



War Is Ugly : A Critical Appraisal of The Consequences of The Nigerian Civil War in Flora Nwapa’s “Neveragain” and Chimamanda Adichie’s “Half Of A Yellow Sun”

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought various significant impacts on the cultural shift in The Nigerian Civil War having being heralded by certain avoidable dark clouds which a capricious leadership in power at the time failed to mollify eventually resulted to certain catastrophic and mind-boggling consequences. Indeed, no progressive nation would desire to see a repetition of such ugly, cruel and inhuman occurrences. Both individual and community experiences as portrayed in Nwapa’s Never Again and Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun point to the fact that the sufferings, deaths and anguish occasioned by the war were really enormous and unbearable. Using New Historicism as a critical model, investigations as guided by the two aforementioned war fictions reveal that invaluable talents and potentials were flagrantly wasted, peace – a paramount precursor of development gave way to pieces, women and girls were horribly abused and debased in the most animalistic manner, and vital infrastructures were destroyed. Yet the war did not achieve any of the goals for which it broke out- Biafra did not secede; Nigeria is still far from being united as one country – still a mere coalition of ethnic nationalities held together by the Van der Waals forces of federation account and revenue allocation. Moreover, the dark clouds that resulted to the war are still largely palpable and unaddressed. The two war novels were carefully selected from two distinct generations of Nigerian writers in order to compare and analyse their perceptions and perspectives of the Civil War with respect to its costs. Thus while Never Again (published in 1975) is a first-generation war fiction, Half of a Yellow sun (published in 2006) is a third-generation artistic creation. The paper also explores the consideration of peaceful negotiation and dialogue as a better alternative to conflict resolution rather than bloodshed.

Keywords: nigerian civil war, consequences, anguish, wastage, experiences

Paper type: Research paper

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INTRODUCTION

The arrival of some heavy rains usually has some severe costs and consequences on the physical, social, even psychological environment. A very heavy downpour could result to a flood situation or lead to a devastating soil erosion with the potential to destroy both flora and fauna and create other serious negative ecological conditions. Iniobong I. Uko believes that the "...irresponsible...government" in power at the time "remained insensitive to" (49), the dark clouds that produced the heavy and devastating downpour called the Nigerian Civil War. After several weeks of intensive tour of Biafra, James Wilde – a Time Magazine correspondent, in his report on August 2, 1968 lamented that "kwashiorkor, a deadly protein deficiency, is killing scores of Ojukwu's people daily. Estimates of the extent of the suffering are at best approximate, but from 1,500 to 40,000 Biafrans are dying of starvation each week." His lamentation of the sufferings and deaths of the people is corroborated by Chris Onyema when he hints on "... the horrific and traumatic multiplier-effects of the war, such as dislocation of Biafrans from their domestic environments or economic and refugee problems, hunger, the horror of air raids, the travails of the wounded and shell-shocked, brambles of war time exploitation, carnage, destruction and death" (Remembering Biafra 108). Okuyade Ogaga describes the period of these occurrences as "... the ugliest moment in the history of postcolonial Nigeria" (128). Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo succinctly termed it "The taste of madness" (194). Also, in remembering the experiences of those days, Ijeoma Nwajiaku bemoans "... the suffering and utter helplessness of war victims" (44). Ernest Emenyonu refers to the agonies of that era as the "... the concomitant catastrophes ..." (xi) of the Civil War. Right from the inception of the war, various literary artists have tried from diverse perspectives to capture and represent the mood and ugly experiences of the people as orchestrated by the conflict. Such notable works include Elechi Amadi's *Sunset In Biafra*, Cyprian Ekwensi's *Divided We Stand: A Novel of the Nigeria Civil War*, Eddie Iroh's *Forty-Eight Guns For The General*, to mention but a few. The paper will, however, focus on these traumatic costs and consequences as represented by Flora Nwapa and Chimamanda Adichie in *Never*

Again and Half of a Yellow Sun respectively, as well as the consideration of peaceful negotiation and dialogue as a better alternative to conflict resolution. This consideration is essential in view of the fact that the war does not achieve any of the goals it sets out to accomplish; moreover, the dark clouds that resulted to it are still very much conspicuous and unaddressed in Nigeria.

METHOD

Two novels under study deal with significant historical issues and events; some of which are directly or indirectly associated with certain past and present historical figures in the nation. It is in view of this that the adoption of New Historicism as a critical approach is considered appropriate. The model could yield insightful results in an analysis such as this, considering that it breaks down the boundaries between artistic production and historical traces and attempts to melt historicity and artistry together. As a critical template, New Historicism evolved in the 1980s through the work of the theorist Stephen Greenblatt and became quite popular in the 1990s. The critical theory was influenced by the tenets of structuralism and post-structuralism, and works by linking a work of art with the era in history in which it was produced as well as the political and cultural organizations of the period. Another outstanding proponent of the theory Michel Foucault directed his approach on both the theory of the limits of collective cultural knowledge and on his procedure of examining and analyzing a broad spectrum of documents in order to understand the episteme of a particular time. The theory, therefore, assumes that an artistic work is ultimately the product of the historical period and moment that produced it. In consideration of these, Harry Blamires states that

Literary texts do not represent historical reality, but they operate on ideology, and ideology relates individuals to history in various ways, allowing multiple kinds and degrees of access to that history. In so far as history is present in a text, it is present as an ideology. (372)

As opposed to other critical theories like structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstruction and even New criticism which were formulated before it and attempted to annihilate the linkages of the author, politics as well as history from literature, New Historicism focuses on the sense of order as portrayed in literary

texts and also interrogates the status of men and women in society in its engagement with political, social and historical questions. Thus the theory vehemently challenges and rejects the assertion "...of a work of art as a closed, self-sufficient, autonomous object deriving its unity from the formal interrelations of its parts" (Hutcheon, 125). This approach to literary studies, before the advent of New historicism, tried to silence history and the derivation of meanings therefrom. New historicism rather interrogates the diverse conditions of the poor, the oppressed, women or the subjugated, assessing their lives as individuals in connection to the society and power. It is in view of this that Stephen Lynn states that "...the New historicist assumes that history is a story, a construct, necessarily written and re-written" (120).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Shattering of Peace in Never Again and Half of a Yellow Sun

Peace is the existence of harmonious relationship; the absence of crisis, mental stress or anxiety. A peaceful atmosphere encourages the fertilization and incubation of developmental ideas in a nation while the absence of peace connotes destruction, stagnation, underdevelopment and even retrogression. Peace is a strong and paramount precursor of development in any nation. But when peace is shattered through the instrumentality of violence or war what you get is pieces. Indeed, it is the experience of crisis, violence or war in a society that reveals the value of peace. Peace is a priceless commodity essential for the growth and development of any nation or community. Nsukka and Ugwuta the two major settings of *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Never Again* respectively were bubbling with life, health and productivity until war came. Odenigbo's house in Nsukka was "... like a political club in the evenings... because ... he wanted Africans to have a chance to socialize with one another" (*Half*, 36). It was a meeting ground for seasoned intellectuals who gathered there almost on a daily basis to share food, drinks as well as valuable progressive Pan-Africanist as well as ideas on topical global issues. It was a place where they celebrated their comradeship and quintessential erudition; a place where they shared their joy and happiness as well

as their hopes in a newly independent nation (Half, 18- 19). But as soon as war comes, those happy moments vanish like a flash of lightning as the narrator tells:

Ugwu had listened and felt buoyed by it, by his favourite line, clay pots fired in zeal, they will cool our feet as we climb. Now, though, it made him teary. It made him long for the days when Okeoma recited poems about people getting buttocks rashes after defecating in imported buckets, the days when Miss Adebayo and Master shouted and yet did not end the evening with her storming off, the days when he still served pepper soup. Now, he served only kolanut. (175)

The above excerpt compares the moments of peace to that of pieces or crises. Gradually, the crisis situation deteriorates into a full scale harvest of tears and sorrows; from reciting inspirational poems and serving pepper soup to serving kolanut and then serving nothing. With the massacres and pogrom in the North and the West, the peace and joy of the people is completely stolen as the narrator says, "It was often difficult to visualize anything concrete that was not dulled by the memories of [the dead] Arize, Auntie Ifeka and Uncle Mbaezi, that did not feel like life being lived on suspended time" (Half, 105, emphasis mine). This is the new situation created by the crisis in the country as people flee for their lives. It goes a long way in revealing the mood of a nation in a time of crisis. Such a mood cannot allow the breeding of developmental ideas.

In the same vein, the peace and happiness of Kate's family as well as numerous others in *Never Again* is shattered as they flee from Enugu to Onitsha, Port Harcourt and finally Ugwuta their hometown which is still attacked and destroyed by the federal forces. Nwapa reveals that Ugwuta, the once vibrant and productive community suddenly turns into a wailing place as a result of the war that inundated it. It is a situation of hell on earth as the narrator describes:

Tears filled my eyes. The children were crying. There was stampede as women threw away their loads to take cover. God spare us this madness. This insanity, this hell on earth. This sudden darkness. This end of the world. A whole town moving. The buildings would begin to move in a short time. Yes, why not.

The aged were moving. They were moving corpses, with sticks, with walking sticks, skeletons. In a day or two they would die like the pregnant woman. And nobody would bury them. They would rot and decay and mingle with mother earth. Then their bones would remain. No! Life was cruel. Life was meaningless... there were more and more corpses as we moved along. I shut my eyes. (45, 57)

This is a situation of total shattering of peace and development created by the Nigerian Civil War for the three dark years it lasted. Meanwhile, Ugwuta is depicted as a very prosperous community - booming with commercial and agricultural activities and products that fed the entire Mgbidi division until the war came and brought a different scenario: "Ugwuta fed the whole of Mgbidi division and the environs. Now Ugwuta had fallen. Where would the people buy food? Fish, cassava, yams, plantains, etc, came from Ugwuta. What next?"(Never, 67). Hunger, famine and death, of course. That is what war brings. With the invasion of Ugwuta comes a harvest of tears and sufferings as peace and joy which are the invaluable precursors of development become scarce commodities, not only in Ugwuta but in the entire war-torn nation. Thus for the three years the war lasted, no one hears anything about either local or direct foreign investment into the various sectors of the national economy. There is no mention at all of Gross Domestic Product or anything on economic development. The prevalent news is rather on famine, Kwashiorkor (dubbed Harold Wilson Syndrome), blockade, air raid, mass deaths and mass graves, importation of arms and ammunition, not machines for industrialization, mass killings here and there, and several other news items that are not palatable to the ears. The educational sector and indeed other critical sectors of the economy were grounded for those three years as almost the entire national budget was channeled into the purchase of arms and ammunition which brothers and colleagues used to destroy one another. Thus instead of development, friendship and bridge-building across ethnic divides, the scarce resources of the young nation were used to create acrimony and disharmony. It was a situation where people celebrated the wiping off an entire family in Half of a Yellow Sun: "We finished the whole family. It was Allah's

will” (148). This goes a long way to prove that there is no place for rationality in the time of war, rather lawlessness and cruelties are usually the order of the day.

Wastage of Invaluable Talents and Potentials in Never Again and Half of a Yellow Sun

Talents or potentials are natural or innate abilities with which human beings are packaged from the factory of God. Although everyone possesses one talent or inclination or the other, talents, however, vary in their degrees of manifestation. A uniquely talented person is one who possesses an unusual innate ability in a particular field of human endeavour. Most people who have made some peculiar discoveries in the fields of Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, Aeronautics, etc., which contribute in one form or the other in solving the multifarious problems of man on earth are, often, uniquely talented people. Also, some notable creative writers who have written some ageless books that continue to benefit humanity also belong to this category of uniquely talented people. Think of the Shakespeares, the Achebes and the Soyinkas of our world. These people with their talents, succeeded in placing their communities and countries in the global map. This is to say that such persons usually bring great honour and recognition not only to their communities but also to their countries and even continents at large. But in the time of war, such individuals of great talents or potentials could be wasted on the altar of strife. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Professor Ekwenugo - a talented inventor and scientist with the Biafra Science Group described by Ugwu as “... the one who made great things” (Half, 355), Okeoma the great and inspirational poet, and Nnaemeka the young, skillful, dutiful and highly promising customs officer wasted at the Kano Airport during the massacres all stand out as uniquely talented individuals who could have contributed immensely in building a great nation if the war did not break out, and if they had lived longer. While Professor Ekwenugo is killed in an accidental land mine explosion, Okeoma is killed during the bloody counter-attack to retake Umuahia the fallen Biafran capital. Professor Ekwenugo’s scientific and technological erudition and inventiveness can only be compared to the creativity of Philip Emeagwali in the world of internet today. Emeagwali himself was a Biafran teenager during the Civil War; he is today the widely acclaimed father of

the internet technology. If he was killed during the war, the world would have missed his great potentials.

Again, Okeoma's charisma and immense poetic talent is the type that draws the admiration of readers right from the time he started reading his poems at the gathering of intellectuals in Odenigbo's house in Nsukka; when their peace was not yet shattered. But when one reads, "... it was the evening that Dr. Nwala came to tell them that Okeoma had been killed. Lightning flashed across the sky and thunder rumbled..." (391), the shock sticks to one's heart. Adichie's admittance, in her author's note, that "Christopher Okigbo's own life and labyrinths inspired the character of Okeoma" (434) is quite revealing. Okigbo, of course, was one of the most promising poets among his generation of Nigeria writers. Considering his immense artistic talents, one could say that Nigeria and, indeed Africa lost a potential Nobel Laureate in literature in the person of Christopher Okigbo.

Also, Nnaemeka's outstanding qualities as a customs officer had attracted him to Richard Churchill the British writer who begins to ask where he came from as he engaged him in a heartwarming discussion at the Kano Airport. One could see that Nnaemeka holds so much promise for himself and for the nation that employed him, judging from the intelligent, diligent, patriotic and "excellent" (151) manner with which he discharges his duties at the airport until he is wasted:

Nnaemeka turned to go back to his desk. Richard picked up his briefcase. The side entrance burst open and three men ran in holding up long rifles... The first soldier waved his gun around. 'Ina nyamiri! Where are the Igbo people? Who is Igbo here? Where are the infidels? 'You are Igbo,' the second soldier said to Nnaemeka... He would not say Allahu Akbar because his accent would give him away. Richard willed him to say the words...and as if in answer to his thoughts, the rifle went off and Nnaemeka's chest blew open, a splattering red mass... there were more soldiers now, more shots... the soldiers ran out to the tarmac and into the aeroplane and pulled out Igbo people who had already boarded and lined them up and shot them and left them lying there. (152-153)

Adichie uses the characters of Professor Ekwenugo, Okeoma and Nnaemeka to portray how war could lead to an unnecessary wastage of some of a

country's brightest and best. While Professor Ekwenugo is a metaphor for scientific innovation and technological advancement, Okeoma symbolizes exceptional literary creativity and artistry. In the same vein, Nnaemeka is a reference point for service excellence and nobility. He would have been a revolutionary customs officer who would have immensely contributed in building an excellent, corrupt free customs department in Nigeria. But they were all wasted in the furnace that was Nigerian Civil War. Again, Agnes in *Never Again* just graduated from overseas after several years of training. With her wonderful potentials and quality academic training, she would have been of great benefit to a peaceful nation; but the war never allowed her to put her talent and training to good use. Thus, despite her expensive overseas training, she is frustrated and ends up becoming one of the mistresses of a mercenary soldier as the narrator states:

They drove away. The mercenary had captured a Biafran girl. No, two Biafran girls. What else could she do? I mean Agnes. She had no money. She had nowhere to go but to the farm. She had never been to the farm since she was born. She had just graduated when the crisis came. She returned. And she continued blaming herself for returning when she did. She had made several attempts to go back but was unable. She then resigned herself to fate. (62)

Professor Ekwenugo, Okeoma, Nnaemeka and Agnes, therefore, stand out in the two novels as a metaphor for wasted trainings, talents and potentials. It could also be remembered that many of the nation's brilliant and gallant first generation military officers were wasted during the pogrom and the war. They were all trained with the tax payers' money in some of the best military institutions in the world, from Sandhurst to Camberly. Any nation which continues to waste such gifts of nature on the altar of violence and strife is in great jeopardy. War usually leads to a senseless destruction of what is valuable and precious.

Women and Children as Victims- a Debasing of Human Nature

From a Christian epistemological perspective, man was created in the image and likeness of God. This implies, among other things, that human beings wherever they may be found, are creatures of dignity, different both in intellect and in genetic configuration, from every animal or beast. However, war often provides the opportunity for the debasing of this dignified human nature thereby

giving room for all forms of irrational and animalistic propensities usually exhibited by soldiers and other aggressive men. Although war usually unleashes diverse forms of suffering on men and women alike in a war-affected area, women and children are often the most vulnerable mainly on account of gender and age. SybilNmezi contends that "The pre-existing culture of discrimination in African society allows women to be targeted and (sic) experience violence and sexual abuse" (129). She substantiates this assertion with the account of her personal observations when Owerri fell into the hands of federal forces on September 28, 1968. Indeed, women and female children are usually targeted for diverse kinds of wicked, inhuman and debasing violations during war. In narrating his personal experiences in Biafra as a member of the International Peace Corps, John Sherman stresses the sufferings of women and children when he states:

During the war, the women struggled on their own to keep themselves alive and to feed and comfort their small children, many of whom were unlikely to be alive when we returned the next week to the former primary school which often serves as our base of operations. (109)

The two war novels under study reveal that women and children suffered untold hardship, torture and pain at the outbreak of the Civil War and as soon as several Biafran towns and cities began to fall into the hands of federal forces. For instance, at the early fall of Nsukka, Adichie captures the condition of women and children thus:

The main road was crowded; women with boxes on their heads and babies tied to their backs, barefoot children carrying bundles of clothes or yams or boxes... Ugwu wondered why they were holding lit kerosene lanterns although it was not yet dark. He saw a little child stumble and fall and the mother bend and yank him up... Baby cried and cried. She cried often the following days... (*Half* 179, 196)

Yet their suffering would take a harsher dimension on account of poor environmental condition, hunger and diseases as the war lingers, and as refugee camps spring up in several places. Again, Adichie states how women and children

suffer as victims of war when Kainene takes Olanna to visit the refugee camp she runs at Orlu. Kainene emphatically calls it “the point of no return”:

‘Now to the Point of No Return.’ Olanna followed. The smell hit her at the first door. It went straight from her nose to her stomach, turning it, churning the boiled yam she’d had for breakfast... She felt faint.

They went into the first classroom. About twelve people were lying... on mats, on the floor. Not one of them reached out to slap away the fat flies... His bones were clearly outlined... They were naked; the tout globes that were their bellies would not fit in a shirt anyway. Their buttocks and shirts collapsed into folds of rumpled skin... ‘That woman is dead. We have to get her removed.’ ... the thick ugly odours of unwashed bodies and rotten flesh from the shallow graves behind the buildings grew stronger... Bed bugs and *kwalikwata* crawled; women would untie their wrappers to reveal an ugly rash of reddened bites around their waists, like hives steeped in blood... (*Half* 347-348, 390)

It is also in this same horrible refugee camp operated by Kainene that “Three children died in one day” after hunger had “stolen” (389) their memories, and a teenage girl named Urenwa is impregnated by Father Marcel despite their hunger stricken condition. Kainene reveals that the same Reverend Father “... fucks most of them (the girls) before he gives them the crayfish that I slave to get here!” (398, emphasis mine). In another touching scene at Uli Airstrip the narrator, again captures the pitiable and traumatic condition of children during the war:

A car was driving in towards them, slowly, with no headlights. It parked close by, doors opened and shut, and soon five emaciated children and a nun in a blue-and-white habit joined them... She asked the children to sit on the wood slabs. Richard went closer to look at them. In the dim light, the milky foam of mucus in their eyes was thick. The nun cradled the smallest, a shriveled doll with stick legs and a pregnant belly. Richard could not tell if the child was a boy or a girl... One of the children made to get up. She toppled over and fell and lay face down and unmoving. (*Half* 374)

Adichie’s portrayal of the traumatic experiences of women and children at war time is not only limited to their ordeals at the fall of towns and cities resulting to their sudden and unprepared evacuation or the hunger and death they suffer in refugee camps, it is also shown when they are devoured by bombs and other

weapons of war during air raids as the narrator tells in a particular pathetic episode at Umuahia:

The first explosion was so loud that...ear popped and ... body shivered alongside the vibrating ground. The second explosion followed and then the third and fourth and fifth ... smoke rose from a compound near the corn-grinding station a street away. Two houses had collapsed into dusty rubble and some men were digging frantically through the jumbled cement... A car was on fire; the body of a woman lay next to it, her clothes burnt off, flecks of pink all over her blackened skin... charcoal-black legs ... 'I heard the child,' somebody said again. (202-203)

Adichie's account of the unspeakable agonies of women and children during the Civil War is profoundly corroborated by Nwapa's in *Never Again*. Although all the inhabitants of Ugwuta go through various degrees of pain and traumatic experiences at its invasion and devastation by federal troops, Nwapa clearly demonstrates that women and children are the greatest victims of the situation. The narrator captures this when she states:

... the eldest who was eight started crying ... Then there was another rocketing... They paraded, molesting women who had already started fleeing... My mother-in-law and the children all burst into tears. My husband ignored them... A column of women and children had begun to flow past. Children of three were walking to Mgbidi a distance of six miles in the heat of the sun. Then another rocket and yet another... The exodus from Ugwuta continued... The rockets were falling, indiscriminately. Children were crying; women were crying... they wept as they went. (Never, 51-55)

In the process of their moving and weeping, Kate makes one's heart to chill when she tells of the torturing physical and emotional ordeal a pregnant woman is subjected to in the process of playing her natural, motherly role:

It was a pregnant woman. She could not walk anymore. The baby in her womb was rebellious. It was kicking and kicking. And the kicking was visible on her protruding stomach. She lay there unable to get up and walk. Her children were there crying. "Mother please, please mother. Don't have the baby here. Not here mother. Not today. Today is a bad day." The baby kept on kicking. "No, no. It has come again. It has come again. Again,

hold me, it's coming. I am going to die. To die, to die... my..." she was dead. We stood there and looked from the corpse to the children.(Never, 56)

When Kate and her family members eventually arrive at the place that becomes their refugee camp, she says, "I felt something crawling on my hands. When I examined them closely I found swellings from almost invisible insects. There were swellings all over my hands. In a short time, I would suffer from crawl-crawl. My God! Crawl-crawl! I, suffer from crawl-crawl" (64-65). It is also in this camp that an escapee man narrates the touching ordeals of his wife and how she is killed by the federal troops as they invaded Ugwuta:

... I could hear boots on the floor of Okwosa's house. They were military boots. They were soldiers, vandals who had come to plunder and to loot. God in heaven help us. I saw my wife dying. I was helpless. Ona was dying before my eyes. Ona died. I laid her down again gently. Her head had been on my lap all the time. ... She was dead. I had to get out. There was no soul seen as I made my way through the bush path to Awo-Omama. I did not hear any more gun shots... Ona was dead... My wife did not come out. She was shot. Her dead body was at the back of our house... And here I am. ... We couldn't help weeping. And once more the chant of weeping rent the air. (Never 75)

Another major form of torture, which bothers on debasing of human nature as can be found in the war novels under study, especially *Half of a Yellow Sun*, is the flagrant abuse of women or the girl child through cruel sexual violations that bring indescribable physical and emotional pains and sufferings to them. And when a woman is debased, a nation is also debased because a woman, to a large extent, is the mother and nurturer of a nation. *Half of a Yellow Sun* tells several shocking stories of how women are raped and debased with relish. This goes a long way to portray the madness that is obtainable in a time of war. In a particular telling episode, the narrator reveals that, "They raped pregnant women before they cut them up!" (191), yet in another episode, a young, promising girl named Eberechi is "... given to a visiting army officer, as one would give kola nut to a guest. They had knocked on his door at night, opened it, and gently pushed her in. The next morning the beaming officer thanked her beaming parents..." (272). Later on, Eberechi would reveal her disgust for the degrading treatment:

He had a big belly. 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. (294)

Much later, "...the sister of Eberechi's father" would report "... that Eberechi had been killed by shelling, that it had happened on the day that Umuahia fell..." (428). The same Umuahia battle that also claimed the life of a great talent like Okeoma.

Although Eberechi dislikes the act of sleeping with an army officer with a "big belly," she is compelled to do so against her wish. Adichie, again reveals how women are degraded during war to the point that one man could take five women to bed at the same time: "And you need to hear what he does with those young-young girls... he takes up to five of them into his bedroom at the same time. Tufia!" (278). This is similar to the report given of a mercenary soldier of whom it is 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" (323). This is nothing but a debasing of women. Also, at the fall of Enugu into the hands of federal troops, it is also reported that the invading soldiers "... force people's wives and daughters to spread their legs for them and cook for them" (285). In any case, women are still the greatest victims for they are vulnerable to all forms of torture, sufferings and sexual violations which traumatize and leave long-lasting scars in their hearts. The climax of Adichie's revelation of the debasing of women during the Civil War is in the scene involving the gang-rape of a bar girl by nine soldiers:

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, her legs wide, wide ajar. She was sobbing, 'please, please, biko.' Between her legs, High-Tech was moving. His thrusts were jerky... The soldiers were cheering High-Tech groaned before he collapsed on top of her... on the floor, the girl was still. Ugwu pulled his trousers down, surprised at the swiftness of his erection. She was dry and tense when he entered her... as he moved quickly and felt his own climax, the rush of fluids to the tips of himself...

He zipped up his trousers while some soldiers clapped. Finally, he looked at the girl. She stared back at him with a calm hate. (365)

This is the kind of injustice and debasing women are usually subjected to at war time.

Destruction of Vital Infrastructure

War often results to the destruction of both individual valuables as well as vital public infrastructures like schools, homes, health institutions, etc., which usually take several years and large amounts of financial resources to rebuild. This implies a situation of backwardness since such resources would have been channeled into further infrastructural development that would have advanced the economy of the nation. Of course, it is easy to destroy but not to build. After an air raid at Umuahia, the narrator describes the state of the previously lively Akwakuma Primary School that was earlier booming with academic activities:

The siren went off ...she looked up and saw the gliding bomber jets, hawk-like, flying startlingly low...they targeted the primary school...Akwakuma Primary School. Two men walked past, in the opposite direction, carrying a blackened corpse. A bomb crater, wide enough to swallow a lorry had split the road at the school entrance into two. The roof of the classroom block was crushed into a jumble of wood and metal and dust. Olanna did not recognize her room. All the windows were blown out... where her pupils played in the sand, a piece of shrapnel had drilled an elegant hole in the ground... (279)

This is similar to the devastation of the previously lively University of Nigeria, Nsukka after the war as the narrator tells:

Ugwu ... stared at the pile of burnt books. They had been heaped together before being set on fire. So he dug through with his hands, to see if the flames had missed any underneath... Odim Street itself was shapeless and tangled with both sides knotted in thick bush... the sofas and curtains and carpet and shelves were gone. The lourvres too had been slipped off and the windows with gaping holes ... dust motes swam ghostlike in the empty room. (418)

Also, Ugwuta is a desolate place when the inhabitants return after the fierce battles. Nwapa equally paints a pathetic picture of the previously lively and

agriculturally-booming community; the kind of situation every right thinking citizen should not allow to occur a second time for any reason whatsoever:

The thatch-houses overlooking the lake were all burnt down. There was evidence of mass graves beside the burnt down houses. The barns were empty. Bullet holes gaped from the walls that were still standing... the great lake had been desecrated beyond description and imagination. Bodies of dead soldiers were floating on the lake. There was no home to return to. (80)

Peaceful Negotiation and Dialogue as a Better Option to Conflict Resolution

History has shown that blood-letting through war or armed struggle is not the best strategy for conflict resolution or way of airing perceived grievances. This is because one form of violence often leads to other forms of violence, the dimensions of which are not usually predictable at the onset. As soon as the 15th January, 1966 coup was executed, Major Hassan Katsina – a former Nigerian Army Chief, with the advantage of foresight, was reported to have told his men that “Coups succeed coups. We will never be at peace again” (Qtd in Siollun 200). This shows that violence is like a chain reaction which, once triggered off, is capable of causing multi-dimensional catastrophic consequences that might take generations to repair if at all repairable. This is precisely what is happening in the Nigerian situation. The ugly seed of violence that germinated, grew and blossomed into a three-year civil war was largely sown on 15th January, 1966 when a group of military men led by Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu adopted a coup approach to bring a long-desired positive change to the messy political terrain that was Nigeria's First Republic. But the change they so desired never came to be and the coup was given diverse interpretations. It was a typical case of violence reproducing a greater violence because on 29th July, 1966 another group of military men staged a counter-coup which till today is adjudged the bloodiest in Nigeria's political history. Since coup is a form of violence, one coup often gives birth to another – a fact that has been clearly demonstrated in the Nigerian situation from January 1966 till recent times. Of course, the catastrophes that followed the January coup in quick successions could not have been envisaged by Nzeogwu and his group when they planned and executed the putsch. This first

coup experiment demonstrates that violence is not the best option for any form of conflict resolution or change in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country like Nigeria for instead of salvaging an ugly national situation as they intended, it rather, gradually degenerated into a civil war - the echoes of which are still being heard, felt and experienced in the country.

It is also instructive to note that Flora Nwapa, an active participant and an administrator in the defunct Biafran government uses the instrumentality of literature to air her bitter regret about the war when Kate the narrator of her novel states:

Tears filled my eyes. How could this happen to us? Who brought this war on us? ... It was madness.

The war was madness... we shouldn't have seceded. It was a big miscalculation... what folly? What arrogance, what stupidity led us to this desolation, to this madness, to this wickedness, to this war, to this death?

When this cruel war was over, there will be no more war. It will not happen again, never again. NEVER AGAIN, never again. Why, we were all brothers, we were all colleagues, all friends, all contemporaries, then...they began to shoot...they began to plunder and to loot and to rape and to desecrate and more, to lie against one another. (Never 47, 49, 70)

Nwapa's painful regret comes on the heels of the huge human and economic costs and consequences of the war. More so, secession was never realized; double losses, with no gains at all. Even till today, one is yet to see any singular gain accruable from the Civil War. Of course there will be none; rather, the war contributes in widening the gulf of division among several Nigerian ethnic nationalities for in remembering the losses of loved ones and possessions on both sides, the ember of acrimony is constantly fanned. This is why the application of peaceful negotiation and dialogue as a conflict resolution strategy and as a means of achieving a desired societal change should be encouraged. It usually produces far better result than blood-letting. In November 2019, it was fascinating and almost unbelievable to hear and see America's president Donald Trump go to the negotiation table with the Taliban after almost two decades of arms struggle in Afghanistan. The constant spilling of human blood through various forms of organized violence, religious or tribal, in Nigeria should be condemned for it shows a total disregard for the sanctity of human life. Rather, the adoption of peaceful negotiation and dialogue as a better option to achieving various forms of

economic, political and social change in the country should be constantly advocated and taken seriously by governments, groups and individuals. If there is no identifiable benefit or gain accruable from the Civil War and Gowon, till date, insists that there is "No victor and no vanquished," then what was the essence of fighting the war in the first place? What was the essence of wasting such a massive number of priceless, precious human lives? Just for nothing? If it was for nothing, then the war would have been avoided through peaceful negotiation and dialogue; then "...Gowon should have followed the agreement he and Ojukwu signed in Aburi..." (Half, 159). The noble agreement mid-wifed by the then Ghanaian leader, Lieutenant-General Joseph Ankarah in that historic Ghanaian town of Aburi if honourably kept would have nipped the crisis in Nigeria at that moment to the bud. It would have given Nigeria a confederal structure which would have made "... the centre less attractive, afford the coordinate states a chance to develop at their true pace..." (Onyema 35); and, above all, would have eliminated all the resource-based tensions Nigeria is still going through till today.

Peaceful negotiation and dialogue, over the years, has proved to be the best conflict resolution strategy, especially when the two parties involved in a conflict have realized its importance, and have decided to abide by agreement reached. Peaceful negotiation and dialogue often leave the parties involved with a win-win situation rather than the might-is-right situation of armed conflict. And it does not breed future bitterness and acrimony that are usually the aftermaths of prolonged armed struggle like the Nigerian Civil War. A recent case of using peaceful negotiation and dialogue as a better alternative to conflict resolution was seen when President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua adopted it in resolving the Niger Delta crisis as soon as he became the leader of the country. This strategy restored peace to the oil-rich region as amnesty was granted to the Niger Delta agitators. Until then, there was no peace in the area; rather a continuous gun battle ensued between the agitators and the Nigerian military. Of course, heavy casualties were recorded on both sides. Not even President Olusegun Obasanjo's "leveling and demolition" approach which he experimented in Odi, Bayelsa State could deter the agitators until Yar'Adua came on board and opted for peaceful negotiation and

dialogue which instantly produced marvelous results - oil production skyrocketed to as high as 2.4/2.5 million barrels per day and soon after nose-dived to 1.4 million barrels as a result of resumed hostilities between the Niger Delta Avengers and the Federal Government of Nigeria headed by General Muhammadu Buhari. Until Buhari discarded his “crush mentality” and approach as advised by Chief Chukwuemeka Ezeife on the 5th June, 2016 issue of The Sun Newspaper a positive result was never achieved. Peaceful negotiation in that situation was particularly important considering the seeming justification of the grievances of the agitators – the pollution and degradation of their environment as occasioned by oil exploration activities as well as poor development of the area despite the fact that oil remains the mainstay and backbone of the Nigerian economy. Taking the approach of peaceful negotiation and dialogue, and consequently citing some mouth-watering developmental projects in the area and by training and empowering the youths of the region economically in order to truly give them a sense of belonging as currently being attempted by the Federal Government through the Amnesty Office and Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs are certainly better approaches, and, of course, far cheaper than the budget for arms and ammunition to be used to “crush” the agitators. Again, remembering that India achieved independence under the leadership of Mahatma Ghandi, without resorting to bloodshed and violent hostilities is heartwarming and worthy of emulation.

It is, however, admissible that in certain rare cases, certain recalcitrant individuals may not yield to peaceful negotiation, demonstration and dialogue as a means of resolving conflicts and bringing about the desired societal change as it was the case in Libya under the tyrannical regime of Muammar Ghadafi. Yet it was a noble thing that peaceful approaches were severally adopted before the approaches of gun and grenade were used to violently remove the long-standing tyrant Ghadafi from power. The fact that an olive branch was first held out before him severally by the people of Libya and he continuously rejected it is a sufficient justification for the manner in which he was ousted. However, peace remains a veritable precursor of development and progress in any nation. Its approach should be advocated, sustained and adhered to by all and sundry. Peace is golden. A consistent application of peaceful negotiation and dialogue to the myriad of crisis that rocked Nigeria’s First Republic would have probably produced a

different and better result than the regrettable Civil War the country was plunged into for about three years. This, to me, is a crucial point Adichie and Nwapa are trying to make with their war novels under study, especially in consideration of the profound regrets and enormous costs and consequences that followed the outbreak of the war as evident in the novels.

On Friday, 8th July, 2016 President Buhari reiterated to some distinguished Nigerians who paid him Sallah homage at the Aso Rock Villa that General Gowon's war-time mantra, "Go on with One Nigeria" is apt at the moment, and that "to keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done." That was in view of the diverse ethnic voices calling for referendum and a possible secession in various parts of the country, especially in the Southeast and South-South. While acknowledging the laudable merits of that age-long mantra, there is the need to emphasize that the mood of the Nigerian state at that moment was quite unique and really deserved the attention of a concerned leadership. Such should not be ignored, belittled or the people's patience taken for granted by the leaders. There should be no grandstanding concerning the sensibilities of Nigerians at any moment. Doing so would be like sitting on a keg of gunpowder. Furthermore, it is vital to note that for ignoring the Aburi Accord, the country seethed for thirty months and managed to come together again afterwards. However, the Nigeria of the sixties is certainly not the same today; the world has changed – the times are no more the same. At the time the Nigerian Civil War was being fought and General Gowon's popular mantra, "To keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done" was being echoed in the airwaves, the Soviet Union was still one. Sudan was also one nation. But the situation is no more the same today. In order to ensure peace, stability and progress in the country there is the need to look into the recommendations and reports of various national conferences convened by various governments before now. If the issues that cause grudges and discontentment among the people persist, peace and stability which are precursors of development will be absent.

CONCLUSION

This study has appraised the application of New Historicism as a critical template in the analysis of the consequences of war in Flora Nwapa's *Never Again* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. It has evaluated the various mind-boggling costs of the Nigerian Civil War which in one way or the other still continue to affect the socio-economic stability of the nation. Although the war has been fought and ended with the mantra of "No victor, no vanquished" which the administration of General Yakubu Gowon invented, the costs and consequences are still clearly visible. Both Nwapa and Adichie have tried to present the issues as reminders that no nation achieves greatness by resorting to avoidable war or violence. In portraying these issues, they have presented many lessons to be learned by both leaders and followers alike; altruistic sacrifices must be made if a better nation must be built and good legacies bequeathed to posterity. Also, it is only the machinery of fair-play, sincere patriotism, justice and equity that can keep Nigeria one and guarantee its unity. These should be the watchwords of all if the old wounds of the war must be permanently healed. The study also presents peaceful negotiation and dialogue as a preferred option to conflict resolution.

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