

## **The Folly and Scourge of War in Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun***

By

**Jacob Scholastica Chinyere UZOMAH**

Department of Philosophy,  
St. Albert Institute, Fayit-Fadan, Kagoma, Via Kafanchan, Kaduna State.  
Email: chichischolar@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

*War is an infamous social crisis that affects and alters human affairs very drastically and fundamentally. The paper is a literary critique of the Biafran-Nigerian Civil War in Chimamanda Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun. Through the use of Freudian psychoanalysis which establishes an affinity between the influence of memory and trauma on an individual's social behaviour and literary creativity, the study reveals that war causes indescribable destructions to human life, property and the environment. It further portrays that traumatic memories of the civil war inevitably shape the personal and socio-political life of characters in the selected text because the crux of the scourge of war lies in its psychological impact on people. The multiplying effect of destructions of war is that it causes untold agonies and problems-psycho-social and psycho-spiritual traumas that cannot be completely obliterated. Consequently, the paper recommends sincere dialogue as a civil, sustainable and pragmatic means of preventing war.*

**Keywords: Literary Criticism, Scourge, Trauma, War.**

### **Introduction**

War is an armed conflict between peoples, tribes or nations. It is a scourge, savagery and a terror to the highest order that has been endemic in the human society from time immemorial. Little wonder then, writers like Atofarati Adebowale (2000), Adesua Bimbo (2002) and Isedile Frank (1999) have named it a spiral-headed demon because when it erupts, it comes with a litany of woes. It deals brutal massacres and gruesome deaths. Robs the people manpower and infrastructures that took decades to build, it degrades the environment and constitutes a jeopardy to the survival of man and the entire ecosystem, it causes unquantifiable losses. In addition, it creates a breeding ground for atrocities and abuses; as a result, crimes against humanity are committed against women and children as they are mesmerized. The crux of this malady called war is that it gives an extreme shock that has an almost everlasting psychological effect and impacts on all.

The Nigerian-Biafran war of horrible memory was indeed an epitome of all of the above. Consequently, in affirmation of this, Chimamanda Adichie was unequivocal as she espoused that the Nigerian-Biafran war was a terror and calamity. The thrust of this work is to establish, using the work of Adichie as paradigm and psychoanalytical theory as a tool that war as a global shared experience or phenomenon is savagery, nasty, brutal, horrific and traumatic experience. It is so configured because it brings unspeakable destruction to man and his social and physical environments thereby leading to impoverishment and starvation. Sequel to the latter, it constitutes the bane of underdevelopment. This becomes more precarious because of the employment of advanced technological military equipment (atomic and biological weapons) in warfare. To forestall these threats to humanity and the planet earth, this work advocates for sincere dialogue as a fundamental option. Sincere and constructive dialogue midwives peace. History and time has proved dialogue and peace to be the perfect option; because nothing is lost by peace whereas everything may be lost by war.

### **The Nigerian -Biafran Civil War and Literary Writers' Respective Perspectives**

War is one notable social crisis that affects and alters human affairs very drastically and perhaps permanently. Writers of war in different ways may be struggling to understand the events, or may lament the horror or the sadness brought about by the war. In whatever way, they attempt to inspire readers to courage and action. Some writers were inside Biafra during the war and had

firsthand experience of the conflict, they include: Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, Chukwuemeka Ike, John Munonye and Flora Nwapa. Others who were outside the disturbed areas and were not direct witness to the military action are J.P Clark, Isidore Okpewho, Okechukwu Mezu and Kole Omotosho. Wole Soyinka formed a group of his own, although, he was outside the immediate area of fighting; his long period of incarceration made him a keen witness to the long injustice of the war and the military regime. These categories of writers painstakingly penned their accounts of the war based on their respective impressions and motivations for writing. This study considers Adichie's insider's account most plausible, hence the choice of her work *Half of A Yellow Sun and Nigerian Civil War* a material for analysis.

### **Brief Biography of Chimamanda Adichie**

She was born on September 15, 1977 in Enugu, Nigeria. She grew up in Nsukka, a university town in South Eastern Nigeria, where her family lived in the house formerly owned by fellow Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe. Her father was a Statistics Professor and her mother a Registrar at the University. At 19, she moved to the United States and studied communications and political science at both Drexel University and Eastern Connecticut State. Adichie graduated in 2001 and in 2003 received her Masters Degree in Creative Writing from Johns Hopkins University. She went on to pursue a second master's degree, this time in African Studies, from Yale, which she completed in 2008.

Adichie's first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) won the commonwealth writers' prize for best first book and her second novel *Half of A Yellow Sun* (2006), an historical fiction that is set during the Nigerian Biafran war and tells the story of two sisters, won the 2007 orange prize. Her third book is a collection of short stories published in 2009 called *The Thing Around Your Neck*. It was shortlisted for the 2009 John Llewellyn Rhys memorial prize and Zolo commonwealth writers prize.

Adichie was selected in Zolo as one of the New Yorker's "20 under 40" writers. She is married and lives both in Nigeria, where she teaches writing workshops, and the United States.

### **Contributions of Her Work to African Creative Literature**

She has showcased the creativity in African women through her intellectual output in form of novels and short stories. She has done Nigeria and Africa at large proud through her rich contributions to the literacy world with awards trailing her pathway. The Igbo proverb that says "if a child washes his hands clean, he dines with elders" is typified in the life of Adichie through her works.

### ***Half of a Yellow Sun and Nigerian Civil War: A Synopsis***

The novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* portrays what transpired in Nigeria during the Nigeria-Biafran War (1967-1970). The effect of the war is shown through the dynamic relationships of four people's lives ranging from high ranking political figures, a Professor, a British citizen, a houseboy and Olanna. After the British left Nigeria, the lives of the main characters drastically changed and were torn apart by the imminent civil war and critical decisions in their personal life.

The book jumps between events that took place during the early 1960s and the late 1960s, the main characters are introduced-Ugwu, 13 year-old village boy who moves in with Odenigbo, to work as his houseboy. Odenigbo frequently entertains intellectuals to discuss the political turmoil in Nigeria. Life changes for Ugwu when Odenigbo's girlfriend, Olanna, moves in with both of them, and he is very loyal. Olanna has a twin sister Kainene, a woman with dry sense of humour, tired by the pompous company she is forced to keep. Her lover, Richard is an English man who has come to Nigeria to study.

Jumping four years ahead, trouble is brewing between the Hausa and the Igbo people and hundreds of people die in the massacres, including Olanna's beloved auntie and uncle. A new republic, called Biafra, is created by the Igbo. As a result of conflict, Olanna, Odenigbo, their daughter, baby and Ugwu are forced to flee Nsukka which is the university town and the major intellectual hub of the new nation. They finally ended up in the refuge town of Umuahia, where they suffer as a result of food shortage and the constant air raids and paranoid atmosphere. There are also allusions to a conflict between Olanna and Kainene, Richard and Kainene and Olanna and Odenigbo.

When the novel jumps back to the early 1960s, we learn that Odenigbo slept with a village girl, who then had his baby. Olanna is furious at his betrayal, and sleeps with Richard in a moment of weakness. She goes back to Odenigbo and they took in his daughter, whom they call Baby, when her

mother refuses her. Towards the end of the war, we see Odenigbo and his household being forced to move in with Kainene and Richard where Kainene decides to trade across enemy lines, but does not return, even after the end of the war a few weeks later. The book ends in suspense leaving the reader to imagine if Kainene lives or died.

Having presented the summary of the novel, before exploring the theme of horror in this historic novel, it is germane that we briefly expose the internal factors or powers that incited the war.

### **Internal and External Factors as Precursors of the Biafran War**

Internally, ethno-politics was one of the precursors of the Nigerian civil war. The Nigerian civil war was necessitated by ethno politics which was prevalent in the Nigerian political scene, coupled with the injustices perpetrated by an insignificant few. Nigeria, under the leadership of the Hausa-Fulani Federal Aristocracy, preferred anarchy, exploitation, subjugation and injustice. This was followed by several tribal bloody coup de tat, and waves of fighting and an unrelenting cold-blooded massacres of the Igbo people from the Eastern Nigeria. The last straw that broke the Camel's back was in 1966, when a heavier bloody coup took place, bringing the massacres or genocide of the Igbos to an estimated number of 50,000. Consequently, when the centre could no longer hold (as Chinua Achebe would have it), secession and declaration of independence of the sovereign state of Biafran was inevitable, and the war erupted.

The 'Ahiara Declaration' which heralded the war was a principle of the Biafran revolution. It was the gallant speech of a hero (Ojukwu). It portrayed the revolution, first as a just and timely struggle against the political subjugation, exploitation, injustices, against human butchers and scavengers of the Hausa-fulani under the guise of the Nigerian state. It also portrayed the revolution as a struggle against that tendency to regard the black man as culturally, morally, spiritually, intellectually and physically inferior to the other two major races of the world, the yellow and white (imperialist). Finally, it equally painted it as a struggle against the Arab-Islamic invasion and Russian trying to assert herself (Ezenwa 147)

From this succinct excerpt, it is obvious that apart from the internal maladies in the Nigerian political scene that acted as catalyst to the war, it was ultimately the external forces or powers that planned the acrimonious conspiracy. Adichie confirms this in the interview she granted the socialist worker on 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2007. She says "it's also a political issue; people who were prominent during the Biafran war are still powerful in Nigeria. Many issues that led to the war remain unresolved today" (ibid). According to Ojukwu in *The Principles of the Biafran Revolution* in Ezenwa:

Our struggle has far reaching significance. It is the latest recrudescence in our time, an age-old struggle of the black man for his full stature as man. We are the latest victims of the wicked collusion between the racist Arab-Muslim expansion and white economic imperialism. Playing a subsidiary role Bolshevik Russia seeking for a place in the African sun. Our struggle is total and vehement rejection of all those evils which blighted Nigeria, evils which were bound to lead to the disintegration of that ill-fated federation. Our struggle is not a mere resistance that can build a healthy dynamic and progressive state such as would be the pride of black men the world over (146).

Tracing the origin of the hatred of these powers on Igbo, Adichie asserted thus: "The first time the Igbo people were massacred, albeit on a much smaller scale than what has recently occurred in 1945; the carnage was precipitated by the British Colonial Government when it blamed the Igbo people for the first national strike, banned Igbo-published newspapers and generally encouraged sentiment" (300). It has been generally agreed by political scientists of both black and white extractions that the sole aim of colonialism was political subjugation and economic exploitation. The British colonial masters did this to the last; they exploited the numerous Nigerian natural resources. And even when they left at the dawn of independence, they came back after independence. Most people would argue that they never really left, as Nigeria was still under their political subjugation and economic exploitation. It has been plausibly argued that what we call globalization today is a modern imperialism or colonization with the ulterior motive of perpetually impoverishing Africans.

Consequently, when the ABURI ACCORD was infringed upon and the succession that followed it, the western powers did not receive it with joy as this stands to frustrate their vested

interest. Consequently, they pitched tent with the Nigerian state. Adichie succinctly expresses it thus: "I think it is impossible to write about Africa in the 1960s or today without engaging with that history, of course, the western powers came after independence a lot of people would say they never really left"(302).

To consolidate their ulterior motives or vested interest, the Great Britain during the war supplied arms and aid to the Federal Government of Nigeria. This ulterior motive includes its colonial ties and post-independence trade and oil connections with Nigeria. Also, the Soviet Russian (USSR) supplied arms and aid of MIG fighters, and this is attributed to an anticipated ideological trade and oil concessions in Federal Nigeria which it sees as inevitable winner, equally, Egypt sympathizes with their Muslim co-religionists in the Northern Region. This brings to fulfillment the tripartite external forces against whom the Biafran survival struggle was waged. In affirmation of this, Adichie with the character of Madu writes thus:

Nigerian MIG-seventeens, Il-twenty-eights, and L-twenty-nine delfins flown by Russian and Egyptians are bombing us every day, and how some of them are using transport planes and just crudely rolling out bombs to kill women and children, and how the British and the Soviets are in an unholy alliance giving more and more arms to Nigeria, and how the Americans have refused to help us, and how our relief flights come in at night with no lights because the Nigerians will shoot them down during the day... (305).

In the light of this exposition, the western powers served as precursors to the Biafran war, and this they consolidated in the practical support which they rendered as we have just seen above.

Furthermore, Adichie expresses this unholy alliance and its effect on the African states as follows:

These African states have fallen prey to the British-American imperialist conspiracy to use the committee's recommendation as a pretext for a massive arms support for their puppet and tottering neo-colonist regime in Nigeria... (266)

Again, she indicates this brute fact humorously or hilariously with character of Pastor Ambrose:

... 'God bless His Excellency! God give Tanzania and Gabon strength! God destroy Nigeria and Britain and Egypt and Algeria and Russia! In the mighty name of Jesus!' some people shouted Amen! From their rooms. Pastor Ambrose held his bible up, as if some solid miracle would fall on it from the sky, and shouted nonsensical words: shebashebashebababa. 'stop babbling, pastor Ambrose, and go and join the army! How is your speaking in tongues helping our cause?' (337).

Furthermore, she consummates this evil conspiracy and acrimony of the western imperialist with Richard's proposed book 'the world was silent when we died', as he intends to write thus:

... 'the world was silent when we died'. He would write it after the war, a narrative of Biafra's difficult victory, an indictment of the world. (374)

What informed Richard's intention to write the proposed book in question was because he was disguised with the racist and callous attitudes of the white observers, hence we read:

Back in Orlu, he told Kainene about journalists and how he had felt both angry with and sorry for the redhead and how he had felt incredibly alone in their presence and how the book title had come to him. She arched her eyebrows. We? The world was silent when we died? 'I'll make sure to note that the Nigerian bombs carefully avoided anybody with British passport', he said (374)

Against this background, the Biafran War apart from been an ethno-political war is also a religious war against the Igbos who are predominantly Christians by the northerners who are predominantly Muslims and were supported by their Arab counterpart.

### **The Follies and Scourges of War**

Some of the most odious aftermath or multiplying effects of the Nigeria-Biafra War that encapsulate the follies and scourges are discussed below:



### **Economic Losses**

To say that Biafrans suffered a colossal economic loss is only but an understatement. Given the chaos and excruciating situation that characterized the sudden flight of the Easterners from all parts of Nigeria they suffered huge economic losses. The pogrom of 1966 saw the massive movement of the Igbos from all parts of Nigeria to their ancestral home (Eastern Nigeria). There is no gain-saying that given that precarious or delicate situation that the preservation of their dear life rank highest on their scale of preference. Consequently, they left behind belongings, investments and all they have ever worked for all their life.

The losses incurred in this pre-war situation are very difficult to accurately quantify. Because of these losses, there was a total upset on the class structure. A vivid example of this is Odenigbo, a Doctor of Mathematics who is in the middle class in the novel. Before the war, he has his own house, own a personal car and he is in every sense of the world highly comfortable. In the novel, Adichie graphically describes his house with one of the major character, Ugwu's amazement:

Ugwu had never seen a room so wide. Despite the brown sofas arranged in semi-circle, the side tables between them, the shelves crammed with books, and the centre table with a vase of red and white plastic flowers, the room still seemed to have too much space (4).

The deteriorating phenomena of the war forcefully relegated Odenigbo to the lower class in the Igbo society as depicted in this epic novel. The relegation was systematic and this played out; first with his moving to two bedroom flat and later to one bedroom apartment. In the face of this deterioration, Ugwu regrettably remark: "there was nothing normal about the house. The thatch roof, and cracked unpainted walls bordered Ugwu, but not as much as the cavernous pit latrine in the outhouse with rusting zinc sheath drawn across it to keep flies out. It is terrible baby" (196). Reacting to this nasty remark, Olanna responds in the defense has come to terms with the present situation:

Look at you, don't you know many people are sharing houses now? The scarcity is serious and here we are with two bedrooms and dining room. We are lucky to know an indigene of Umuahia (326).

As the day progresses and as the events of the war raged on, things move from bad to worse when they could no longer foot the bill of their present apartment, they were given a quit notice and this saw them to one room apartment. Adichie is clever to draw the sorry situation when she said that, what trouble Olanna is how she will manage the one room with her husband, Baby, Ugwu, eat, dress and make love in the same room.

They were lucky to find one room now that Umuahia was thronged with refugees. The long strip of a building had nine rooms, side by side, with doors that led out onto a narrow veranda. The kitchen was at one end and the bathroom at the other, next to a grove of banana trees. Their room was close to the bathroom and, on the first day, Olanna looked at it and could not imagine how she would live here with Odenigbo and Baby and Ugwu, eat and dress and make love in a single room (Adichie 326).

The climax of this is when this once comfortable family now resorts to food from the refugee camp for their survival.

We averred earlier on, that the war caused a lot of degradation or deterioration to the environment and this in turn had a great economic implication to the people. Adichie densely presents the effect of the war on the environment, firstly, economic trees that served as the only source of revenue to the people were all destroyed by the ravages of the war, and streams which served some economic values were polluted. It is an obvious fact that the Igbos are predominantly farmers, as a result of this deterioration on the environment, they had little or no farmland to cultivate, even when there is one, it was not fertile. As a result of the dense population, the lands were over utilized, there was an undue tension on the land and it could not guarantee enough produce. As a result, there was acute shortage of food which led to hunger and starvation. This can be deciphered from Richards's exclamation: "Farming with what? And how are we going to feed millions of people on the tiny territory we hold now" (405).

Another aspect of economic losses was in the area of human resources, the able-bodied men

who constitute the workforce were massively claimed by the war. Consequently, this category of people who are the fulcrum and the engine room of every economy were not around to stir the economy and this spelt a woe to Ndi Igbo. Of course, economic scientists or analysts would say, as a result of these drains of the workforce, the development of Ndi Igbo was set five years backward.

The photograph below portrays the wanton destruction of properties during the Nigerian civil



Cited in Balogun Ola (1973)

### Starvation

Sequel to economic losses was the scourge of starvation. Starvation was one of the various factors that plagued the Biafran people even after the war and this resulted in various factors, first as we noted earlier on environmental degradation which rendered the Arable lands infertile for cultivation and destroyed aquatic lives and life stocks. Secondly, it also resulted in economic losses of about an estimated 50,000. Writing on this cause of starvation, De Jorre 237 submitted thus:

Starvation, malnutrition and infant mortality have always had a high incidence throughout Nigeria. The last rising to a phenomenon, Fifty percent in some place. But even before the war began the situation was deteriorating in the Ibo areas of the East. By far, the most densely populated part of the country-only Rwanda, Burundi and the Nile valley match it in Africa. It relied traditionally and heavily on imported food especially high protein foods”.

Starvation becomes graver during the war as the Biafran side increasingly lost its territory to the Nigeria sector. As a result, the land, even when they have been damaged became increasingly and grossly inadequate for farming, to feed the teeming population. As a result, there was much tension on the land. This is made obvious by their angry exclamation of Richard: “Farming with what? And how are we going to feed millions of people on tiny territory we hold now?” (405). And most importantly from the total blockade of the Biafran territory. All through the novel, it is pretty obvious and paramount that starvation was the weapon used by both the Nigerian state and her foreign allies against the Biafran nation. Hence, Richard intends to write in his book 'the world was silent when we died':

Starvation was a Nigerian weapon of war. Starvation broke Biafra and brought Biafra fame and made Biafra last as long as it did. Starvation made the people of the world take notice and sparked protests and demonstrations in London and Moscow and Czechoslovakia. Starvation made Zambia and Tanzania and Ivory Coast and

Gabon recognized Biafra. Starvation brought Africa into Nixon's American campaign and made parents all over the world tell their children to eat up. Starvation propelled aid organizations to sneak-fly food into Biafra at night since both sides could not agree on routes. Starvation aided the carriers of photographers. And starvation made the international Red Cross call Biafra its gravest emergency since the Second World War (237).

As a result of the acute shortage of food, children suffered from malnutrition and ate a diet that do not contain the essential mineral and vitamins especially protein. They became stunted in growth and were dying of Kwashiorkor which is a disease that is caused by acute malnutrition. Consequently, the women who go for their usual routine to collect food from the Red Cross will sing in appreciation:

“Caritas, thank you, critas si anyi taba okporoko na kwashiorkor ga- ana” (283).

Starvation was the weapon used by the western world against the Biafran people, so, kwashiorkor which is the resultant consequence of this was named after the British prime minister who sanctioned the total blockade. This fact is encapsulated in the conversation between Mama Orji and Olanna thus:

Mama Orji muttered, 'I have been telling mama Adanna that the child's illness is not malaria but she keeps giving her medicine that does nothing for her. If nobody else will say it, then I will: what Adanna has is Harold Wilson syndrome- Kwashiorkor. The child has kwashiorkor. Olanna burst out laughing. She did not know they had renamed kwashiorkor after the British prime minister, but her amusement dissipated when she went to Adanna's room (338).

De Jorre clearly paints this sorry picture of what kwashiorkor looks like as follows:

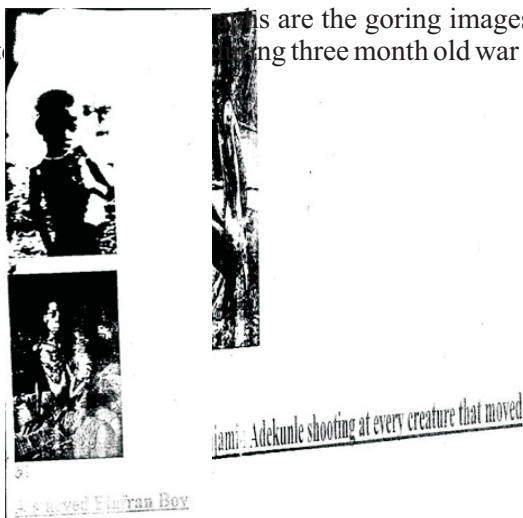
Tiny children were the worst hit with their soft, fluffy ginger hair and almost fleshless skull; shoulders like miniature coat hangers and ribs that stood out in delicate relief. ...protein not medicine was the cure for kwashiorkor. Caught in time it could be quickly and drastically reversed, left too long it either killed or maimed. Through brain damage for life (238).

Starvation led to a high rate of infant mortality, children were dying in their hundreds daily. And it was not only limited to children, a larger number of civilian death was also as a result of starvation. Ottah, an editor of Drum Magazine during the civil war in Bailey, Jim R. (1998) asserts:

I saw the waste of lives, the starvation, the frustration, the hopelessness of a shattered illusion. In the former Eastern Nigeria, people young men, old men, young women, old women and children- die daily in hundreds and in thousands from bullets, from bombs, from hunger, from exposure and from despair (204).

From all indication, it is pretty obvious that starvation was indeed a weapon used against the Biafran people. Starvation ravaged and brought the Biafrans to their feet, and it was responsible for the eventual surrender.

The result of acute starvation are the goring images of children almost starved to death as a result of acute starvation during the three month old war



**Cited in Balogun Ola (1973)  
The Savagery of War on Women**

Another ugly phenomenon next to starvation that ravaged the Biafrans as indicated by this world-class novel is the savagery of war on women and teenage girls. The Nigerian Civil War was a great savagery on the women folk because they were violently and gruesomely violated or sexually harassed and exploited. Exposing this ugly incident, we find paramount in Adichie's configuration, instances of rape. The Nigerian forces were referred to as vandals, upon invasion of any territory, after looting valuables they could lay their hands on, the next is to descend on the women and young girls.

And they choose the best houses and force peoples wives and daughters to spread their legs and cook for them (Adiche 285).

It is ironic and baffling to reveal that the Nigerian Federal Government sanctioned the assaults mounted on the Nigerian women and girls. This is made explicit in one of the broadcast of the Nigerian radio as we read in the novel thus: "I was listening to Nigerian radio. Lagos says, Chinese soldiers are fighting for us and Kaduna says every Igbo women deserves to be raped, Kainene said. 'their imagination impresses me'" (Adichie 346). Still on the issue of rape she writes:

They forced themselves on her five of them; Nnesinachi sat down and placed the baby on her lap. Ugwu stared at the distant sky. 'where did it happen?' 'It has been more than a year'. 'I asked where?' 'oh Nnesinachi's voice quavered 'near the stream.' 'outside?' 'yes' Ugwu bent down and picked up stone. They said the first one that climbed on top of her, she bit him on the arm and drew blood. They nearly beat her to death. One of her eyes has refused to open well since (421).

Furthermore, it is most pathetic to disclose that, this obnoxious crime was not only committed by the vandals against the Biafran women, but also the Biafra soldiers whom supposedly are fighting to liberate their people perpetuated this same abomination on their own people. We find at an instance, five Biafran soldiers taking turns to rape a bar girl. (Adiche 365).

Closely related to the sexual assault on women was the issue of prostitution. It is common knowledge that girls are forced into prostitution as a result of economic deprivation. Young girls and even women were forced into prostitution because of the prevailing poverty that characterized the Biafran war situation. In this vein, Eberechi, Ugwu's girlfriend narrates her ordeal to him; she tells him about her parent urging her into the many officers room, and he listens as if he had not heard it before. "He had a big belly", she says in the detached tone. He did it quickly and then told me to lie on top of him. He fell asleep and I wanted to move away and he woke up and told me to stay there. I could not sleep so the whole night I looked at the saliva coming down the side of his mouth. She paused. 'He helped us. He put my brother in essential services in army' (Adichie 294).

Another incidence of commercial sex depicted in the novel reads: "Okeoma darted an apologetic glance at Olanna before he said: "He throws girls on their backs in the open, where the men can see him and does them, all the time, holding his bag of money in one hand" (Adichie 323).

A grave effect of rape or illicit sex on the victims is that it has a long-lasting impression which if not well managed, according to clinical psychologists, they will constitute a great obstacle to the inter-personal relationship of the victims. It may make them to unconsciously develop phobia for men. It is on this note we shall now discuss the psychological implication of all the ravages and savagery of the Biafran war on the people.

**Psychological Impact of War**

One of the obvious factors that are ubiquitous in this novel is the psychological implication of war on the people. The novel not only portrays the impact of the war on the psyche of the people, during the war, rather, it portrays it starting from the pre-war situation and the aftermath of the war on the people. Consequently, it is sound to argue that the crux of the scourge of the Biafran war is its indelible impact on the psyche of the Igbo race. This consisted of the frustrations, anxieties, fears, worries, tensions, disillusionment and the fear of violent death that bedeviled them during the war. The siege mentality, disillusionment, and the horrible memories of the war are also some of the profound psychological impacts of the infamous war.

War, as a predominant theme in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* affects the actions and made people restless. The events determined their actions and reactions consciously. They have to think of



a means of protecting themselves from the bomb thrown by the Nigerian army thereby coming up with the idea of bunker. The need for a bunker that will shield them from enemy bomb occurs to Odenigbo's reasoning, and we can see this in the excerpt below:

We should build a bunker; he said, and went to the door. 'yes, we certainly need a bunker here (Adichie 331).

Olanna is affected psychologically when she sees the dead bodies of her relatives living in Kano:

She stopped when she saw the bodies. Uncle Mbaezi, lay face down in an ungainly twist, legs splayed. Auntie Ifeka lay on verander. 'Arinze: she said, 'Arinze is down the road (Adichie147).

What surprised her was the fact that a friend of the family, Abdulmalik, was the one who led the slaughter of her family members. She had once met him in their compound and he presented her with gift of leather slipper. After this infamous betrayal, Abdulmalik exclaimed, "We finished the whole family. It was Allah's will" (148). Also, on the train she boarded back to Nsukka, she saw a woman carrying a girl's head in a calabash "Olanna looked into the bowl, she saw the little girl's head with the ashy-grey skin and the plaited hair and rolled-back eyes and open mouth, she stared at it for a while before she looked away, somebody screamed". (Adichie149). These occurrences affect Olanna's psyche to the extent that when she comes back from Kano, her legs and her bladder fails and Dr. Patel, her doctor says that her inability to walk is psychological.

During the war, a factor that constitutes a great psychological issue was an incessant raid and bombardment. This is quiet traumatic to the people and this put them in a state of anxiety and tension. This is depicted as follows: "Olanna jumped, 'was that a plane?' 'Plane, kwa?' Mrs Muokelu laughed. 'Somebody closed their door in the next house and you say it is a plane?' Olanna sat down on the floor and stretched out her legs she was exhausted from fear" (278).

Another aspect of the psychological damage of the war could be referred to as psycho-spiritual trauma. Those whose dead ones could not be buried properly, who had no time and a conducive atmosphere to mourn their deceased ones suffered excruciating anguish. A vivid example of this psycho-spiritual trauma is the precarious condition of Odenigbo after he received a heartbreaking news of the death of his mother and for the very fact that he was not at hand to give his mother the required funeral rite, he was engulfed by sorrow and anguish, and this marred his interaction and relation with his family and even his dedication to work. This is portrayed as follows:

She wanted him to truly talk to her, help her to help him grieve, but each time she told him, he said, 'it's too late, nkem: she was not sure what he meant. She sensed the layer of his grief, he would never know how mama had died and would always struggle with old resentments, she wondered if this was her own failure rather than his, it perhaps she lacked a certain strength that would compel him to include her in his pain (322).

It is further portrayed as follows:

... but she did not want him to stop she wanted him to cry and cry until he dislodged the pain that clogged his throat, until he rinsed away his sullen grief. She cradled him, wrapped her arms around him, and slowly he relaxed against her. His arms circled her. His sobs became audible. With each intake of breath, they reminded her of Baby; he cried like his daughter (330).

Furthermore, his grieve for his deceased mother was too overwhelming on him that he could no longer hold himself. Therefore, he took to episodic drinking:

.... This drinking here silenced him, it made him retreat into himself and look out at the world with bleary, weary eyes. And it makes her furious (380)

One could imagine why Odenigbo was traumatized, the simple reason is, the Igbos believe that proper funeral rituals ought to be done to usher the deceased back to the ancestors. If not, it has a consequence both on the deceased and on the immediate family. Furthermore, the Igbos have a strong belief in life after death even before Christianity came, ancestral shrines and deities were also destroyed, and all these had both spiritual and psychological implications on the people. Little wonder Chinua Achebe in his *Things Fall Apart*, averred that the Igbos were highly religious and civilized before the coming of the white when things fell apart.

Another aspect of the impact of the war on the psyche of the people is depression and trauma. Richard, a white man, is depressed and was affected psychologically because of his experience at the

airport in Kano where the Hausa soldiers came and killed all the Igbos at the airport. Thus, he wets his trousers and nearly missed his flight. “The soldiers ran out to the tarmac and into the airplane, and pulled out Igbo people who had already boarded and lined them up and shot them there. Richard felt himself wet his trousers. There was a painful ringing in his ears. He almost missed his flight because as the other passengers walked shakily to the plane, he stood aside vomiting” (Adichie155).

The scene of death that Richard sees at the airport traumatizes him and we see how long to hold his mind and forget about the scene:

He had often wished that he would lose his mind, or that his mind, or that his memory would suppress itself, but instead everything took on a terrible transparency and he had only to close his eyes to see the freshly dead bodies on the floor of the airport and to recall the pitch of the screams (Adichie165).

We can also see the effect of the war on Ugwu, his degeneration from human to a less human being. Initially, he had enthusiasm to fight for his tribe's honour but later on as the narration progresses, we see him take part in the rape of a bar attendant as shown in page 305, which he wouldn't have done in a peaceful atmosphere.

Also, we see the case of psychological trauma and depression in Olanna's action when she sleeps with Richard due to Odenigbo's betrayal of the trust she has for him. Odenigbo who sleeps with a village girl brought to him by his mother 'amala' made Olanna do something she wouldn't have done if she is in her right mind, when Kainene finds out about the incident, she knows that Olanna is not in her right mind when she sleeps with Richard and this makes her to ask her why she did it. We can see this in the extract below:

'Why did you do it? Kainene sounded frightening clam, you're the good one and favourite and the beauty and the Africanist revolutionary who doesn't like white men and you simply did not need to fuck him. So why did you? (Adichie254).

The psychological issue that arises from these betrayals is that both parties would live in perpetual torment of the sense of guilty and loss of self-worth and esteem. What about those who engaged or indulged in commercial sex, what kind of self-worth do you think they would have. More pathetic was the case of those who did all these even when their husbands were alive. The savagery effect of illicit sex cannot be over emphasized; the people that had the greatest deal of depression and trauma are those who were odiously raped.

## Conclusion

The crux of the scourge of war lies in his psychological impact on people. It is the combined effect of all the items discussed in this paper and the height of the horrors of war on the living. On the strength of the findings of this literary criticism, it is plausible to assert that war is nasty and savagery, it causes starvation, deepens poverty, ruins environment, forces migration of people, makes people compromise on their social values just to survive, increase the gap between the rich and poor and causes prolong misery for the vulnerable. The multiplying effect of all these is that it causes an untold agony and problems-psycho-social and psycho-spiritual traumas that cannot be completely obliterated in a very long time. Therefore, war although endemic in human history is the height of human foolishness.

## Works Cited

- Adesua, Bimbo, *Impact of War on the Society: An Appraisal* Ondo: Odo Printing Press 2002.
- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Lagos: Farafina Kachifo Ltd, 2006.
- Akachi, Ezeigbo, “*Facts and Fiction in The Literature of Nigerian Civil War*” Lagos: Unity Publishing and Research Co Ltd, 1991.
- Atofarati, A. A. “*The Nigerian Civil War, Causes, Strategies and Lessons Learnt*” file E: Nigerian civil war, 1992. Web 3/09/2012.
- Atofarati, Adebawale. *The Effect of War on Economy* Abakiliki: Glory Press, 2000.
- Balley, Jim R. and Dysen, Sally (eds). *Nigerian: The Birth of Africa's Greatest Country*, Vol. 2. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1998.
- Balogun, Ola. *The Tragic Years, Nigeria Crisis 1966-1970*, Benin City: Publishing Corporation, 1973.
- Christians and War: Thomas Aquinas refines the “Just War” theory (<http://www.catholiceducation.org/article/politics/pg0029.html>)

- Isedile, Frank. *In the Hands of the War Lords* Onitsa: T&T Press Limited 1999
- Nixon, R. "The Presidential Campaign" September 9, (1968)
- North, Gary, "The Asymmetrical Rhetoric of War and Peace" In LewRockwell.com, July 11, 2005.
- Ohaeto, Ezenwa. "To understand what happened", in Chinua Achebe, *A Biography*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press 1997.
- Saint De Jorre, J., *The Nigerian Civil War*, 7<sup>th</sup> Ed, Toronto: Hodder & Staughton Press Ltd, 1972.