of post-colonial literature has been used as an umbrella term of the writings of various disenfranchised groups from countries of Asia and Africa which were on the primacy list of the colonisers due to motley reasons. Ironically, the idea of post-colonialism does not refer to the situation of an erstwhile colony after it has gained sovereignty. Instead, it incorporates the experiences of the indigenous people during the colonial phase, and the manner of their retaliation is both silent and manifest. Very soon the idea spread in various arenas of art and literature and a new theory rose to the dais of world literature and art.

Post-colonial literature is an attempt is an attempt of the colonised to reshape and restructure their clan identity once again and revive their customs and traditions in their narratives. For instance, Chinua Achebe in most of his works tries to present an insider's view about Igbo customs and conventions to the readers and at the same time juxtaposes the pre-colonial and colonial situations in Nigeria. He brings home the idea that a rich and prosperous clan was victimised under pacific attempts by the colonisers.

Identity and politics have played major roles in post-colonial Nigeria. The meaning of "identity" as we currently use it is not well captured by dictionary definitions, which reflect older senses of the word. Our present idea of "identity" is a fairly recent social construct, and a rather complicated one at that. Even though almost everyone knows how to use the word properly in everyday discourse, it proves quite difficult to give a short and adequate summary statement that captures the range of its present meanings. "Identity" in its

present incarnation has a double sense. It refers at the same time to social categories and to the sources of an individual's self-respect or dignity. In ordinary language, at least, one can use "identity" to refer to personal characteristics or attributes that cannot naturally be expressed in term of a social category, and in some contexts, certain categories can be described as "identities" even though no one sees them as central to their personal identity. Nonetheless, "identity" in its present incarnation reflects and evokes the idea that social categories are bound up with the bases of an individual's self respect.

A typical instance of this is in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The deconstruction of Adichie's works mimics the post-colonial identity in that the post-colonial identity occupies a paradoxical space in which coloniser and colonised identities are interdependent. Together, Ugwu (a house boy), Olanna (a wealthy and educated Igbo woman) and Richard (a British man infatuated with Igbo culture and in love with an Igbo woman), created an assemblage of personalities, cultural attitudes and positionalities that seem to be arbitrarily interconnected. Adichie seems to skillfully connect three very different characters whose relationships, were it not for the Biafran War, would not be deeply intimate.

The social gatherings at Odenigbo's house are full of debates on Africa's political future. Here, the usefulness of various forms of African governance is discussed amongst the Nigerian intelligentsia. One particularly note worthy debate involves Odenigbo defending the tribe as the idea unit for Africans, as other characters stress the need for pan-Africanism or nationalism. He is quoted as proclaiming: "the only authentic identity for the African is the tribe... I am Nigerian because a white man created Nigeria and gave me that identity. I am black because the white man constructed black to be as different as possible from his white. But I was Igbo before the white man came" (33).

In the novel, gender also determines the character's lives and identities. The central pairing is that of Olanna and Kainene, twin sister who are delineated according to what the other is not. They are characterised by two opposing types of femininity: Kainene is ostensibly a cool and enigmatic femme fatale, while Olanna is generous to the point of self-abnegation. The novel makes clear that the women are able to play out these types of femininity because they are in a position of financial security and have been gifted with overseas education.

Due to their privileged backgrounds, they are lucky enough to explore what it means to be a woman in a time of social upheaval seeing that they have the means of self-indulgement in questions of identity. This is most certainly the case when it comes to marriage.

Nigeria became politically independent on October 1, 1960, after about seven decades of colonial rule by Britain. Prior to colonial rule, most of the groups that today make up the country were often distinguished by differences in history, culture, political development and religion. Several important developments that have continued to affect Nigerian government and politics in the postcolonial period marked the period of colonial rule. In creating largely artificial regions, the British government fostered the cleavage between ethnic majority and minority groups. Each region contained the nucleus of the majority group that dominates in its respective region: the Hausa/Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the west and the Igbo in the East. The major political parties that emerged in the groins and controlled them were based on these groups. With regional autonomy, the major groups became the major "shareholders" of the federation. The minorities, felling oppressed and dominated, agitated for separate states in the regions.

Since independence, there has been struggle among the various ethnic nationalities in Nigeria over natural resources and political power that has led to civil conflict between 1967-1970. This war was fought between mainly Igbo dominated Biafra and Nigeria. Over three million of its citizens mainly of Igbo extraction were killed. The causes of the war are very controversial. The general consensus among historians, social commentators and political scientists was fear of domination and struggle over economic resources. Political antagonism and increasing corruption characterised the first government of independent Nigeria. After the first coup, northerners who feared Igbo dominance staged a counter-coup in July of 1966 which resulted in the death of Major General Aguiyi-Ironsi. Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowoon, a northerner, replaced Ironsi as chairman of the federal military government. Political dissension continued in many northern states where mobs began killing easterners, particularly members of the Igbo ethnic group. Ojukwu announced his

secession and on May 30, 1967, declared the eastern region an independent state named the “Republic of Biafra”. Nigeria attempted to counter this secession by initiating a war with Biafran forces.

Achebe in his memoir, *There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, maintains that the outbreak of the Nigerian-Biafra war was as a result of the struggle for power and class stratification among political leaders. He sees the war as a collision of ego between the Igbo and the Nigerian federal government. Ojukwu, being “the voice” of the Biafrans, saw himself as an Oxford man that deserved better treatment than his counterpart, Gowon (120).

This issue of class-consciousness, according to Achebe, remains part of the Nigerian society till date. One of the those who also harboured an alternative view was the distinguished diplomat, Raph Uwechue, who served as Biafra’s envoy to Paris up until 1968, and then later as Nigerian ambassador to Mali. Uwechue published a well-known personal memoir called *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War: Facing the Future in 1969*, in which he unleashed a scathing criticism of Ojukwu and the leadership he provided for Biafra: “In Biafra two wars were fought simultaneously. The first was for the survival of the Igbos (sic) as a race. The second was the survival of Ojukwu’s leadership. Ojukwu’s error, which proved fatal for millions of 160s (sic), was that he put the later first” (22). The story of Nigeria during the post colonial era has been one of a search for the constitutional and political arrangement that, while allowing for the self-expression of its socially and culturally diverse peoples, would not hinder the construction of a nation out of this mosaic. In this search, the country has experienced cycles of military and civilian rule, civil war and peaceful reconstruction. Many distinguished novelists have contributed immensely on the history of the Nigerian civil war. These novelists include: Achebe, Elechi Amadi, Buchi Emecheta, Adichie, Chukwuemeka Ike and many others.

The Igbo tribe is not only fighting with the Northerner, but there is war between them. The Biafran soldiers seize the opportunity to adopt young ladies suitable to them as lovers. Instead of focusing on winning the war, their focus is rather on exploiting fellow easterners.

Alfred A. Knopf focuses on the partition of Nigeria most notably the impact of war’s brutalities through the humanist perspective. Knopf focuses on the impacts of war and its damages at various levels. The harrowing and savagery of war is foregrounded with history of haunting intimacy. Knopf further writes:

...Adichie tells her profoundly gripping story primarily through the eyes and lives of Ugwu, a 13-year-old peasant houseboy who survives conscription into the raggedy Biafran army, and twin sisters Olanna and Kainene, who are from a wealthy and well-connected family. Tumultuous politics, power plot and several sections are harrowing, particularly passages depicting the savage butchering of Olanna and Kainene’s relatives...This is a transcendental novel of many descriptive triumphs most notably its depiction of the war’s brutalities on peasants and intellectuals alike (1).

For Knopf, the novel is all about the savagery of the war which is shown through the variety in narration. The most traumatic events due to racial conflict is shown vividly; like butchering of Olanna and Kainene’s relatives and Ugwu’s pathetic condition while conscripting into the Biafran army to fight the racial or ethnic riot of secession.

Commenting on the novel, John, Marie-Elena, a novelist argues that the novel is not standard war account but it does not excel the horrors. She sees hope, future, unity and love out of such conflict in Nigeria. She further writes.

...Adichie insists on accountability and then forgiveness as the only option for redemption: “what will you do with the misery you have chosen? Will you eat misery?” by the end, after braking our hearts, she uses her last sentence to blind-side us with a gift. She offers hope in the future, which is what we imagine (41). E. Frances White views the novel from the nationalist point of view. She focuses on the futility of Nigeria’s ethnic nationalism. She also blurs the boundary of master and servant, Odenigbo and Ugwu respectively. She further argues that Odenigbo and Ugwu are a fascinating pair and writes:

As Nigeria descends into bloody civil war, native Ugwu’s experience helps him find his voice...Many of the war’s most harrowing experiences are shown through Ugwu’s eyes. In contrast

to his servant, Odenigbo becomes more and more mute, as his idealism is dashed along with Biafra's hopes. At the beginning of the book he is a man sure of his opinions and place in the world. By the war's end, his narrow ethnic nationalism seems empty. With no defenses against slights to his manhood, he sinks into alcoholism. Yet Ugwu dedicated his book to Odenigbo, but for Odenigbo, Ugwu would never have learned to read, write or challenge the injurious values he learns in school (10).

The concept of ethnic nationalism which Odenigbo raises turns out to be mere futility. His revolutionary attitude at the last fades with alcoholism and amnesia, Ugwu, on the other hand, though presented as a slave within the ethnic hierarchy, at last turns to be the hero of the novel as he challenges the harrowing condition caused by the civil war. Another critic Donna Seaman focuses on the psychological horror out of the war showing the psyche and ethnical pressure because of the racial violence. She also portrays the neo-colonial mission which is hungry to exploit oil and influence. She, in this concern, writes:

Half of a Yellow Sun is Biafra's emblem of hope, but the horrors and misery Adichie's characters endure transform the promising image of rising sun into that of a sun setting grimly over a blood-soaked and starving land. Adichie has masterminded a commending, sensitive epic about a vicious civil war predicted by prejudice and stoked by outside power hungry for oil and influence (39) Seaman sees the psychological pressure that Adichie employs to depict the rising of hope. The *Half of a Yellow Sun* represent the rising sun which is turned into the setting to the destruction. Thus, the main focus of Seaman is on the doomed breakaway of Igbo State and fate of Biafra. She sees the colonial motif in the very vicious civil war in some extent (for oil)

Review of Chinua Achebe's *There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*

Chinua Achebe's *There was a Country* is one of the most recent autobiographic works on the Nigerian Civil War. It has been diversely criticised and interpreted by various critics from the very outset of its publication. Adeyinka Makinde on his part has this to say:

The book is at its best when the details are personal: the story of the last time Achebe saw slain poet Christopher Okigbo; his account of cowering overnight in a car emptied of petrol; the fate of trusting his first and only draft of *Things Fall Apart* to the Royal Mail Service. His own free verse poetry is interspersed with the text. But still Achebe would rather talk politics (7).

Makinde is of the view that, Achebe has other things to emphasise on, regarding his experience during the civil war, but he rather prefers to talk about politics.

Abiodun Oyewole argues that:

There was a country, that was, Biafra, no matter how briefly it lived, “there was a country”. Achebe was just drawing our attention to the principles of the Biafran revolution which led to the secession of the East. The principles were called the “Ahiara Declaration”. It was a model country where justice, peace, law and order reigned. The “pogrom” was on and Igbo people were being slaughtered in many parts of Nigeria. One who can understand how people were facing extermination like the Jews during the Holocaust would want a model country where there would be peace, justice, law and order. Achebe lived through this war and saw the slaughtering of his people. So, it was very emotional to him. Hence, he gave plenty of space to the Igbo side of the war (3).

Achebe’s personal stake in the Biafran war makes his account more than just a standard historical retelling. His writing reveals his love for his people and his hope for Nigeria’s future. Throughout the book, Achebe is very blunt about many things. He states clearly that he is for a new seceded state of Biafra; he also states the evils of tribalism (Nigeria has over 250 tribes).

Andrew Ibewuchi Nwagbara in regards to this, posits that:

Achebe gives a detailed account of events that transpired in Nigeria during the colonial era, especially the political wizardry of some of the political leaders of that period. These leaders benefited from the education provided by the colonial institutions like the church. They consequently constituted the reservoir of leadership that the nation needed at independence...Achebe does not fail to establish the fact that tribalism was a major event in the politics and leadership of colonial and post-colonial Nigeria. This was coupled with political corruption prevalent amongst those in the political class. The leaders of the period utilised the weapon of tribalism to remain relevant in politics (121). Achebe has been openly critical of the Nigerian government, his novel *A Man of the People* even anticipated the military coup that launched the conflict. But he was also horrified by the brutality of the war and torn between his sympathy for the Biafran cause and his disappointment with the leaders of the Biafran independence movement. Achebe assumes the role of a tribal spokesman bent on building up the Igbo as a master race, absolving it of any blame in the events that culminated in the war, reducing other (major) tribes of Nigeria as less-sophisticated and incurably envious of the Igbo tribe.

Moses Idowu posits that, “it’s an odd decision... readers expecting a juicy literacy memoir will be disappointed, but Achebe is a credible guide” (13). Achebe’s memoir is an answer to many questions that have been asked. However realistic Achebe’s memoir might seem, it only earned him more Nigerian enemies. This is because of its daring bluntness. It contains information that will aid the young generation to know more about the history of Nigeria.

According to James Tar Tsaaior:

In his latest book, *There was a Country*, Achebe again ploughs the furrowed landscape of Nigeria’s political and social existence with characteristic uncommon courage, fortitude and forthrightness. In this compelling, haunting and masterfully executed autobiographical narrative, Achebe reaches deeply into the inner contours of his native Nigeria’s undulating history and recuperates it with searing and penetrating insights. In this rite of self-telling and re-telling through the instrumentality of the “I” of the beholder, Achebe summons past history and imposes on it the sacred duty and cumbersome burden of answering to the contingencies of present history and the challenges that await the nation in future history.

This dialectic between the past, present and future is important to Achebe because his role as “a private, public and prophetic figure who is ordained to bear the burdens of society” is precisely located within this temporal configuration (84).

By frequently recalling the sights of infants and unarmed civilians with tattered clothes fleeing to nowhere in the Biafra war zones, dying in droves, killed by federal war planes or cut down, lynched or decapitated with machetes by federal soldiers and their civilian supporters under the watchful eyes of their commanders, Achebe portrays the war as a crime against the Igbo that should have been redressed. Going by this and many other atrocities committed against the Easterners, Achebe asserts his deep sense of disappointment stating: “My feeling towards Nigeria was one of profound disappointment, especially because federal government sat and let it happen” (71). It is this abiding sense of disappointment over the Nigerian project that has compelled his memoir so that the living might learn some lessons from this historical memory.

Regarding all these issues and commentaries, it is clear that Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Achebe’s *There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, can be analysed from various perspectives, but the present research prefers to analyse the fictional and non-fictional narratives as capturing the identity and political issues prevalent in post-colonial Nigeria. These areas have not been looked at the previous researchers.

Identity and politics in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*; It is interesting the way Adichie discusses the shifts in identity depending on the surroundings of the individual. The simplicity and complexity of identity is played out in *Half of a Yellow Sun* through the way characters are forced to change their behaviour and adapt to changing social situations. Adichie also contrasts the identities of the main Nigerian characters through the way they are described to the readers and the way the other characters (white intellectuals) view them.

One of the key themes in the novel is identity and the way different characters view each other and the way the characters are presented to the reader. Within the black community, there are certain stereotypes and preconceptions that can be seen. For example, the houseboy, Ugwu expects all intellectual black women to have western features. Ugwu “imagined the bald woman: beautiful, with a nose the stood up, not the sitting-down, fattened noses that he was used to” (32). However Adichie challenges that stereotype by showing that there are different kinds of beauty and that having a fuller figure, flattened nose or androgynous body does not make a woman any less beautiful. Richard (a white man) falls in love with Kainene (a black woman) who by the standards of the other people in the book is not considered a definition of beauty.

Furthermore, the contrast of the white intellectuals description of the black people versus what the reader is shown of the black people is enlightening. Susan (a white intellectual) describes members of the black wealthy community as nouveau riche and “obvious” (79). Both words are used in a derogatory manner and further into the book, Susan and other members of the white community use words such as “uncivilized” to describe the black community. However, when the reader is let into the worlds of the main characters, Olanna and Odenigbo, they act in a perfectly civilized and human manner. We watch as Olanna and Odenigbo express love and affection for each other, as well as their frustrations, courage, fear and all other emotions as they come up against different situations. Their intrinsic humanness is what makes them very loveable and captivating.

The different layers created by Adichie show that identity is fluid and open to interpretation. The novel also shows how the politics of identity is only one dimension to the wars and conflicts that happen within countries. The lives and love of the characters and the identity of the individual and humanity is equally if not more important.

The social gatherings at Odenigbo’s house are full of debates on African’s political future, here, the usefulness of various forms of African governance are discussed amongst the Nigerian intelligentsia. One particular noteworthy debate involves Odenigbo defending the tribe as the ideal unit for Africans, as other characters stress the need for pan-Africanism or nationalism. He is quoted as proclaiming: “the only

authentic identity for the African is the tribe... I am Nigerian because a white man crated Nigeria and gave me that identity. I am black because the white man constructed black to be as different as possible from his white. But I was Igbo before the white man came” (33).

Odenigbo’s view is that colonial legacy is still working. The African identity is not free; it is associated with the traces of colonialism. Odenigbo is more concerned with his ethnicity, Igbo rather than Nigerian identity or humanism. At the same time, his statements work in two levels; historical and cultural. On the one hand, he is troubled by the historical trauma of colonization and on the other hand, he is excluding the other ethnic groups focusing on Igbo. This kind of attitude is guided with the cultural hierarchy among the Africans. He seems to be guided by “Thick ethnics” rather than “thin morality” or critical humanism. His statement voice the collective identity of Igbo eliding the ethnics of co-existence. *Half of a Yellow Sun* intriguingly portrays the subtle – and occasionally bold-identity politics. While reading this novel, the following questions of identity quickly comes to mind: Did colonialism crate new identities? Did colonialism create conflict between groups based on pre-existing identities? What does one do when one’s own identity is inextricably tied up with a colonial past? What does Adichie’s identity representation point at within the Nigerian identity politics? These questions are suggestive of the signifance and the reason why Adichie’s writing is “Post-colonial”. Many of the characters in this narrative question what must be done in the aftermath of British colonialism as they navigate the dynamics of their own identities and even develop a new identity: Biafran nationalism, Hausa, far from the previously imposed and the now negotiated Nigerian identity.

At the beginning of the novel, before the war breaks out, we are introduced to Ugwu, a young illiterate houseboy who works for Odenigbo, an Igbo professional who is clearly an elite. The interactions between Ugwu and his “master” identity the class and identity politics present in post-colonial Nigeria. He seems to be most comfortable in English, speaking Igbo Language “coloured by the sliding sounds of England, the Igbo of one who spoke English too often” (11). By mastering English, Odenigblo has lost touch with his native tongue and he has become alienated from his own self (14). Or the way he speaks Igbo reveals his linguistic hybridity and Ugwu understands this hybrid state of his boss and calls him master which signal his detachment form who he really is. The master lives in a western-style house, uses British terms of speech; he is known for saying “my good man” throughout the book; has tea and bread for breakfast, and plays tennis. It is when Ugwu comes to live with Odenigbo that he first becomes familiar with colonial establishments. Despite their being both Igbo. Ugwu contrasts this new environment with his familiar traditional home life. When he hides some chicken in his pockets, master reprimands him, saying “Do your people eat while they sleep?... food will stay in the dinning room and the kitchen” (11). This strongly suggests that the master is of a different class or group of people from Ugwu, or at least, he sees himself that way.

In the scenario of post-independent Nigerian politics, Adichie traces the intervention of ethnicity and ethnic politics that also provokes and fuels violence. Here, complexity of ethnicity not only includes the inter-ethnic conflict, but also the situational religious conflict. Lack of resources triggers intense completion and ethnic polarisation. Due to the politicking of ethnicity, Hausa came to power in the first election disappointing Igbos and Yorubas. The first coup was the result of ethnic intolerance or superiority-complex when Igbo premiers overthrew the Hausa government assassinating the prime minister, and the second coup was inspired by the intensity of revenge from the side of Hausa.

Before the eruption of the conflict , Adiche treats readers to a story of a normal family, with its share of ups and down, one instance of which is when Odenigbo out of the machinations of his mother sleeps with her companion from the village called Amala and gets her to conceive Odenigbo’s is only child, Baby, an affair of which Olanna gets to learn and in retaliation sleeps with Richard, the white boyfriend of her twin sister Kainene, As the family struggles with this crisis however, the nation is in a state of agitation. Igbo-Phobia is rising and attacks against members of the tribe by their northern neighbours are on the rise. The turn of events is prompted by a political crisis emanating from the takeover of the country by military rulers led by major Nzeogwu, an Igbo who did it ostensibly to clean the country’s politics of corrupt civilian leaders. The deposed leaders incite their tribe people against the Igbo and within no time, hatred against them turns into

open violence. In fact, Olanna barely escapes death and travels in a train full of Igbo escapees, one of whom carries a basket in which she has kept the severed head of her daughter.

A close reading of the novel illuminates the role of the British in arbitrarily constructing Nigerian and being indirectly responsible for the Biafran war and the suffering of the Biafran people. Intersecting with that is the decentralising of the Igbo/Biafran people that Adichie constructs through Ugwu, Olanna and Richard. Together Ugwu, Olanna and Richard create an assemblage of personalities, cultural attitudes and positionilities that seem to be arbitrarily interconnected.

Adichie seems to skillfully connect three very different characters whose relationships, were it not for the Biafran war, would not be as deeply intimate. Digging deeper, we could interpret Richard as being a symbol of Britain's imperial power. Adichie sets up Richard's character as an embodiment of both British superiority and white guilt. Furthermore, the British superiority endemic in Richard's character is synonymous with the coloniser exercising power over the colonised. If viewing Richard from the perspective of British superiority then, this interpretation suggests that Olanna represents the colonised who is only able to be saved from Richard who represents the colonizer. Solidifying this point is the imagery of slavery depicted as the metaphorical shackles and pins that are released from Olanna's body in the text: "Everything changed when he was inside her... it was as if he was throwing shackles off her wrists, extracting pins from her skin, freeing herself with the loud, loud cries that burst out of her mouth. Afterward, she felt filled with a sense of well-being, with something close to grace" (291).

Up until this point, Olanna has been humiliated and betrayed by Odenigbo, another representative of the colonised. The injury that she has sustained is repaired by her encounter with Richard, who is acting as a proxy of the coloniser in this interpretation. The relationship between Olanna and Kainene is strained by this act of betrayal. Kainene, who learns of the affair, becomes withdrawn from her twin sister, Olanna. Their refusal to discuss and accept the reality of the betrayal, results in a stifling silence which ultimately implodes on them—a symbol of the civil war. Richard's role as a British national who identifies as a Biafran is a complex one. By nature of his race and country of origin, he occupies the highest societal position out of all three narrators. Still, though, Richard does not completely assimilate the British expatriate way of life in Nigeria. At the beginning of the narrative, we learn that he wanders around parties aimlessly trying to conjure witticisms that will impress his British girlfriend, Susan and her expatriate friends. Even after trading in his superficial relationship with Susan for a genuine, committed relationship with Kainene, he continues to fumble in his words and actions. Richard loves to be identified with the Igbo culture, though Susan has presented the Igbo tribe to him, to be unpleasant: "she told him that Hausa in the north were a dignified lot, the Igbo were surly and money-loving, and the Yoruba were rather jolly, even if they were first-rate lickspittles" (74). His coming to Nigeria was inspired by his interest in Igbo-Ukwu art. Ultimately, Richard struggles to reconcile his privilege with his desire to immerse himself in Igbo culture. There are numerous points in the novel in which Richard cleaves to the privilege that is associated with the social status. Often, he becomes annoyed or insulted when members of the Igbo tradition fail to recognise his privileged status. By contrast, he lathes the racist attitudes of the British and makes whole-hearted attempts to embrace Igbo culture.

The title of the book, *Half of a Yellow Sun* could be seen as the author's affirmation of the idea that Nigeria identity is burdensome. This idea is projected in the book where Nigeria is described as "a collection of fragments held in a fragile clasp" (158). This is a reference to the country as a product of a colonial administration which for administrative convenience welded together disparate tribes without the people's consent. The result is the struggle for supremacy among the tribes in a bid to fill the power vacuum left by the colonial masters at independence. Professor Ezeka in the novel confirms the above position thus, "one must see that tribe as it is today is as colonial a product as nation and race" (20).

The historical fact of ethnicity and race as the bane of Nigeria's unity is projected in the novel through incidents that resonate with the failure of the leadership to identify and harness the position aspect of Nigeria's history for national unity. For example, early in the novel, prior to the outbreak of hostilities precipitated by the pogrom in Kano against the Igbo, the predominant northern natives refuse to admit Igbo children in government schools. In order to educate their children, the Igbo Union constructs an Igbo Union

Grammar School. This was because, the northerners viewed the Igbo as people who want to control everything. We find out that the identities of the characters in one way or the other affected their belief or propositions on the war. The Igbos who were hardworking, were being made to leave the northern and western parts of the nation for fear of taking over the whole nation. If only the diverse tribes in Nigeria will agree and act on a common identity then wars will be averted in the country.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Irrespective of how Nigerians from whatever tribe feel about the events of the 1960s, particularly the Nigerian-Biafra Civil War, the fact remains that events have become a significant, albeit painful part of Nigeria's history. The success of the narrative lies in their non-judgemental tone which allows the reader to digest the painful memories without anger. Adichie achieves this through her multiple narrator-Ugwu, Olanna and Richard, who bring to bear on the story their diverse identities, while Achebe's story, though told from a personal perspective benefits from a multiplicity of sources so that the memory can allow for both criticism and the possibility of a national reconciliation.

Both books serve as admirable representations of a moment of huge importance for the most populous and dynamic country in Africa. And there is only superficial conflict between representing Biafra in fiction or as memoir. Both join a battle to fill the hole left by western histories of Africa. Though Adichie never witnessed the war, she skillfully constructs a tragic story that spans a decade and revolves around the lives of diverse cast during the Biafran-Nigeria civil war. Achebe's book on the other hand, is made up of history, personal experience and strong opinions on the treatment of the Igbo people in the 1960s. His statements on the role of art in politics, the place of intellectuals in the society, and the need to formulate enduring visions are truly measured and profound his personal stake in the war makes his account more than just a standard historical retelling. His love for his people and his hope for Nigeria's future are revealed in his writing. The Igbo tribe aroused hostility because of their intelligence and success. They had always been a democratic, well educated and progressive people, and have flourished in the bigger context of Nigeria. This built up jealousy among the other tribes and led to the civil war eventually. It was a war of appalling savagery, but there was no coherent plan to end the horror. The two leaders of the different opposing sides could not compromise their identities in order to end the war. If only Nigerians will agree on a common identity, they will be able to fight the disagreement that has befallen the nation. Therefore, to achieve national unity, we have to compromise some beliefs and agree on one national identity in order to make the politics of the nation worthwhile.

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