



Research Paper

## War Trauma And The Dynamics Of Closure: A Hysterical Memory Of Battling Through Embers In Adichie's Half Of A Yellow Sun

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**ABSTRACT:** A violent and horrifying experience whose shadow lingers in one's psyche, years after it has in reality ended, just as the embers linger long after the fire has been put out, causing nightmare after nightmare is the gruesome legacy that any war bestows. It is the understanding of this war trauma that furnishes material for this paper. It works through and delineates the war situation of Nigeria-Biafra war and the brutalities inflicted on people in the name of religion and nationality, simultaneously rendering the hardships that people come face to face with in an attempt to find themselves a niche away from its havoc. The novel which has been written almost thirty six years after the war ended reconstructs each and every detail with clarity and vividness as if it is a thing of just a day before thereby presenting to the mortal eye a scenario clouded by a bloody mistsimultaneously explaining the psychological disruption and social indifference that develops in people as a result of war condition. The paper also gives an insight into the absence of closure that Adichie has resorted to in the end of the novel providing the audience a chance to take recourse to their creativity and imagine a substantial conclusion besides acting as a symbolic of non- finality and endlessness of war suffering.

**KEYWORDS-** brutality, closure, Nigeria-Biafra war, suffering, trauma

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### I INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has been one of a few nations to show an astounding achievement as far as the growth of its literature is concerned. Even though this genre of Nigerian Literature in English is less than a century old, we come across such mammoth achievements like the Nobel Prize of Wole Soyinka in 1986 which testifies that this genre has been widely accepted on the international platform [1]. However a cursory glance at African Literature from its inception to the present shows, that this literature pendulates between a bipolar framework which constitute the writer's firsthand experience. "It is either geared towards the decolonization or apprais[es] the post colonial aftermath...the experiences responsible for the present state of socio cultural and political disenchantment and alienation of African people" leaving them in a state of broken hope[2]. Though Charles Nnolim(2006) as pointed by Ogaga resentfully opines that the writers tend to renounce the idea of envisioning a new Africa at the cost of this backward glancing, there is always an undeniable influence of the surrounding on the writer's mindset which gets vent in his literary output as is emphasized by Taye Awoyemi who says, "African Literary writings reflect the period of history and the stage of development...when she was occupied by the colonial powers who deemed it fit to institutionalize their language and culture by superimposing those on the natives of an entity they decided to call Nigeria" (30) [3]. This implication that there is an uninhibited and indispensable link between the socio-cultural scenario and the literature of a place is also emphasized by Goldman who believes the philosophical thought and the literary creation are intricately connected with the economic and social life of a place and can be considered as the different expressions of the same vision.

Keeping in view the inexorable relationship between the society and literature, it doesn't astonish us to see that the events of the first decade of Nigeria's independence particularly the Nigeria-Biafra war generated an unprecedented literary output. It is this reflection of the socio political scenario that Adichie is at pains to underline in her novel, recounting the harrowing experiences of a group of characters belonging to different strata of the society, ripped apart by the inhuman consequences of Civil War which resulted from the political upheaval [4]. The paper also takes into consideration the relevance of the type of ending that Adichie has given

to her novel, to the major thematic strands that run through the text. It explores how the thematic concerns are accentuated by the technique that the writer has employed in composing the conclusion of the novel.

## II NIGERIA-BIAFRA WAR- AN INTERFACE OF HISTORY AND FICTION

Historical fiction refers to a genre of writing where-in a story is set in a particular epoch of history. Here the time period is of utmost significance for both the setting and the fiction itself. Bryanna Licciardi calls it a “genre in literature... that reconstructs the past. Often inspired by history [it] incorporates past events or people into their fictitious stories...to feel authentic” [5]. It is the third generation of Nigerian writers who have taken recourse to and began a re-examination of the broader thematic aspects of the first generation Nigerian writers [6]. This revisiting of the past has enabled them to explore the hitherto corroded sensibility and assumptions regarding the earlier fictional documentation of “Africa, Nigeria and the validity of historical realism” (Ibid:187). The contemporary Nigerian writers do not fail to toil in lending a helping hand towards the reconstruction of new identity brimming with a feeling of kinship and communal harmony against the framework of past traumatic experiences.

It is unlikely, for any country with literary brilliance, that an event of utmost historical importance would escape a notice and not get a place in its literature. Among the writers of many countries like India, Pakistan, Ireland, Canada, Philippines, Sri-Lanka and Bangladesh that have provided an account of their interface with the history of colonization, Africa stands noteworthy. It is the homeland for many such writers who have brought to the forefront the very agony and pain that colonization wrecked on them in the fictional and non fictional works constituting an endless list. Some of the cardinal works include Chinua Achebe’s *Girls at War and Other Stories* (1972) [7], Flora Nwapa’s *Never Again* (1975)[8], Chukwuemeka Ike’s *Sunset at Dawn* (1976) [9], Cyprian Ekwensi’s *Divided We Stand* (1980) [10], Elechi Amadi’s *Sunset in Biafra* (1982)[11], Eddi Iroh’s *The Siren in the Night* (1982) [12], Kalu Okpi’s *Biafra Testament* (1982) [13], Ossie Enekwe’s *Come Thunder* (1984)[14], Nwapa’s *Wives at War* (1984) [15] and Anthonia Kalu’s *Broken Lives and Other Stories* (2003) [16]. Adichie owes a great deal to her literary precursors as far as the details of her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* are concerned particularly in terms of characterization and specific experiences of these characters implying that she is carrying forward the tradition of her literary ancestors while simultaneously garnishing it with her own flavours. The character of Ugwu somehow seems to be inspired by Meka- a fifteen year old soldier in *Come Thunder*. Likewise we see a faint reflection of Alan Grey of *Destination Biafra* in Richard Chuchil. There are clear juxtapositions of the ideologies between characters e.g. Olanna’s grief for the things she left back at Nsukka like “her tablecloth with the silver embroidery, her car” (HYS 184) is almost similar to the obsession of Emeka Ezenwa’s wife in *Sunset at Dawn* whose “only concern is with her possessions abandoned in Nsukka” [17]. In the same vein, there are certain scenes which Adichie seems to have borrowed from other novelists and therefore it is difficult to detail out the extent of literary debt of the novel. Ann Mary Adams believes that *Destination Biafra*[18] is an important precedent as far as the documentation of “portions of the war that other narratives only gloss or allude to” [1] particularly its depiction of rape is concerned. Thus there are significant points where the novel walks hand in hand with the works which were published prior to it.

The novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2013) falls in the category just described as historical fiction and the event of history that it reproduces is the Nigeria-Biafra War. Biafran war, a notable event in many respects, was in no way less than the world wars in terms of creating the horror that eventually got engrained in the minds of people. There were Nigerian aid blockages that resulted in starvation leading to the development of Kwashorkor in children. This was followed by demonstrations of postcolonial conflict between England and France- the former imperial powers in Africa thereby, creating the memory of families torn apart and communities destroyed and dislocated. The novel is primarily concerned with the atrocities that followed Nigeria’s independence in the face of civil war in which not only one among almost three hundred different ethnic groups (in which Igbo was the largest in the Southeast followed by Yoruba in the Southwest and Hausa in the North), but all were equally affected as the arbitrary unity began to fall apart between them by the insinuating presence of the British. It poked discord through the way government was arranged such that the Northern Hausa with its autocratic tendencies acquired most of the control. Ultimately the rising tensions between the ethnic groups gave way to the large scale massacre of Igbo people in 1996 and the secession of the Republic of Biafra in the Southeast eventually followed. Thus none of the group emerged out blameless just as none of the characters can be absolved of the blame of dumping and jilting the other as portrayed in the novel.

The novel comes to us through the experiences of Odenigbo, Olanna, Ugwu, Kainene and Richard all of whom fall prey to the brimming violence in one way or the other. Nevertheless, it remains to be established whether or not its fictionality has done justice to its historicism and in what ways the combination of the two has resulted in a unified whole.

According to Hugh Hodges, “[the novel] dramatizes its own incompleteness [and is unable] to fully comprehend (in both senses of the term) the Biafran War. [It] negotiates the dilemmas implicit in fictionalizing war more successfully than most of its predecessors” (3). Likewise Chidi Amuta puts it as, “although the raw, immediate experience of horror does lend itself to journalistic reflection, the literary enterprise requires fictional mediation of social experience”[20]. So a historical novel has to strive for what Eddie Iroh calls “an unbiased total assessment of the whole great tragedy”[21]. For Hodges, the two things which Eddie calls for are “objective distance [i.e.] the statement of bald facts and ...assessment [i.e.] the judgment passed on the facts and by implication the participants in the war.” In contrast to many historical novels such as Emcheta’s *Destination Biafra*, the novel *Half of a yellow Sun* according to Hugh Hodges is “unmistakably about the Biafran War.” It not only presents a slice of history but also happens to be an aesthetic masterpiece where both history and fiction coalesce to produce an everlasting effect of credibility which characterizes Adichie’s work.

Hawley on the other hand says that “Adichie portray[s] the war as a backdrop for interpersonal ethical questions” [22]. Hugh counters it as “not quite right” as the term “backdrop” implies something which is static and of lower significance than some other scene which is more important but the novel in point cannot be said to treat the war in such a way. The novel is incessantly burdened with the war material and most of the chapters are dedicated to the descriptions of war-related events and sufferings which cannot therefore be so easily pushed to the background as somewhat subsidiary to something which is impersonal and ethical. No doubt there are certain offshoots that take the reader to understand the ethics and morality but those have to be considered in relation to the war scenario. Hawley further asserts that because of Adichie’s “comparative disinterest in the niceties of war’s politics”, she comes out with something less than a “Biafra Novel”. He further adds that “Adichie’s account is not that ‘total’ reckoning which Iroh envisions and is not completely without some positioning in the conflict’s politics.” This leads to a conclusion that for Hawley it is the facts about a historical event that must go into a fictional work based on it so as to make it an authentic representation but I believe that it is not the exactness of the facts but the inner kernel of aestheticism which characterizes a work of fiction and differentiates it from a pure history on which it is based. Having said that, it is obvious, that inclusion of facts and exactness of the historical scenes would rob the work of its aesthetic sense which is the sole purpose of literature.

Hughes believes that

Adichie’s approach to writing the Biafran war is much more like Flora Nwapa’s in *Never Again*. In that novel, the war is perceived not from the privileged perspective of the international observer or even of the informed elite, but from the perspective of someone with little access to the “facts.” The narrator, Kate... has only rumour and propaganda to rely on. She tells her mother, “You and I don’t understand. All that is left now, is to keep alive. This is not the time to apportion blame. Let’s keep alive first”. The only “facts” that matter are those that effect survival on a daily basis: hunger, suspicion, fear. Adichie’s characters find themselves in a similar position. The more the Biafran War becomes a moment in political history, the less important either politics or history become to Odenigbo, Olanna, Ugwu and the other Biafrans whose lives have been reduced to the permanent present of mere survival. Even the momentous event of Biafra’s surrender signifies to Olanna, whose sister has disappeared behind enemy lines, only one thing: she can go and find her sister. That the superpowers have got their way, that the ideal of a free black state has been betrayed, and that the world did not listen do not matter. Only practical questions of survival matter. In the text, this moment of radically limited horizons is followed quite literally by a blank space... (8-9)

In spite of quite contradictory opinions about the historicity of the novel, it is more than evident that Adichie has undoubtedly been successful in bringing out the essence of the war in terms of the destruction and betrayals caused by it.

### **III TRAUMA OF WAR IN HALF OF A YELLOW SUN**

The word trauma defines a state of mind characterized by a shock and stasis produced by the experiences or situations which are extremely painful and distressing, overshadowing people’s ability to cope and leaving them powerless. Sometimes trauma is defined in reference to circumstances that are outside the realm of normal human experiences.

According to Judith Herman,

Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life...unlike commonplace misfortunes, traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity or a close personal encounter with violence and death. [23]

This definition of trauma appropriately fits in the novel where we have the events related to individual and mass killing, gang rapes, loots, massacres and blunt beheading of innocent victims. In this connection, Susannah says, “Trauma theory denotes a vibrant, interdisciplinary area of Western scholarship developed since 1980’s through cross fertilization between Psychology and the Humanities” [24]. *Half of a yellow sun*

unquestioningly fits in this classification, of being a novel laden with such traumatic episodes as can cause psychological distortions and inflict mental pain. In the novel, the extent to which the bloodshed is depicted is virtually impossible. The pages are laden with the scenes depicting the horrors and dread of air raids causing a disorganization and madness in people, dashing here and there in search of a safe refuge simultaneously “fighting for their pride while hope is impermeable and countless casualties mount in a bloody civil war”[25].

Having said that Adichie has been very well able to translate the essential quality of war, it becomes imperative on us to appreciate her for the elucidative endeavor she has made to bring to us the depiction of major strategies of war, the air raids being one of them which were frequently employed in Biafran war. It was during the wedding ceremony of Olanna and Odenigbo that an air raid unexpectedly hit on:

Ugwu heard the sound just before they cut their cake in the living room...at first it was thunderous, then it receded and... came back again, louder and swifter...they[the guests] ran...and lay on their bellies...the planes gliding low beneath the blue sky...they spurted hundreds of scattered bullets before dark balls rolled out from underneath as if planes were laying large eggs. The first explosion was so loud that Ugwu’s ear popped and his body shivered alongside the vibrating ground...the second explosion followed and then the third and fourth and fifth until Ugwu felt the warm wetness of urine on his shorts and was convinced that bombs would never end...(HYS 143)

The impact of these air raids was both psychological and physical. Some were rendered crippled for life while others lost their lives and yet others got the trauma engrained in their psyche making them vulnerable. This is seen even in the slightest agitation as in case of Olanna who panicked even at the thunder, thinking it to be an air raid. Such a hallucinatory thinking is revealed from the following:

Olanna jumped each time she heard the thunder. She imagined another air raid. Bombs rolling out of the plane and exploding in the compound before she and Odenigbo and Baby and Ugwu could reach the bunker down the street. Sometimes she imagined the bunker itself collapsing, squashing them all into mud (HYS 184 )

Gradually it becomes unendurable to witness the sights of desolation on one hand and open savagery and the cruelties inflicted on people especially Igbo people on the other. The people who fall victims to the bloodthirsty opponents lay unattended on the roads, that exude nothing but dust and blood, scattered in hideous positions thereby shedding light on the still existing darkness in the mental spaces of the newly independent people. The scene in which Olanna goes to fetch her pregnant cousin sheds light on the beastly acts that vandals had already performed there:

The street looked strange, unfamiliar, the compound gate was broken...Aunty Ifeka’s kiosk [tattered]...splinters of wood, packets of groundnut lying in the dust...with grit and ash floating in the air...Uncle Mbaezi lay facedown in an ungainly twist, legs splayed. Aunty Ifeka lay on the veranda. The cuts on her naked body were smaller, dotting her arms and legs like slightly parted red lips. (HYS 105)

The devastation wrecked by the violence is unprecedented and sends a shiver through the spine when the plethora of infernal episodes cross the eyes. Andrea puts it as:

The dead haunt the living in the land of rising sun. the [head of the] dead baby found in the ceremonial calabash, Kaniene’s disappearance and the beheading of her servant serve as a few examples that depict the devastation of a war ravaged place where children are often conscripted by feuding political counterparts to participate in the killing of their own people.(2)

It is obvious that any war breeds violence and ambiguity, so is true of the Civil War that has been described in the novel. It addresses the issue of misery and heartache that were rampant during the time of war and the suffering and vulnerability which had become the destined lot for everyone. Nobody could escape the ongoing play of massacre in which the wrongs done by people were somehow recoiled on them. To substantiate this, Adichie gives the example of Ugwu who madly rapes a bar girl and in turn suffers because his own sister gets raped. In the midst of chaos and confusion, Ugwu grabs an opportunity along with many others to give vent to his animalistic feelings which he long wanted to satisfy on Nnesinachi:

The bar girl was lying on her back on the floor, her wrapper bunched up at her waist, her shoulders held down by a soldier, legs wide, 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-colored than his legs. The soldiers were cheering. (HYS 249)

As if watching the rape happening was not enough, Ugwu gets an impetus by his comrades to take part in the act. Though a moment of hesitation flashes through him but then his rage overpowers his senses and he violently demonstrates his masculinity on the helpless victim:

He did not look at her face, or at the man pinning her down, or anything at all as he moved quickly and felt his own climax, the rush of fluids to the tips of himself: a self-loathing release. He zipped up his trousers while some soldiers clapped. Finally he looked at the girl. She stared back at him with a calm hate. (HYS 249)

This atrocity that Ugwu committed rebounds on him as he gets to know that his sister's respect has been maimed forever. Also the fact that his lover Eberechi's death remains a mystery to him, which he would never be able to solve, adds on to his frustration. In addition to the killings, people had to suffer starvation, begging for a few grains outside the community centers from morning till evening but still returning empty handed. People like Olanna who used to throw away pieces of meat only the second day of its cooking find themselves in long queues to get just a handful of dried egg yolk to feed her sick Baby. Her reduced status and a state of helplessness has been depicted by Adichie as:

Olanna joined the cue and held herself from pushing back at the woman who tried to nudge her out... the incongruity of queuing to beg for food made her feel uncomfortable, blemished...she was close to the front when she noticed that the powder being scooped into bags and bowls was not yellow but white. Not egg yolk but cornmeal. The egg yolk queue was the next one. Olanna hurried over to join it, but the woman who was dishing out the yolk stood up and said, "Egg yolk is finished" (HYS 188)

In the novel the consequences of war and exploitation leave a never ending pathos in the minds of the characters and an indelible mark of futility and meaninglessness which they would never be able to wash off. The scenes of grotesque savagery left the minds in a state of perpetual shock, overwhelming an individual's ability to fully recover. In the novel, Olanna's mind always tended to visualize the slaughtered images of her uncle, aunt and her cousin whenever she heard anyone talk of war. It was a kind of involuntary thing to happen, bringing the images of terrible past to lay their foul shadow on the present causing an emotional upheaval in her:

It was difficult for Olanna to visualize a war happening now, bullets falling on the red dust of Nsukka while the Biafran troops pushed the vandals back. It was often difficult to visualize anything concrete that was not dulled by the memories of Arize and Auntie Ifeka and Uncle Mbaezi that did not feel like life being lived on suspended time. (HYS 132)

The thirst for blood in the vandals did not quench after countless massacres, so that they ran after Olanna to slaughter her as well. In the ensuing struggle to safeguard herself from the shining razors her senses seemed to start betraying her. Here Adichie tries to give a real picture of the war in the sense that it breeds nothing but senseless hatred and violence against each other. This is because here it is Abdulmalik, the person who formerly knew Olanna and was in good acquaintance of her, who turns thirsty for Olanna's blood. This has been delineated as:

The smoke was thickening around her so that she was not sure if the crowd of men drifting into the yard was real or just plumes of smoke, until she saw the shining metal blades of their axes machetes, the bloodstained kaftans that flapped around their legs... policemen in blood splattered uniforms... vultures perched by the roadside. (HYS 106)

Another important thing that comes to the forefront is that war gives people an opportunity to satisfy their communal anger under the garb of national integrity. This becomes clear from the following passage which explicates the death of Nnaemeka:

The side entrance burst open and three men ran in holding up long rifles...wearing green army uniforms... [With] red and wildly glassy...eyes...The soldier walked over to him [Nnaemeka]. Say Allahu Akbar...Nnaemeka knelt down...fear etched so deeply into his face that it collapsed his cheeks and transfigured him into a mask that looked nothing like him. He would not say Allahu Akbar because his accent would give him away. Richard willed him to say the words anyway, to try; he willed something, anything, to happen in the stifling silence and as if in answer to his thoughts, the rifle went off and Nnaemeka's chest blew open, a splattering red mass.(HYS 109)

Toni Duruaku has identified courage as one of the attributes of a good creative writer stating that, the creative writer "needs to be courageous in order to be true to his art and play the role of the guardian of the society's conscience" [26]. In his paper, Ojinmah testifies this while endorsing *Half of a Yellow Sun* as an audacious masterpiece. He says that both Chinua Achebe and Binyavanga Wainaina recognized Adichie's fearlessness, asserting that it takes great strength to take on the "intimidating horror of Nigeria's civil war" without looking away [27]. The author provides heart rending experiences, that people had to go through, that epitomize the animalistic behavior hidden under the human faces. Narrating one such example about the demeaning behavior meted to Udodi, Adichie says:

Northern soldiers put him in a cell in the barracks and fed him his own shit. He ate his own shit...then they beat him senseless and tied him to an iron cross and threw him back in his cell. He died tied to an iron cross. He died on a cross. (HYS 99)

In addition to this firsthand experience of violence, Adichie gives a slice of second hand experience which comes to people daily from the radio news. It becomes almost a routine to hear this number of people dead, that number injured as if it is not about human beings but some sort of unimportant and useless animals which are meant to be slaughtered. This has been rendered in the novel as:

Ugwu...wanted... [The guests] to shut their filthy mouths. He wanted the radio announcers to be silent too but they were not. They repeated the news of killing in Maiduguri until Ugwu wanted to throw the radio out of the window and the next afternoon...a solemn voice on ENBC recounted the eyewitness accounts from the North: teachers hacked down in Zaria, a full Catholic church in Sokoto set on fire, a pregnant women split open in Kano. (HYS 103)

There are moments in this war when people are unaware about the whereabouts of their nearest relations as all of them have to run in different directions to save themselves. In the text Adichie acquaints us with a woman who cries in separation for two of her young kids whom she cannot locate:

One of the women had a baby boy tied to her back. 'We were on our way back from the market when we discovered that vandals had occupied the junction and were shelling inside the village. We could not go home. We had to turn and run...I don't know where my two children are, the ones I left at home to go to the market. (HYS 201)

Peterson remarks that in this novel we "find out that nobility of purpose has no currency in this contest." Continuing, she says that in it we also see "how powerfully we can love; how easily we can kill; how human we can be when a war dedicates itself to stripping our humanity from us" [28]. In spite of the chaotic bloodshed that goes on everywhere the novelist has portrayed certain characters who try to contribute their own part in alleviating the suffering and needs of others so as to build a nation where peace and prosperity prevails. And more importantly they do not do it by resorting to shedding the blood of others but through peaceful and intellectual means of educating and rehabilitating the oppressed and needy folk. It is by way of narrating these episodes that Adichie is indirectly playing the role of a moralist as the condemnation of violence clearly suggests a need to re-educate and reframe the moral consciousness of those who seem to have lost it altogether. For this purpose, Adichie has employed certain characters like Olanna who work to awaken the ethical sensibility in the masses on the whole.

#### **IV AESTHETICS OF CLOSURE AND THE OPENNESS OF THE NOVEL**

Closure as a kind of narrative technique refers to the 'ending' of a text which is complete and gives a single solution to the problem that the writer deals with throughout the text. It pulls together all the loose threads and provides reader with a single significant strand on which he can rely. It not only gives a kind of satisfaction but performs the "function of scaffold[ing] the retrospective interpretation of the book" [29]. According to Peter Rabinowitz, narrative closure is of utmost importance both from the thematic and stylistic point of view. He says that a narrative must come to a close, unlike the seeming vastness of the world from which it is culled; it cannot continue indefinitely. This implies that any work of art represents only a fraction of that overall scenario which provides it the authentic back and against which it acquires a meaning. So, it obligatory to define the limits of that portion which the writer is interested in. In his perspective, Rabinowitz says:

...a true narrative ending, regardless of type of disposition, will bring a sense of coherence, stability and completion to the text and reader...moreover textual conclusions are noteworthy in that the reader expects plots to be resolved, explanations to be found and closure to be had. (117)

Likewise, Troftgruben defines closure as "the process by which a novel reaches an adequate or appropriate conclusion" [30]. There are certain experiences that a reader assimilates at the end of reading a novel which may either be thematic or formal and these experiences appear complete, integrated and coherent only when the text indicates a sense of closure. Even in the classical criticism, Aristotle, emphasizing the importance of closure, calls attention to it in Poetics saying, "an ending is that which does itself naturally follow from something else either necessarily or in general but there is nothing else after it" [31]. Closure, similarly, forms the cardinal component of what Wendy Griswold calls "mythic structure" which is common to many war novels. He lays down six stages in such a structure:

1. Confidence and high hopes
2. Intimations that all might not go well
3. Ups and Downs of wartime
4. Increasing despair, chaos, death, and horror
5. The death of someone who is educated, wise, or otherwise highly valued
6. Survival plus disillusionment (232-3) [32]

According to Hugh Hodges, *Half of a Yellow Sun* conforms to this structure just at a glance but with a slight variation in the fifth stage where instead of depicting "a death of Griswold's kind", there is a disappearance, of Kainene, when she goes behind the enemy lines in an afa attack to get food for the refugees under her care. For Hughes:

She has unexpectedly become, as "despair, chaos, death, and horror" threaten those around her, the strength that holds everyone together, so her disappearance, which remains unexplained at the end of the book, makes a more fitting metaphor for what's lost at war's end than her death would have been. Her death would be

final and measurable; her absence remains irresolvable. As a result, there is no closing of the book; indeed, the novel's last gesture is towards a book yet to be opened, Ugwu's *The World Was Silent When We Died*. (13)

The narratives which have a proper closure signify a finality of the problem i.e. whether big or small, it is bound to end. However there are certain situations which, though end apparently, keep on lingering in the minds of people till the end. They continue to haunt because the destruction they cause fails to find a replacement in real life. Their memories do not completely erase as that would mean forgetting the loved ones that were wiped off by those accidents. It is in this regard that Adichie resorts to the non-finality- a conclusion which is open ended to devise a symbolic thought of the incessant suffering that war perpetrates. The loss of people, erosion of property, blotting of emotions and memories with a bloody ink and the fractured feeling of those relationships which were once assuaging and consolatory are certain legacies that could never be forgotten or forgiven. This is what Adichie is trying to convey through an ending which is not closed- a perpetual heartache that war bequeaths.

Robert Young opines that for any text to incorporate a closure, it must block its way to history [33]. This implies that history is to be taken as a completed action which ends with the end of the narrative. However it is not so in reality as the cycle of time never comes to a halt. This gives Adichie a natural reason to keep the novel open ended so as to depict the flowing nature of time which is one of the important strands found in historical fiction that the novel is and the fictional realism that the novel might be. As far as the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* is concerned, Madhu suggests that it refuses to turn its back on history by avoiding the presentation of a completed action. This way the novel keeps up its contact with the present thereby explaining the lack of closure. The novel thus remains true to the eternal nature of time and presents itself as a representation of only a fraction of it.

According to Oates, the novel "creates dialectic between the prewar intellectual freedom of the privileged academic environment that characters enjoyed and the dehumanization of war" [34]. It is by way of characters that Madhu Krishnan explains this dialectic as follows:

Ugwu's growth into the scribe of Biafra; Odenigbo and Olanna's uneasy development into a family; Richard and Kainene's deepening relationship and symbiotic need for each other; Olanna and Kainene's fragile bond as sisters united in a new nation. (190)

What is important for the working of the dialectic is the progression of human interaction resulting in a nation's history. However, when one of the players i.e. Kainene gets eliminated without any notice, the dialectic falters and hence get 'off balance' thereby blocking the dialectical progression. Thus when the dialectic movement operates between two time periods as in the novel in point, Madhu says that, "it is the dialectic which is never resolved, the synthesis is unattainable within the text because one of its elements disappears" (190)

According to Hughes,

*Half of a Yellow Sun* is a book about the Biafran War by someone born after the war "ended." But then the Biafran War is in some ways still going on; as Karl Maier observes in *This House Has Fallen*, disabled veterans of the Biafran army can still be seen begging at roadsides and the war is "still in the mind of everyone in eastern Nigeria" [35]. In some sense then, eastern Nigeria still inhabits that blank space that follows the declaration of peace in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, still unsure whether it has survived or what survival might mean. (12)

In the light of this comment, the ending with a (non)closure signifies a never ending pathos that the war engrained in the hearts of people who suffered it and in those of subsequent generations through the stories recounted by the sufferers. Thus keeping the overall understanding of the novel in consideration, its open endedness is more than appropriate from both the thematic and stylistic perspectives and in every respect it accentuates the thematic strands of the novel.

## V CONCLUSION

This discourse dealt with the Biafran War and its representation in fiction and also highlighted the grotesque situation that the war produced in Nigeria, simultaneously depicting the hardships that people had to go through. It also took into consideration the physical and mental consequences the war left behind which resulted in the emergence and development of a new branch in sciences i.e. the study of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The starvation that people, especially children, faced produced the symptoms of the disease now called as Kwashorkor. An important conclusion that the paper drew about the structural formula of the novel was about its open endedness which turned well in conformity with the theme of the novel. It, therefore, proved wrong many critical observations which considered only closed endings as being able to transform the novel into a comprehensive whole. It exposed the inherent falsity of the notions of completeness, logic and sensibility. The Nigerian nation after independence remained in a state of constant flux in terms of the political turmoil and social commotion which continued the trend of the Biafran War. This thing is what Adichie has reflected in the

novel in an artistic manner by using open ended plot. By preferring the lack of tidy endings she underlines the significance of continued negotiation and interrogation necessary in post colonial condition.

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