

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

**GENDERED NARRATIVES AND THE WEST AFRICAN CIVIL WAR
NOVEL: A STUDY OF AMINATTA FORNA'S *THE MEMORY OF LOVE*
AND CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN***

The image shows a large, light blue watermark of the University of Ghana crest. The crest features three golden leaves at the top, a central shield with a golden scrollwork design, and a banner at the bottom. The text 'BY' is positioned to the right of the top part of the crest.

BY

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF
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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is the result of my original research, except for references to other studies, which have been accordingly acknowledged, and that no part of it has been published or presented as part of the requirement for the award of any other degree in any university.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the West African civil war novel by investigating how female novelists present the West African civil war narrative. It examines how the female perspective on the civil war ushers in new dimensions that may be missing in earlier male authored novels. The argument of this thesis is that female novelists writing about West African civil war embark on a social agenda in their novels. Their perspective (narration) is one that goes beyond the blood curdling details of the battlefield, to explore the intimate and interpersonal relationships of characters within the war setting. The study, thus, emphasizes “*how*” a female perspective on war is conveyed through structural or technical innovations. It adopts formalist criticism to examine the techniques used in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Aminatta Forna’s *The Memory of Love*. The study seeks to show how female writers depict war by exploring; (i) how these writers narrate the war scenes with a focus on the intimate and interpersonal relationships (ii) the narrative technique they adopt and (iii) the meaning that emerges from the analysis of the form and structures. In brief, whereas Adichie narrates Biafra by looking at the interpersonal dependence of the characters, Forna recounts the traumatic effects of war on the people of Sierra Leone and advocates a psychological cleansing of the country.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my father, Mr. Ebenezer Amarteifio, whose love, care and rebuke make me strive for higher levels in every aspect of my life.

I also dedicate this work to my mother, Mrs. Stella Amarteifio whose care and prayers have brought me this far.

And to my lovely sister Mrs. Beatrice Kwabena-Adade, my handsome brother Mr. George Amarteifio, and my dearest sweetheart Prince Asiedu Yeboah, I dedicate this work for challenging me to be the best that God wants me to be.



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- Angela Amorkor Amarteifio

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In a discussion of civil war novels in West Africa, one controversial issue has been that the majority of the novels produced in response to the rampant civil wars in Africa, are written by men and deal with the activities of men. (Emenyonu, 2008; Amuta, 1988; Twagiramariya, 1998; Young, 1992; Nwahunanya, 1991; Novak, 2008; Bryce, 1991). To some, war is the preserve of men and “the ultimate test of manhood” (Young 273); a scene that women seldom appear on or get directly involved in. Others say that female war novelists, though in the minority, are not entirely absent from the war writing scene; however, their works focus on the home front rather than on the war front. This makes the female-authored war novel a scarcely read and unappreciated piece. Most of the war novels by female writers are not regarded as “authentic” war novels because “instead of describing terrible battlefields or the dirty politics behind them, they tend to delineate the home front and familiar everyday life in a plain, down-to-earth style using their own experience” (Machiko 60). Sidestepping these controversies, Iddrisu (2011) argues that one main feature of African war novels and in particular, West African war novels, is their preoccupation with trying as much as possible to tell the story as it is. They do not pay attention to the art or style of writing.

In my view, female war novelists of recent times are not only preoccupied with telling the war story but are also mindful of the “art” of telling. That is to say, they do not only strive to tell the war story, but they also employ peculiar narrative

techniques in telling their own war experiences and these are different from those used by male writers. Though I acknowledge that their aim for telling the story is not to focus on the technique of writing, I still uphold the notion that they subscribe to the axiom of art for a social purpose, because their choice of technique is not by coincidence but deliberately selected to project the intended content. That is to say, their technical innovations are meant to serve the purpose of telling the war story. For example, Veronique Tadjo uses polyphonic narration in her war novel, *Shadows of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda* (2002), to project the stark reality of the painful effects of the Rwandan war to readers from the character's perspective. Thus, narration takes a different form (use of 1st personal pronouns) from when it is told by a central narrator. This use of polyphony is relevant in the sense that narration of the effect of war is believable and reliable because characters present their experiences themselves. Emecheta also recounts the Biafran war in *Destination Biafra* (1982) from the female protagonist's first person view point, to project her feminist perspectives of war. By using this female protagonist, she succeeds in giving voice to the "subaltern". In other words, she gives the woman, considered less important in a war setting, the leading role to assert herself in her own voice and space.

Although some critics might object by saying that by and large technique is the novelist's means of capturing a subject matter, I maintain that women writing about occurrences of war deliberately favour certain techniques over others just to communicate their unique experiences of women during war. As Mark Schorer states "technique is the means by which the writer's

experience, which is his subject matter, compels him to attend to it; technique is the only means he has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning, and, finally, of evaluating it” (67). In making this comment, Schorer argues that to speak as a critic is to think along the lines of narrative technique which discovers new subject matter.

Given the importance of technique for expressing subject matter, critics have not paid much attention to narrative technique used in the writing of West African war novels. Critics (Iniobong I. Uko, 2008; Ouma, Christopher, 2011; Akpome, Aghogho, 2013; Eromosele, Femi Ehijele, 2013) have analysed such works from political, ideological and thematic viewpoints, downplaying the contribution of technique to expressing meaning. However, if serious attention is given to narrative techniques in war literature, it will help to “discover more [and] produce works with the most satisfying content, works with thickness and resonance, works which reverberate, works with maximum meaning”(Schorer 67).

Technical devices abound in West African war novels. In a writer’s effort to represent the spectacular, the public, bloody and grotesque nature of the war experience in novel form, he/she chooses suitable techniques to communicate his/her thoughts. While these novels have been largely successful in representing the political, exterior and spectacular war scenes, they have not adequately represented/portraying the personal, private or intimate lives of the people, especially of the women, and how they experience the war. Thus, there is some merit in Ndebele’s argument about the need for post-apartheid South African writers to find a way to represent ‘the ordinary’ in an exciting way instead of

representing the traumatic experiences in their novels. He states that “the ordinary daily lives of people should be the direct focus of political interest because they constitute the very content of the struggle, for the struggle involves people not abstractions” (1984, 52). According to Ndebele, writers of post- Apartheid literature were writing with the focus on the spectacular and gory scenes and settings that stared them in the face. Most of the literature produced had themes and symbols of the monstrous war machines; random massive pass raids; mass shootings and killings; mass economic exploitation; mass removal of people; and the luxurious lifestyle of the Whites. These writings, according to him, are mostly unartistic, crude and too political. In other words, there is more politics than art in them (31). Ndebele’s basic argument is that with the defeat of Apartheid, South African literature, which has seen enough of the spectacular during the war era, must resist the tendency of still focusing on the literature of apartheid. Its focus must now be on the life after the war struggles. This means a shift of attention from the gory war scenes to the ordinary relationships between children, parents, love and marriage.

Arguing from the perspective of Ndebele, the female writers this thesis focuses on claim that the private, intimate and personal lives of people must not be lost during war. Thus, the literature produced on war must not solely be on the conflict and the gory scenes of war. War literature must also deal with the ordinary day-to-day lives of the people.

Modern female war novelists have adopted a unique narrative tool to articulate and express their space, ideology and world view. They subscribe to

Ndebele's analogy of representing the mundane, instead of the spectacular, when projecting their views of war. Unlike the typical description of vivid war scenes that privilege the spectacular, the social and outer world, as presented by West African male authors like; Ahmadou Kourouma, Chukwuemeka Ike and Emmanuel Dongala, female writers tend to privatize the public by portraying the domestic and intimate, inner world of the characters. They narrate the impact of social turbulences on private spaces, on individuals' intimate space, and on the destruction of souls, not just the graphic destruction of physical structures.

A careful study of Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love* (2003) shows how both writers foreground the intimate, ordinary relationships of characters through the order of narration, multiple perspectives and metatext. Adichie uses her unstable time order (that is the movement to the period before and after the war) to avoid focusing on the war scene and to emphasize the unstable relationships of the characters due to the war. Forna briefly moves from present to past through the memory of the characters. This is also done in her bid to escape narrating the war scenes. These two approaches are different in the sense that even though they both indirectly tell the various war scenes (by focusing on the intimate and interpersonal relationships of the characters), they use different means to communicate the domestic, private, interpersonal relationships and the traumatized lives of the characters in their novel unlike the grand display of bloody war scenes.

Adichie and Forna privatize the war novels through narrative techniques adopted to foreground the intimate interpersonal relationships of the characters. And hence the female perspective foregrounds the domestic, interpersonal relationships, private and intimate lives of characters as against the male perspective of war seen through the graphic description of war scenes. In other words, Adichie and Forna discuss intimate, private relationships through multiple perspectives, where narration is not from a central narrator, but from characters' intimate selves describing exactly how war has affected their souls and family. Furthermore, Adichie does a back and forth recounting of the Biafran experience in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, where narration oscillates between different year periods. Forna also narrates the intimate interpersonal lives of characters by focusing on the traumatic effects of the Sierra Leonean war in *The Memory of Love*. Forna recounts the war experience through the memory of her characters. Hence, the description of war scenes is done in retrospect. This back and forth movement in time from the war scene to the intimate and domestic lives of the characters also privatizes their war narration; in that, the focus is not only on the war 'outside' but also on the war 'inside'.

This thesis has adopted formalism as its method of enquiry. It analyses chosen passages on the basis of the style, vocabulary, sentence structure used and the image that emerges from the analysis. This kind of analysis is important because this is a study of how technique represents the mundane and intimate (as opposed to the spectacular/bloody) lives of traumatized people living during and after war situations. It focuses on narrative technique and how aspects of it (order

of time, focalization and the metatext) are employed to foreground the intimate interaction among characters through whom the authors of *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *The Memory of Love* project their varied perspectives on war. In other words, the study focuses on what writers find important to “tell” about the effects of war and “how” they “narrate” these effects. To this end, the thesis discusses how focalization (multiple perspectives), narrative time and the narrative within the narrative (metatext) are used to represent the “private” and intimate relationships among characters. It is pertinent to explain that the thematic focus on private and intimate relationships in female-authored war narratives is informed by the contrast that exists in the male-authored narratives. Whereas male-authored war narratives depict physical violence, antagonism, animosity and the ubiquitous absence of kindred-feeling and familial or interpersonal bonds, female-authored war narratives project the familial relationships, kindred associations, domestic life, the totality of human encounters and experience removed from the battlefield. The focus of this study does not suggest that the male writer’s enterprise of narrating the violent aspect of war is not a legitimate part of the ‘reality’ of war. However, the purpose of the study makes the research strongly emphasise the intensity found in the female authored war novels, as against those of the males.

1.1 Background to the Study

West African countries like Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Liberia, Cote d’Ivoire, have all experienced conflicts and struggles which have led to the loss of lives. Quite a number of novels on war have emerged as a result of these rampant civil wars

because readers “must learn from the past to safeguard the future”¹. In the early 90’s, writing on war experience was the preserve of men. Hence, women writers, because of society’s gendered perception that characterized them as the weaker vessels, did not take on what seemed the “masculine” enterprise of telling about the gruesome nature of the war experience or of narrating a story involving bloodshed and cruelty. A critical look at some of the West African civil war novels reveals that most of the writers are men. For instance, *Sunset at Dawn*, a novel on the Biafran war by Chukwuemeka Ike; Elechi Amadi’s *Sunset in Biafra*; Emmanuel Dongala’s *Johnny Mad Dog*; Ahmadou Kourouma’s *Allah is not Obliged* and Boubacar Boris Diop’s *Murambi, The Book of Bones*. are all male authored. Most of these male authored novels are filled with vivid descriptions of war scenes, chaos, dead bodies, rape and bloodshed. The language of these novels is harsh and sometimes foul. The bloody war scene is vividly described. The men are heroes and there are few or no descriptions of women. For instance, in Kourouma’s *Allah is not Obliged*, the protagonist of the story is a child who joins the army of child soldiers after the death of his crippled mother. The language is harsh and foul with a lot of swear words like “shit” and “fuck”. After reading the novel, one realizes that very little is said of the women in the society or the female characters. The only time they are mentioned is when the armed soldiers are harassing and raping them. There is no account of their lives before, during and after the war. It is almost as if they are non-existent.

¹Wiseberg, Laurie S. “An Emerging Literature: Studies of the Nigerian Civil War” (1975)

Dongala's *Johnny Mad Dog* is no different since it also has the sordid description of war with war jargon and the indiscriminate rape cases where women, including a twelve year old girl, are publicly gang raped by soldiers (303). Each chapter oozes pain. Compared to the other novels mentioned, the style employed in *Johnny Mad Dog* provides a better example to investigate how both genders narrate war and what they deem important to recount, since it has two narrators, a young boy and a young girl, allowing for both the female and male perspectives of the effect of war and what each sex deems important to narrate. There is a vast difference between the stories of these two characters. Lakolé, the female narrator, has an impressive command of the English language and uses words like "maelstrom", "inundate" and "commensurate" (26). She uses well-constructed, grammatically correct English without the influence of her local language or pidgin English. More importantly, her main concern during the war is to ensure the safety of her crippled mother and to find her brother whom they lost during a stampede. In other words, her account is not of the war but about the safety of her family and how they can survive the crisis. Johnny Mad Dog, the male narrator, on the other hand, uses profanities and harsh words as seen in statements such as "wherever I tread, the grass is dead! If they didn't, they'd be *goddamn sorry*" (18); "...the guy was a *fucking ox*" (18); and "*moron*" (38). He has an identity problem because he wants to belong to "something"; to identify with a strong and fearless group so he can be accepted as a strong man. Thus he changes his name (e.g. to Matiti Mabé- "poison weed") and takes pride in being seen as strong and terrifying. He is portrayed as a strong character in the war and

is even made a leader of a section of the army. However, at the end of the novel it is discovered that he is not as strong as he pretends to be.

Thus, the female character tells of war events focusing on the interactions between the characters, the human lives and the way people struggle to keep their sanity. The male character's account, however, is aggressive and frightening with a focus on the army, on war, on the massacre/killings of children in cold blood and the marauding of the Mayi- Dogos². Johnny Mad Dog is a paradoxical character whose account is so bizarre and so jumbled that a reader might fume in rage at his pretense.

However, in the 70's and 80's literary works have shown a change in pattern from the era when civil war novels were the preserve of men to an era when female writers are also taking on the task of war narration. For instance, Flora Nwapa's *Never Again* (1975); Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* (1982); and Rose Adare Njoku's *Withstand the Storm: War Memoirs of a Housewife* (1986) are war novels authored by women. Women writers like Veronique Tadjo, Yvonne Vera, Adichie and Forna have also written novels on wars in both their own countries and on countries around them using various techniques different from those of the male authors. Female writers of war avoid using harsh and vulgar language. They instead use a softer and subtler approach. For instance, Forna decides to recount the Sierra Leonean war story, *The Memory of Love*, through the love relationship between Elias Cole and Saffia, and between Kai and

² A rival tribe, who together with the Chechen tribe are looted and killed by the Dogo Mayis for the mere fact that they belong to the enemy tribe (tribalistic genocide).

Mamakay. The story begins with Cole narrating his “impossible” love story to Adrian, a psychiatrist. The author chooses to start her narration with Elias Cole telling about a particular song he heard in college.

I heard a song, a morning as I walked to college. It came to me across the radio playing on a stall I passed. A song from far way, about a lost love... but in the low notes I could hear the loss this man had suffered. And in the high notes too that it was a song about something that could never be (1).

Unlike the violent war song scene that begins Chukwuemeka Ike’s *Sunset at Dawn*, this one is a love song about a lost love. This opening foreshadows what the story is about and sets a tone for the story that unfolds in the subsequent chapters. The story is in the third person, narrated from two perspectives except Elias Cole’s account which is in the first person. And most of this account is in retrospect when Elias Cole expresses the desire that drove him to acts of betrayal that he tries to justify.

Also, in *Shadows of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda* Veronique Tadjo writes a polyphonic narrative about the Rwandan genocide in 1994 that wiped out one million Tutsis in ethnic violence. She writes the words of numerous survivors from the first person point of view and even gives life to the dead. Even though she also vividly describes the war scenes, she does not tell the story from one point of view. Instead she ‘travels in the heart of Rwanda’ chronicling, what happened from characters’ own point of view, short stories of people’s encounter with the genocide.

Additionally, Adichie uses a unique technique in her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*. She depicts the war through the interpersonal relationships of two sisters, Olanna and Kainene and their respective husbands. The novel is also divided into four parts and moves back and forth in time. It starts from the early sixties, moves to the late sixties, comes back to the early sixties and finally moves to the late sixties. The events of the war are told from the perspectives of three characters: Ugwu, Olanna and Richard. The protagonists in this novel are female characters (Olanna and Kainene) who depict the changing scenes in the life of a woman in a war torn country. The novel tells about the unstable lives of women before, during and after the war. The language used is “soft”, not harsh but descriptive of the changes that a woman goes through and her fight to keep her sanity and family despite the chaos and killings around her.

The works of these women writers, despite the fact that they are in the minority, are worth discussing. My argument is that women writers of war novels narrate war experiences through the relationships of characters instead of describing the war scenes. For instance, the authors of my primary texts choose to talk about the war scenes through the explicit description of sexual relationships between the characters. Such description may or may not be a preferable alternative to the gory, bloody scenes in male-authored war narratives. The argument being presented here relies on the implication that sexual encounters do mirror or suggest the intimate, domestic and interpersonal. The intimacy of this sort of encounter represents an almost quintessential expression of human interpersonality which in this circumstance, is a sensual, amorous, physical,

conspicuous expression of heterosexual human love; this, it can be argued, is in sharp contrast to the violence and animosity epitomized in war front depictions.

Also, the change in perspectives and the back and forth order of time, for Adichie, foregrounds Igbo ethnic-nationalism (what this study realizes as her fight for the Igbo ethnic group to become a nation). According to Amy Novak (2008), Adichie “challenges the concept of the ‘postcolonial’ by connecting the violence in post-independence Nigeria with the centuries of colonial rule” (34). For Forna, the movement to the past is to help account for and highlight the bitter and ruined relationships between and among the characters.

Thus, my aim in this thesis is to examine the narrative techniques of Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Forna’s *The Memory of Love*, with the ultimate goal of discussing how an understanding of the authors’ concerns about war are emphasized through the aspects of narrative techniques mentioned earlier. The analysis of these techniques will lead to a firm statement on the relationship between technique and the author’s gender and show what uniquely constitutes the female war novel. In a nutshell, I intend to examine the narrative time, the multiple perspectives, the metatext and how they/these reflect and foreground the fractured and strained intimate relationships of the characters due to the turbulence. Consequently, the study projects the way in which female authors privatize war novels: where the focus of narration is on the domestic and inner lives of the characters, as against the bloody war scenes of some other war novels.

1.1.1 Evolution of Narrative technique

Technique, to put it simply, is the freedom to vary narrative choices with regard to elements such as the type of narrator and narrative situation; the selection of perspective and voice; the linguistic register (colloquial or formal language); the development of plot with its implied underlying story and the variation of time and order (Hawthorn, 2010). The art of ‘telling’ is an essential component of a novel. Unlike the dramatist who communicates through ‘enactments’, a novelist is successful when he/she is able to effectively communicate his/her thoughts through the ‘telling’ of events. According to Jeremy Hawthorn, “a novel may make us feel that we ‘see’ characters and actions, but we see as a result of what we visualize in response to a telling, not an enactment” (108). Hence, the onus lies on the author to choose a suitable art form to help readers visualize and hear the particular ‘telling’ of the events. In the same manner as the film director who controls the audience’s perspectives of ‘reality’ with his camera angle, crane shot, long shot and eye-line shot, the novelist also has a wide range of techniques to choose from to help influence and to sway readers in a certain preferred angle or perspective.

One factor that is common to the schools of formalist criticism is the emphasis on the ‘art’ (technique) of a literary work. Thus, in order to understand a piece of work, these schools suggest a detailed analysis of the “arts” employed by a novelist. Therefore, meaning could be arrived at via the narrative techniques because a novelist purposely and deliberately chooses ‘how’ to tell a story and presents the story in different modes and techniques to produce different effects.

For instance, the American writer Henry James in writing his novel, *Portrait of a Lady* (1881), chooses to use the Free Indirect Discourse (FID) to help achieve realism. This is a unique feature of the novel which “provides readers with character’s speech, thoughts or even unconsidered attitudes without the use of direct attribution by tag phrase (‘she thought’, ‘he said’) or even quotation marks” (Hawthorn 232). Joseph Conrad adopts the frame narrator technique to examine his concerns about the African continent and the life of the people in *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Thus, Marlow, in lieu of Conrad, “projects the image of Africa as ‘the other world’, the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization” (Achebe 15). Barbara Kingsolver also uses five female child narrators to tell a Westerner’s perspective of Africa (the Congo) in *The Poisonwood Bible* (1998). At the level of analysis one can say that through the use of child narrators, Kingsolver is saying that Europeans are “innocently” ignorant about Africa. And this view works both ways, in that for an American reader, the use of child narrators portrays the view that the African continent is a world ‘they’ cannot comprehend but for an African reader, the narrative technique means that just like these western child narrators, Europeans are too fickle minded to understand the complex lives and cultures of Africans. Therefore, with the kind of technique used, readers get an “objective” view (one that is not influenced by authors’ perspectives) about the African continent different from Conrad’s subjective view realized by his characterization of Marlow.

In this same light, West African war novelists also use narrative techniques in varied ways to depict the rampant wars and the gruesome effects on

a nation and the African continent as a whole. Some West African war novels like *Sunset in Biafra* (1973), *Sunset at Dawn* (1993), *Johnny Mad Dog* (2005) and *Allah is not Obligated* (2006) use unique narrative techniques to present their accounts of the war in their respective countries. However, most of these novels also use similar techniques that provide a pattern of “how” war novels are told. For instance, they give an account of “actual” war scenes, bloody battlefields and vivid settings that depict the loss of lives, destruction of property, refugees, economic strife etc. The language used is not simple and “polite” but filled with war jargon, foul language and swear words like Ahmadou Kourouma’s use of “shit”, “goddamn it”.

It is worth noting that Isidore Okpewho’s *The Last Duty* (1976) uses a different narrative technique in terms of the graphological style of presentation, focalization and language that articulates a man’s duty in the Biafran war. He deviates from the “traditional” style of prose presented in chapters, but divides the narration into three parts with each chapter bearing a different heading (a proverbial quote). Even though he uses the first person narrator, he makes the characters speak for themselves and articulates the characters’ attitude, temperament and age through their own account of the war. For instance, Ogbenovo’s thoughts are presented in a childlike manner; “i went to show Onome, i cried” (15) and portrays Toje as malicious from the steps he takes to imprison Oshevire, prostitute his wife (Aku) and bully Odibo. Okpewho’s concept that to do one’s duty is to do the honest and honourable thing is foregrounded by his style and choice of narrative technique which makes

the characters talk and create their own personalities through their roles and speech.

Similarly, this thesis studies “how” the intimate and domestic relationships of characters living under war situations are foregrounded by the narrative techniques adopted; how war is expressed differently by these writers due to their tendency to tell the intimate, private and inner lives of the characters affected by war and turbulence. In other words, female writers of war, because of the focus of their writing, privilege certain techniques which are different from those of the male authors and this study seeks to study and analyse this difference through the structure adopted in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Forna’s *The Memory of Love*.

1.1.2 Narrative Time

In a structural analysis of any novel, the manipulation of time is an important element that must not be taken for granted. Gerard Genette’s category of time from his seminal study, *Narrative Discourse* (1980), discusses the numerous ways in which time can be organized in a narrative to bring out the author’s intended meaning. Since a story is not static in time and can only function within the context of a certain time period, narrative time is an essential part in any given story. Narrative time refers to the relationship between the time covered by the events of the story and the time of the discourse. Hence in analysing the role of time, Genette suggests three sub-categories of Time: *Order*, *Frequency* and *Duration*. Order has to do with the arrangement of events in the narration, which

action comes first and which one is delayed, highlighted or glossed over. The event or character highlighted with more prominent roles determines an author's main concern. Frequency is the number of times a particular event is "told" and Duration is the discrepancy between story time and narrative time. One must, however, note that novelists are not historians, even when they write about a historical event. Thus, they are not bound to follow the chronological time of the historical account they narrate. A novelist may choose a suitable time structure to communicate a particular theme.

Adichie and Forna adopt a back and forth time order where the account of the war events moves in between the past and the present, before, during and after the war. Adichie uses this order of narration to avoid the focus on the war front. Thus anytime she moves from the narration of one scene to the other, she does this to intentionally avoid focusing on the war scenes. This back and forth movement in time is also symbolic of the unstable life of the characters since their once comfortable lives are thrown into frenzy/turmoil because of the war.

1.1.3 Multiple Perspectives (Focalization)

Mood, according to Genette, is the "name given to the different forms of the verb that [are] used to affirm more or less the thing in question, and to express... the different points of view from which the life or the action is looked at" (161). Mood is a narrative category of Genette's narrative discourse which is different from Voice. "Voice" refers to the one who speaks during the narration, such as the narrator but "Mood" is the one who sees, in other words

mood is the one from whose point of view what is narrated/spoken is seen. Narrative mood is made up of two subcategories: Distance and Perspective. Distance refers to how much or how little is told and how directly or indirectly a story is told. It is simply the distance between the narrator and the information. In other words, it is a play between mimesis which “imitates” rather than “tells” and diegesis which is pure narration. Perspective, the second mode of regulating information, is also known as point of view. Thus to classify mood in terms of point of view, two elements are worth noting: the narrator and the character. This is because both elements influence the perspective given in the anecdote/story. A more modern and abstract term, according to Genette, is Focalization, which corresponds to Brooks and Warren’s expression, “focus of narration”

Focalization is the view point or perspective from which a narration is seen, felt and understood. It could be a zero, internal or external focalization. Zero/Non-focalization is when the narrator knows more than a character, That is, a third person or omniscient narrator who is able to tell the mind and thoughts of the characters. As Genette puts it, it is when the narration is a “vision from behind.” An example is Henry Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* (1742). Internal focalization is when the narrator says only what the character knows: when the point of view is from the one who sees. In other words, internal focalization is perceived when the narrator and the character are equal, with neither of them knowing more than the other. Internal focalization is made up of three types: the fixed, the “variable” and the multiple. For instance, in Barbara Kingsolver’s novel, *The Poisonwood Bible*, she makes use of internal focalization, specifically, the multiple or the epistolary type of the internal focalization, where several

characters tell the same story from different perspectives to help bring out her views on the image of Africa in general and the Congo in particular. Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness*, on the other hand, adopts the fixed type of internal focalization where narration briefly begins in the third person and moves to the first person (Marlow). Both approaches bring out different interpretations to the novel.

In like manner, Adichie and Forna adopt internal focalization, specifically the “variable” type, where they have one narrator, the third person, whose narrative is mixed with several shifts in points of view, unlike the “multiple” type where several characters narrate the events of the novel. Thus, Adichie tells her story using the third person but from the perspectives of Ugwu, Olanna and Richard. Forna narrates from the perspective of Kai and Adrian through the third person, except Elias Cole's account which is told from the first person, by himself, and mostly from his memory. The variable type of internal focalization used by both writers heightens the indefinite and declining state of the interpersonal relationships of characters.

1.2 Objectives of Study

This study intends to critically analyse the war fiction of Adichie and Forna with the objective of showing *how* these female writers narrate the war experiences.

My objective, thus, is to:

- i. Investigate how narrative technique as a compositional tool gives the novel a particular character.

- ii. Assess the narrative techniques that distinguish female war novels from those written by male writers.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

This thesis uses formalism and a conceptualized framework of art for a social purpose as its theoretical framework, for the analysis of the stories. Formalism is a system of analysis which argues the supremacy of the text in interpreting and unravelling what a text means. In this regard, formalists treat biographical or historical data and authorial intent as existing outside of the world of the text and thus, not privileged or relevant information in a critical formalist exegesis.

The aim of formalism is to focus on the text as opposed to the status of the author or the reader in literary analysis. The formalist's objective however, is to get away from the social content of literature in order to focus on the evolution of literary style and genre. With this, formalists reject all extra literary approaches to literature and place emphasis on the aesthetic form: beauty of expression and art for art's sake in terms of critical approach. However, the technical innovations of Adichie and Forna are not created in isolation but are meant to serve the purpose of telling the war story. It is an art employed not for mere art's sake but as an appropriate and effective means of projecting the experiences of the war and how it affects and destabilizes interpersonal relationships. Consequently, this thesis does not only end at a critique of formalism as a system of enquiry but

supports the findings with a conceptual framework, which the study terms “arts for a social purpose”. This framework will give a further interpretation of the results of the close reading of the texts suggested by formalists to bring out the narrative techniques and new meanings. But a close reading will go a step further to justify that the use of these technical innovations is a means to an end, which is the social function.

Hence, this study intends to employ formalist methodology as an interpretive tool to uncover the social relevance or purpose embedded within the text. In other words, the interpretive logic that drives or influences this study assumes that an investigation into the form or structure of the literary text should not be undertaken in a vacuum; it should have a purpose and this purpose is ultimately to reveal the social “obligation” and didacticism of the text. As Achebe asserts in his essay, “The Novelist as Teacher”, “the writer and his society live in the same place” (32) and not at the “fringe of society” (32). He is entirely against the notion of “Art for Art’s sake” which is the intrinsic value of art, divorced from any didactic or moral function; art that needs no aesthetic justification. He believes literature must teach the cultural values and the historical past of the society and must have a moral. Thus, he says, “I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past—with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God’s behalf delivered them” (30). In sum, the study investigates the form of Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Forna’s *A Memory of Love* in order to reveal the social

projects found in them; how “the telling” of the wars suggests inherently distinct perspectives and focuses.

This thesis also draws from Genette’s study, *Narrative Discourse* as well as Mark Schorer’s “Technique of Rediscovery” (1948) and Ndebele’s “Rediscovery of the Ordinary” (1986). Schorer’s essay supports the supremacy of technique over subject matter to discover new meanings. He says, “Modern criticism has shown us that to speak of content as such is not to speak of art at all, but of experience; and that it is only when we speak of the achieved content, the form, the work of art as a work of art, that we speak as critics” (Schorer 67). Ndebele’s essay helps in linking the technical discussion to thematic issues of how war is represented by these female novelists. Ndebele’s argument is that post-Apartheid writers must shift from the narration of the spectacular bloody scenes of their traumatic experience and to represent the ordinary in an exciting way. The argument of this thesis is that female writers have found the technique to represent the home-front in an exciting way. Thus, as a system of enquiry into the literary depths of both Adichie and Forna, this thesis prioritizes the study of *how* a novel is narrated as a preferred medium of telling *what* the novel is narrating.

1.4 Methodology

Formalism as an interpretive tool examines the literary text based on a critical investigation of form. Thus to the formalist, appreciating the form of a text is a

prerequisite not only for understanding the compositional structure of the text but also for decoding meaning. The three genres of literature (poetry, prose, drama) reveal distinct forms. In other words, the compositional structure of the three genres provides the formalist with three unique systems of appreciating texts. Prose writing differs from the other genres in terms of its complex plot, multiple narrative techniques and complex characters. Thus, the novel, which represents prose writing of a lengthy nature, complicates the study of the compositional structure.

For the purpose of this study, the thesis adopts a formalist methodology that investigates the form of the novel by looking particularly at the formalist elements of narrative time, multiple perspectives and metatext. To understand how female writers perceive war differently in the chosen novels, the study discusses how the female writer employs these formalist elements with the objective of establishing a nexus between the form of the text and its social purpose. The study adopts a formalist procedure that first investigates how narrative time is employed in the texts and how time communicates issues that are peculiar to female war novelists. The thesis also does a formalist inquiry into the multiple perspectives and the metatext. In a narrative, the lens through which we perceive the story influences our interpretation. Thus, this study employs the element of multiple perspectives to investigate how the story is told and how the lens through which we perceive the story influences our interpretation of the text. A formalist criticism proposes an analysis of the individual words on a page. However, since prose fiction has a complex plot and complex characters, the thesis

studies the narrative techniques looking at the three aspects earlier mentioned instead of individual words. After a critical reading, the study identifies three narrative techniques employed by both writers but used in different ways and analyses each of them, studying what the authors say about the respective anecdotes of wars through the narrative elements. It analyses the narrative time and studies what is said at a given period, where the narration oscillates and the relevance of such shifts. It then proceeds to study the points of view by analysing, one after the other: the different perspectives and their relevance. It finally studies the metatext and its relevance. The study does all these with the objective of investigating how these techniques communicate a female perspective on war.

1.5 Justification

This thesis is a study on **how** some female authors represent war situations in their countries. The study sets out to discuss Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Forna's *The Memory of Love*. The two novels are selected for the reasons that both are West African novels on civil war in the authors' respective countries, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Both depict wars that started with political grievances and finally became civil wars. One thing that stands out when reading these novels is the style of writing adopted by the writers. The manner in which they narrate the war stories of their respective countries is different from what is done by some male writers of war. Both discuss the impact of social turbulence on private spaces, on individuals' intimate space and on the destruction of souls and not just graphic destruction of physical structures. In other words, both novels

narrate the war with a focus on the domestic and the inner lives of characters. The novels discuss the issues concerning the civil war using similar narrative techniques like the arrangement of the time structure or the order of narration and the third person narrator through multiple perspectives to foreground and discuss the intimate sexual relationships of characters (as opposed to the vivid bloody war scene), and the telling of another story within a story (**metatext**). These novels are also selected for the reason that they both narrate sex and sexual relations differently from earlier war novels that only talk about sex through the violent raping of women and children.

1.6 Organization of Study

This thesis is organized in five chapters.

Chapter One introduces the thesis and discusses the theoretical framework, objectives of study, justification and the organization of the study.

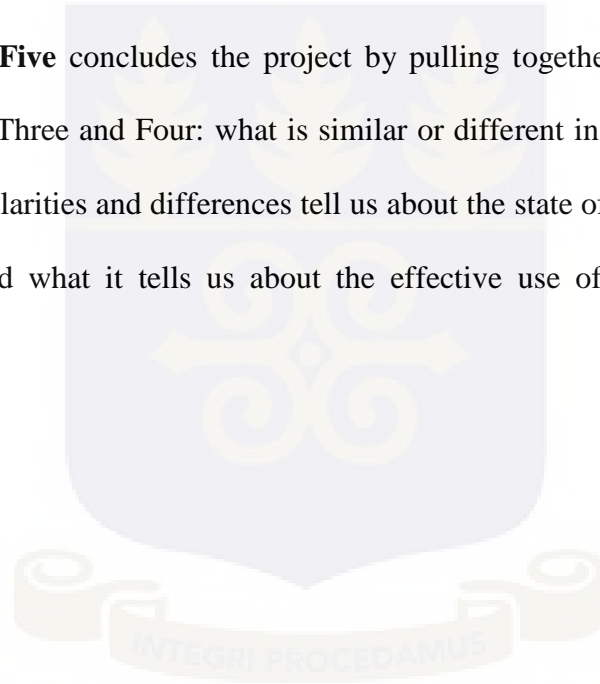
Chapter Two is a review of available literature concerning wars in Africa and some West African war novels and establishes the gap created by these discussions which this thesis attempts to fill.

Chapter Three analyses Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. This chapter focuses on Adichie's use of narrative techniques and how she articulates

her views on war through selected techniques. It discusses the three identified narrative techniques; multiple perspectives; order of narration and metatext as well as their relevance to the narration.

Chapter Four analyses Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love*. It studies the use of narrative techniques and how, through selected techniques, multiple perspectives, order of narration and the metatext, she articulates her views on the psychological trauma of war on the entire Sierra Leonean nation.

Chapter Five concludes the project by pulling together the issues discussed in Chapters Three and Four: what is similar or different in the primary novels, what these similarities and differences tell us about the state of the war novels in (West) Africa and what it tells us about the effective use of the narrative technique.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present a critical review of available war literature with the aim of establishing the case that female war novelists are not only preoccupied with a narration of the thematic and ideological dimensions of war story but are also mindful of the technique used in telling the story. Consequently, this chapter is a discussion on civil war and war writings that brings out the relevance of structure in the analysis and interpretation of a text. This will lead to a firm statement on the relationship between technique and the author's gender and how this relationship affects the development of events.

To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the focus of this thesis, this chapter discusses formalist structures as a theoretical framework, to bring out the importance of structure in the analysis of a text. It also discusses the literary representation of the war genre in terms of "form" and "content" and its ability to represent reality. The thesis further looks at the relationship between writers' technique and the gender, i.e. how the writers' gender influences her narration of the war and how different that is from males writing on war. Finally, this chapter reviews relevant essays on the primary texts with the objective of advancing certain claims and criticisms made on the war genre and finding the gap in earlier criticisms. This gap created is what makes this study a necessary one.

2.1 Formalism and Formalist Structures

Formalism is a branch of literary criticism that rejects the traditional method of analysing literary works of art which says that, literature is an expression of its age; that we must be careful to ask of it only what its own age asked; that we must judge it only by the historical, or authorial background. Formalism debunks this notion and pays attention to the internal structures of the language of poetry (literature). The propounders of this theory (Alexander Veselovsky, Alexander Potebnya, Victor Shklovski and the Prague School of structuralism) believe that arts, like any other social system, has meaning because of the internal inter-relationships of the words and not necessarily what it says about the world. Formalists perceive the text “as a unified collection of literary, artistic and narrative devices and conventions which may be analysed objectively to achieve meaning”. They believe in the power of words on the page to achieve meaning. Therefore, for a critic to engage in a formalist activity is for that critic to do a close reading of the work, that is the study of its poetics, its form (the linguistic and artistic matter) to arrive at the central meaning. There are three models or schools of formalist criticism. The Russian formalists advocate (for) a close or critical analysis of the form to uncover the artistic and the literal meaning of the text. This type of critical analysis will eventually lead to a ‘de- familiarization’ of meaning. That is to say that a new perspective will emerge to debunk the old perspective. Another school of formalism is Roman Jakobson’s form of communication. This model also believes in the centrality of the message which can be seen with the help of other functions of communication. The writer is the initiator of communication (message) to the reader who has a connotative

function. That is to say that he interprets the message received according to his own volition and personal influences and values. Within the message is the referential approach of communication used mostly by scientists. However, literature uses the contact (the phatic function) and the code (the metalinguistic function) means to arrive at the central message due to the fact that the language of literature is the language of paradox, and this language is emotive and not like the referential language of science and other forms of communication. The third method of formalist criticism is the methodology of American New Criticism. This form of criticism was popularized by Cleanth Brooks, Robert Warren, W. K Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley. The New Criticism is somewhat related to the works of critics like F.R Leavis, I.A Richards and William Empson in England. These critics were of the view that criticism involves close analyses of words on a page with close attention to their connotative, denotative and etymological meaning and then of an analysis of the allusions and literary devices. Reading a poem (literature), for these critics, involves a step by step identification of key imagery and paradoxes drawn by the internal linguistic patterns. Then a careful tracing of how these images bring out some tensions which are resolved by the same linguistic and artistic patterns is the belief and work of the new critics. New critics believe that there are always some minor tensions that culminate in a major tension and in the end, all the tensions including the chief tension are reconciled. Thus the common trait that runs through all these schools of criticism is that words on the page are powerful and meaning can be derived from analyzing them exclusively.

However, the idea of an objective judgment of the text without the ‘intent’ of the author and his background influencing it is flawed. In the 1920s and 1930s, I. A Richards and Louise Rosenblatt identified a wide range of responses that a reader could have in the interpretation of one text. When three people read a particular text, there will be a variety of meanings and interpretations of that one text. These responses will be influenced by the reader’s experiences and feelings. Thus Richards and Rosenblatt came up with the Reader-Response criticism which relies on the experiences that transpire when the reader and the work come together. Hence the reader moves to the centre position as against the text in the case of the formalists. Quoting from Ann B. Dobie’s *Theory into Practice*, Rosenblatt explains that,

At the aesthetic end of the spectrum,... the reader’s primary purpose is fulfilled *during* the reading event, as he fixes his attention on the actual experiences he is living through. This permits the whole range of responses generated by the text to enter into the centre of awareness, and out of these materials he selects and weaves what he sees as the literary work of art (*The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, 27-28).

Therefore, Reader-Response criticism is somewhat an inescapable phenomenon when it comes to decoding and analysing the meaning or implication of words and events in a text. As Tompkins rightly says in his introduction to his Reader-response criticism:

...a poem cannot be understood apart from its results. Its “effects”, psychologically and otherwise

are essential to any accurate description of its meaning, since that meaning has no effective existence outside of its realization in the mind of readers (1980, ix).

One challenge with reader-response criticism is that it runs the risk of creating what Wimsatt and Beardsley referred to as the “affective fallacy” or the emotions of readers superseding the literary or textual analysis in the process of interpretation. However, its assumptions are that the idea of an “impersonal” and objective interpretation is flawed because it is a human who engages with the text whose feelings and emotions affect the reading. Thus, Wimsatt and Beardsley disagree with the formalist notion of the autonomy of the text as the sovereign tool of interpretation of literature.

Nonetheless, these forms of analysing just the structures of literature have received a number of criticisms. Principal among them is that formalist criticism has elevated the autonomy of the text to the exclusion of the social function of literature. Such criticism is said to have lost the direct link that literature has with society. The assumption that a text could be read without recourse to social and personal influence is problematic, because reading is a constant and gradual process of interpretation. Thus, it requires that individuals engage with the text. Engaging with the text is also a process whereby the reader or critic desires, whether unintentionally or deliberately, to make the text socially relevant. Hence, a reader is tempted to go against the demands of formalists by looking outside the text to create meaning and by resorting to the social effects or the background of the text to assist in the analysis and interpretation of the text. Texts contain

words and words belong to a human system of language that has contextual, idiomatic and pragmatic implications. Thus in interpreting a word (the ‘literary’ or ‘textual’ word), the social does and can play a significant role.

2.2 Writing War

Literature with themes of war and conflict is a genre that has been in existence since antiquity and the period of medieval epic poetry. Epic poems of that period such as *Beowulf*, *Legend of King Arthur* and Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* are writings full of descriptions of bravery, heroic deeds, battles, glorifying war and violence. These epic poems and stories with their themes of heroism and bravery influenced novels such as Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*, Shakespeare’s *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Richard III* and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.

In modern literature, representing or recounting a traumatized experience can be a painful and difficult task. Writers are faced with the difficulty of either sustaining history as Achebe does with *Things Fall Apart*, (irrespective of the fact that it is not a war novel) or fictionalizing the historical account and repressing some sordid and violent scenes or even compromising on some of the facts. This is the point where the issue of representing “content” and “form” in war literature arises. When it comes to the topic of “form” and “content”, most of us will readily agree that literary works from Greek mythology has been faced with the problem of aesthetics. The main concern has been the problem of structural balance between form and content (Nwahunanya, 1991). In other words, there

has been a conflict between narrative structures, form(sjuzhet) and story (content or fabula) in the writing of war novels.

Consequently, writers of war novels are faced with the challenge of balancing form and content since one is not able to draw a line between the historical veracity of a work and a writer's artistic reflections of historical reality (Nwahunanya, 1991). A controversial issue that has developed in recent discussions about the African war novel has been whether fictional writing on civil war can represent reality due to the challenge of simultaneously presenting history and adhering to the formal aesthetic requirements of fictional art. For instance, a war novel is a fictional account of history. Hence, the war novelist is faced with the challenge of balancing the historical facts which are the actual battle scenes, dates and actual names of places and people, with the imaginative or fictional creation of the novel. That is, in a process of recreating war scenes, the writer might overlook some of the actual happenings of the war. In a well detailed article, "War in African Literature: Literary Harvest, Human Tragedies", Emenyonu emphasizes this notion that;

[T]he creative writer- novelist, poet, playwright, or short story writer who draws inspiration and themes from war situations has other challenges to confront. The imaginative work (a by-product of war), must still meet certain known aesthetic and critical standards by which it should be judged as a work of art. (xii)

On this same point, Maurice Taonezivi Vambe, quoting Prime Minister Mugabe of Zimbabwe on the discussion of the problems and challenges of

fictionalizing the Zimbabwean war experience, says that the problem with such fictionalized histories is that they are written by “onlookers”, those that did not “wield the gun”, who were not present during the war experience itself and thus cannot produce a reliable or “authentic” history of the liberation struggle³ (87) Adichie inadvertently falls under such criticism. She was not an active participant in the war experience but only relied on what she had gained through her extensive research and had been told by her relatives. As a result, there is the tendency to stereotype the works of such writers as not authentic, as unreliable and unreal. I, however, do not agree with such conclusions. In my opinion the problem about these writers not being present during the war must not necessarily stop or hinder them from writing about it. And their works should not be seen as less authentic or unreliable, as the then Prime Minister Mugabe asserts. We may acknowledge that writing is looked upon as a therapeutic process of recovery where what is written becomes the constructed memories of a group of people. Hence, a writer’s work must not only be authentic if he/she was directly a part of the history he/she writes about. If that is the case, then Achebe’s work, *Things Fall Apart*, must also not be seen as authentic since he was also not an active participant in the colonial period of Nigeria, even though he lived in the colonial period. We must not create stereotypes of these writers since the challenge with stereotypes is that they “straitjacket our ability to think in complex ways” (Adichie 43).

³ “Problem of Representing the Zimbabwean War of Liberation in Mutasa’s *The Contract*, Samupindi’s *Pawns* & Vera’s *The Stone Virgins*”.

Irrespective of such criticisms, a number of African writers have written quite a number of novels on civil war. (Amadi, 1973; Emecheta, 1994; Diop, 2006; Dongala, 2005; Ike, 1993; Kourouma, 2006; Okpewho, 1976; Tadj. 2002). They did not allow the challenges that come with writing war novels to limit and cripple them. Thus they have produced novels that Nwahunanya (1991) considers as;

[...] war novels [that] would be seen to reveal various degrees of artistic success, and this is often determined by the extent of each writer's weaving of history into art and by the degree of attention each writer pays to such aspects of novelistic art as plot, language (especially dialogue), and characterization. (441)

Further on the controversial issue of narrating the war novel, Ndebele has noticed that South African protest fiction privileges the existence of “visible symbols of the overwhelming oppressive South African social formation appear[s] to have prompted over the years the development of a highly dramatic, highly demonstrative form of literary representation” (31). This focus on representing the political, Ndebele says, has disregarded the artistic value or the artistic perspectives of their writings. War novels, especially those authored by men (Dongala, 2005; Ike, 1993; Kourouma, 2006), usually narrate their historical events concentrating on the war scenes without an intimate or deep look at the individual lives of those experiencing the war. Their account of the war is visual. Even though their narration is about characters and how the war affects their lives and experiences, they do not concentrate their narration on the intimate, private

and domestic scenes of the characters. Most of the scenes in such novels talk about bloodshed, ammunition, soldier camps and the graphic description of violent scenes with “harsh” war language.

One might think that when it comes to the narration of war experiences, the right and valid thing to do is to chronicle the war scenes. This thought is what deludes most West African male writers of war to the extent that even though they narrate the lives that suffer, under such traumatic circumstances, their main concentration is on bloody war scenes. For instance, in Kourouma’s *Allah is not Obligated*, a child protagonist joins an army of child soldiers after the death of his crippled mother. From then, we see the experiences he goes through as a result of the war and how this war affects his life and experiences. However, the writer does not fail to vividly describe the war scenes. The language used is harsh and foul with a lot of swear words like “shit”, “fuck”. “I’ve been in Liberia and killed lots of guys with an AK47 (we call it a ‘kalash’) and got fucked up on kanif and lots of hard drugs” (3)... then in “that small fucked-up African state, Sierra Leone” (157). And after reading the novel, one realizes that very little is said about Birahima’s (the main character in *Allah is not Obligated*) intimate and interpersonal life. The concentration is on the child soldier but the war scene is also foreground; not at the background. Dongala’s *Johnny Mad Dog* is no different. He narrates the war “through the crossed subjectivities of his characters—both victims of the absurd” (Sadai, 313). Every chapter narrated is a visual representation of war and child soldiers like Johnny Mad Dog who changes

his name at every point just so he will be regarded as a fierce soldier. Despite the fact that Dongala and Kourouma focus their narration on the child soldier and what a child has to go through during war, it still doesn't take away the fact that they focus their narration on the war scenes. In order for the authors to effectively bring out the experiences of the child soldiers for readers to "hear" and "feel" them, they resolved to "directly" narrate the graphic, vivid and picturesque war scenes. Adichie and Forna, on the other hand, focus on the interpersonal and sexual relationships to tell the war experiences without necessarily merging the discussion on relationships with vivid war descriptions and harsh and foul language. This different way of narration is what, in my view, needs to be studied.

Even though Ndebele's writings have been criticized by Theophilus T. Mukhuba for doing the very thing he frowns on⁴; writing political statement through novels instead of a successful literature, I am of a similar opinion that the focus of such novels on the spectacular and political diverts attention from the mundane, ordinary and other things such as artistic beauty. War literature needs not be solely focused on war scenes. What about the lives involved in the war? What about their feelings, struggles and pain? What are the experiences they have and the changes that occur in their lives? How do we know what they experience as well if that is not chronicled, but mixed up with war descriptions? If the concentration of war novels is solely on war scenes, with little concentration of the intimate interpersonal lives of the characters, these little but significant detail

⁴ <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/sa/ndebele/mukhuba1.html>

details will be lost in history. One can tell war experiences of a character without necessarily detailing the vivid, bloody and graphic war scenes. There must be a shift from the monumental representation of graphic destruction of bodies with bloody scenes of war to the everyday, intimate lives of the people living war situations. Hence, Dan Ben-Amos shares similar sentiments as he advocates for “a shift in the perception of collective memory from the monumental to the mundane, from the archives to everyday life” (1999, 297).

Although the aforementioned Prime Minister Mugabe’s point of view about war narratives may be valid to an extent, he overlooks an emerging kind of war literature that I consider essential in dealing with war writing in Africa. There is a new generation of contemporary war writers such as Adichie and Forna who have distinguished themselves. In terms of ‘style’, ‘form’ and ‘structure’ of narration, these two writers are unique in their representation of war experiences. The common struggle to balance “form” and “content” is not evident in their war narratives. Just like their predecessor, Okpewho, who is able to artistically manipulate language, point of view and stylistic idiosyncrasies such as dashes and ellipses, figures of speech like anaphora, litotes, and rhetorical questions among others to beautify the work and to discuss the Biafran war (Nnaji, 76), these female writers also adopt an aesthetically pleasing narrative form (focalization; metatext; order of narration) which does not shroud the meaning or the content they seek to portray. Despite the fact that their works are on the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean wars respectively, their focus of narration is not just the war scenes but the personal, private and intimate lives of characters.

2.3 Relationship between Author's Gender and Technique

A number of researches have been made on gender and language use. These researches have brought to light some differences in the use of language between male and female writings. There is the dominance or deficit theory propounded by Robin Lakoff, and Otto Jespersen. This theory is grounded in some assumption about the language of women being an inferior version of that of the male due to some peculiar linguistic features typical of women's speech (e.g. incoherent sentences, inferior command of syntax, less extensive vocabulary and non-innovative approach to language). However, this theory has been criticized and refuted by scholars such as Dale Spender, Janet Holmes and Pamela Fishman to be in itself deficient and unsatisfactory. Nonetheless, the debate still goes on as Deborah Tannen and Holmes argue that female talk more about relationships than males and they use compliments and apologies more often than the male counterpart. They also claim that females are more disposed to using more linguistic devices that solidify relationships.

A group of scholars have further conducted research on the topic, "Gender, Genre and Writing Style in Formal Written Texts". According to this research, there are some significant differences between male writings and female writings. The study claims that the male writer talks more about objects, while women discuss relationships in their writings. This difference, according to their finding, is because females use pronouns which refer to animate things while the male use 'specifiers' that only give information about an object. They argue that;

Female writers use more pronouns that encode the relationship between the writer and the reader (especially first person singular and second person pronouns), while males tend to not to refer to it. Second, female writers more often use personal pronouns that make explicit the gender of the “thing” being mentioned (third person singular personal pronouns), while males have a tendency to prefer more generic pronouns. Both of these aspects might be seen as pointing to greater “personalization” of the text by female authors (10)

In other words, the study says that a writer may use certain lexical items and language based on his/her gender and what appeals naturally to them. This unique difference between the writer’s gender and their choice of language and technique is what this research seeks to study with the West African Civil war novels written by women. Furthermore, Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie propounds these features in her editorial: “The female writer and her commitment”, which is of value to this study. She writes that feminists have posited that the woman writer has two major responsibilities; first to tell about being a woman, secondly to describe reality from a woman’s view (5). This perspective is what Adichie and Forna project in their novels. As mentioned early on, these authors narrate the woes and plights of women living in a war environment and give women and children privileged roles in their narrative, quality which hitherto have been ignored in the male narratives.

Ogundipe-Leslie further says that;

The female writer should be committed in three ways: as a writer, as a woman and as a Third World person; and her biological womanhood is implicated in all three. As a writer,

she has to be committed to her art, seeking to do justice to it at the highest levels of expertise. She should be committed to her vision, whatever it is, which means she has to be willing to stand or fall for that vision. She must tell her own truth, and write whatever she wishes to write. Being committed to one's womanhood would necessitate taking up the tasks discussed earlier in this essay. It would mean delineating the experience of women as women, destroying male stereotypes of women... that the female writer should be committed to her third world reality... [which] implies being politically conscious, offering readers perspectives on and perspectives of colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism as they affect and shape our lives and historical destinies. (10-11)

This, thus, emphasizes the relationship between an author's gender and their writing. Obviously, from the above discussion, this study can say that the female writer will write her novels in a particular way using lexical items that appeal to her naturally to fulfill certain commitments she has as a female writer. This kind of writing, in my opinion, is what Adichie and Forna do differently from the male authors in their respective novels on war.

2.4 Reviews of *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *The Memory of Love*

There has been a flux of interest in the works of third generation writers like Adichie, Forna, Fall, Vera, Tadjó etc. Quite a number of the commentaries, reviews and critiques of their oeuvres have flooded the literary scene. However, the bulk of criticisms have neglected the deft use of narrative technique in the narration of the events of these novels. A cursory look at some criticisms of

Adichie's work, specifically, *Half of a Yellow Sun* suggests that most of these works adopt either a thematic analysis or an ideological criticism.

For instance, Christopher Ouma does a thematic study of *Half of a Yellow Sun* in the essay, "Composite Consciousness and Memories of War in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*". His aim is to examine the novel as "constructing a composite consciousness of the war" (15) and he does this through the houseboy character Ugwu, aiming to examine the "project of memory, especially trauma memory, and how it is played out in the daily lives of the protagonists" (15). He says that Adichie, in her novel, moves from the telling of the war story which is "archived" or "monumental" to the "mundane" or everyday life, where she tells the realities of daily life in the context of war. (16). He says further that;

[T]he voice of Ugwu the houseboy represents an interesting critique of an elite consciousness of the Biafran war, especially how it is remembered... Ugwu undergoes an epistemological evolution: as a servant, then a pupil, who becomes a teacher during the war, a child soldier and eventually an authorial voice. He embodies a composite ideological vision for Adichie. (16)

He concludes his analysis of the novel by saying;

Ugwu's book project, drawn from the sketches of Richard's story, from Ugwu's experience in the war, from his sense of guilt and want of expiation and most significantly from an individual and collective trauma, is part of a process of creating a

composite memory of the Biafra war. The disparateness of traumatic experience, and the fragmented nature of the experience of war, can only be experienced through various processes of archiving that involve personae of different ages, classes, gender and even race. (26)

Ouma does just a thematic study of Adichie's novels by showing how Ugwu, the houseboy, metamorphosed in the novel from the simple, naïve houseboy to the intellectual and author of a novel. This change, he says can be likened to the Nigerian state that went through similar metamorphoses during the postcolonial era. However, he failed to notice that the narrative style of the novel is unique for a purpose. He fails to emphasize that the traumatic experiences are fragmented to narrate, in my view, the domestic and home front of the characters instead of the war front.

Ehijele Femi Eromosele also discusses the theme of sex and sexuality in Adichie's first three works, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009). In Eromosele's essay, "Sex and Sexuality in the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie", it is noted that irrespective of the criticism that recent Nigerian fiction has received for being a "literature of the flesh" (99), Adichie narrates her first three novels using sex and sexuality as symbols of freedom and as a metaphor for an escape from the chaotic war scenes. She says that Kambili's rediscovery of 'voice' goes beyond the natural voice but extends to her sexuality which has been curtailed by her autocratic father. Thus, discovering her voice can be extended to mean

discovering her ability to look on Papa-Nnukwu's naked form without showing any remorse of committing a sin or discovering her sexuality when she is close to Father Amadi and going all out to explore that sexuality. Furthermore, argues Eromesele, Adichie uses sex as a metaphor to "[deliberately] attempt to underscore the humanity of the characters" (104); to symbolize the settlement of substitutes and to also symbolically depict the love relationship between Olanna and Odenigbo which is "unlike the typical African man-woman relationship, a relationship in which the woman takes the lead" (105). She says in conclusion that;

And all through, what comes across from the works of Adichie is a concern for sexual matters; whether writing about the crippling effects of religious fanaticism and dictatorial parenting or the harrowing experiences of the Nigerian Biafran civil war or other unconnected issues, the reader's attention is drawn to sex and the sexuality of her characters. (110)

Eromesele's study of sex and sexuality in Adichie's work could be read and interpreted as a structural analysis of the novel. She, however, does not go beyond sex and sexuality as a structuring device to look at the role of the narrators, focalization the order of the time, the language and how they can reveal other aspects of the novel, such as the deliberate oscillation of the order and time of narration to depict the writer's "deliberate" avoidance of the temptation to narrate the war scenes.

Zoë Norridge's essay is another article that uses the sexually intimate aspect of *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *The Memory of love* as a structural device by looking at how sex has been used as a synecdoche to represent the violent scenes of the Biafran war. This article is based on the two primary novels used for this project. Norridge's study looks at the style and the language of narration of these two authors. She says that the new generation West African writers have switched to the depiction of explicit sexual relationships in the novels and Forna and Adichie also add to that tradition. She claims that;

[S]ex and violence are intricately interwoven and that the examination of sexual pleasure in these novels forms both a language and strategy with which to explore and contest violence against women. In doing so, it draws on theoretical insights about the sexual nature of outsider. (18)

For Norridge, sex is an integral part of the narration of *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *The Memory of Love*. Sex is not summarized or not talked about as if a writer is "flitting past the bedroom on the way to something more important." (35) The description of sex is "to provoke a response in the reader and function as an aesthetic language with which to explore the legacies of language." (35) She concludes that;

Both novels proffer a political agenda, asserting their characters' right to sexual pleasure alongside their right to refuse. In terms of the study of relationships, sexual contact is used to bridge distance and explore intimacy, while simultaneously revealing the limitations of such a gesture and the inherent potential for loss. Sensual touching brings with it not only an awareness of physical closeness

of proximity between the characters but also the realization of bodily disappearance of missing limbs, of the absent body, of the corpse. (35)

What Norridge fails to note is the unique similarities in the style and structure of narration between the two authors. She fails to mention and discuss that both writers use analogous structures like focalization, back and forth time order as well as a narrative within a narrative, to describe the everyday lives of the characters. She limits her discussion to the representation of sex (a part) for war and violence (a whole); the use of sex as a peaceful backdrop and a haven for the tormented souls of the citizens. She thus, overlooks the other techniques they use to portray a peaceful and serene life in a war torn situation; a life which is not entirely peaceful due to the chaos lingering in the background. This “oversight” in interpretation is what this thesis seeks to advance.

Perhaps one exceptional article that is worthy of note is an article entitled “Focalization and Polyvocality in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” written by Aghogho Akpome. This article discusses the narrative technique adopted by Adichie in the narration of the Biafra war. His discussion “demonstrates the ways in which the novels model of polyvocality and its innovative structural organization scaffold Adichie’s fictional historiography” (25). He uses a central character Ugwu as a main example to focus on the method of focalization and how the technique of a multiple narrative perspectives is explored to get a unified and coherent narrative (25). This article is an impressively researched discussion on the novel, however, Akpome limits his

discussion to Ugwu's focalization of Olanna and Odenigbo and the use of the metatext. There is no doubt that Ugwu's focalization is an essential one. However, the other focalisers, Olanna and Richard are also worthy of note because they give us the female, eye witness' and the foreign observer's perspectives of the war respectively. Thus Akpome goes as far as to discuss Ugwu as a central focaliser.

This study raises the notch higher by discussing not just Ugwu's focalization but the narrator and the three perspectives as well as the order of narration which Akpome's article is silent on but is very significant in the interpretation of the novel. Also, this study charts a new course different from Akpome's study by analyzing both Adichie and Forna's novels to see the similarities and differences in order to make a statement about West African war novels authored by women.

2.3 Conclusion

This literature review has revealed the limitations and challenges of the African war genre and argues for the relevance of a formalist study of the war novels. It has revealed that most critics who have discussed the novels, especially *Half of a Yellow Sun*, in varied aspects, discussed it either thematically or used other aspects of the novel as structural devices to discuss the novel. However, nothing has been done on a study of the focalization, the metatext and the order of time in both *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *The Memory of Love*. For this reason, this project does a similar analysis as Akpome does in his article earlier mentioned. The point

of divergence is that Akpome looks at focalization through the eyes of Ugwu, his focalization of Olanna and Odenigbo as well as his development throughout the narration. One unique thing about this project is that it does not just look at Adichie's work in isolation but looks at the use of techniques such as multiple perspectives, metatext and the time order which emphasize the private, personal lives of the characters in both Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Forna's *The Memory of Love*. This thesis analyses how the writers' communicate the mundane everyday life of the people living in a war torn area. It looks at the relationship between "form" and "content" to narrate the simple relationships of the people. At this juncture, it is important to recall a comment Adichie made that summarizes the central message of this thesis in her article, "Truth and Lies". She says:

While writing *Half of a Yellow Sun*, I enjoyed playing with minor things: inventing a train station in a town that has none, placing towns closer to each other than they are, changing the chronology of conquered towns. Yet I did not play with the central event of that time. I could not let a character be changed by anything that had actually not happened. If fiction is indeed the soul history, then I was equally committed to the fiction and the history, equally keen to be true to the spirit of the town as well as to my artistic vision of it⁵ (Adichie, 2006).

⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/sep/16/fiction.society>

CHAPTER THREE

Analysis of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

3.0 Introduction

A serious critique of a novel must pay attention to the technique of writing. Owing to the serious and blood-curdling nature of war, critics examining novels about war do not seem to pay attention to the narrative technique employed in the novel. They instead focus on the historical aspects, war events, the outcome and the effects. This chapter focuses not on the biography or the historical identity of the novel but rather on the craft. It centres on Adichie's use of narrative techniques and how she articulates her gendered perspective on war through selected techniques. The first section of this chapter discusses the three identified narrative techniques: multiple perspectives, order of narration and the metatext. It further has a sub section which I term gender and technique and which does a formalist study of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, with the main aim of finding the link between the gender of a writer and his/her techniques. In other words, this section will lead to a strong affirmation that female writers of war use unique techniques to narrate their war stories. The purpose of this kind of analysis is to open up the text to further possible analysis discovered through the study of the structure of a novel that hitherto may have escaped critical attention.

3.1 Female Perspective

In order to understand the female perspective on war, which forms the crux of the argument in this thesis, it is pertinent to provide a definition of the term that will serve as a basis for discussing the two novels. The female perspective on war

concerns itself with the intimate, emotional and interpersonal relationships. It assumes that descriptions or accounts of war that privilege the gory and violent aspects of war over the emotional and psychological effects of war on man are deficient in that regard. Such accounts of war seem to “de-centre” the intimate and private lives of the human being involved in the war and instead emphasize the scenes of bloodshed, violence and destruction of property. Even though such accounts narrate the lives that suffer, under such traumatic circumstances, their main concentration is on bloody war scenes and the experiences of the human being at the war front. The interpersonal relationships, emotional and psychological effects that attend the loss of lives and destruction of property is relegated to the background in these account.

Female perspectives on war, on the other hand, “re-create” the place of human beings in the narrative. Thus, the focus of the inhuman is discouraged and in its place is the perspective on war that delves into the intimate lives of the people who partake in the war as well as those who sit on the sidelines but nonetheless, feel the icy hands of war. This definition of the female perspective on war does not in any way invalidate other perspectives on war. Rather, the study intends to contribute to literary discussion on the West African war novel, by examining in what ways the female perspective on war reflects a paradigm shift by moving the war narrative from the war front to the home front.

3.2 The Narrator

“In everyday life, the fact of ‘who’ tells us a story, and ‘how’, makes a very big difference. A proposal of marriage uttered directly, in emotional speech, strikes the recipient rather differently from one formally written and received by post” (Hawthorn, 2010)

Taking a cue from the above quote, an analysis of the type of narrator employed is important in the discussion of the focalization of *Half of a Yellow Sun*. To be able to tell the effect a novel has on its readers, it is essential to know who the narrator is and how he/she narrates differently from the focalizers. First of all, the narrator in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is an extradiegetic one who acts as ‘superior to’ or on a higher level from the story he/she is narrating. This is because the narrator knows the world (thoughts and feelings) of the characters to the extent that he/she is able to tell exactly what characters are thinking and feeling. Furthermore, this extradiegetic narrator, who rears his head from time to time to comment on the perspective narration of the three characters, cannot be said to be a participant in the story. Hence, he/she is a heterodiegetic narrator who stands on the fringes to watch over and comment from time to time. However, this type of narrator is not a frame narrator in the sense that his account of the story does not necessarily frame the entire perspectives of Olanna, Ugwu and Richard. That is to say, he/she does not start the narration, hand it over to the characters and come back to conclude the story as is done in Henry James’ *The Turn of the Screw* and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. What this extradiegetic narrator does is (to) tell the story through the perspectives of three characters; Olanna, Ugwu and Richard with an interspersed comment from time to time.

3.2 Focalization (Multiple Perspectives)

Focalization, as discussed early on in Chapter One, refers to the view point or perspectives from which a narration is seen, felt and understood. Focalization could either be zero, internal or external. Zero/Non-focalization is when the narrator knows more than the character. That is, a third person or omniscient narrator who is able to tell the mind and thoughts of the characters. Like Genette puts it, this is when the narration is a “vision from behind”. An example is Henry Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* (1741). Internal focalization is when the narrator says only what the character knows; when the point of view is from the one who sees. In other words, it is when the narrator and the character are equal, with none of them knowing more than the other, an example is Barbara Kingsolver’s *The Poisonwood Bible* (1998). Internal focalization is made up of three types: the fixed, the variable and the multiple focalization. External focalization has to do with the objective point of narration when the character knows more than the narrator. A writer’s choice of focalization is influenced by his/her aim, goal or objectives of writing as well as the effect he/she wants to impose on readers. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie adopts the internal focalization, specifically the variable type, discussed and propounded by Genette to articulate her views. This style of narration is where there is the presence of the superior narration (extradiegetic) who narrates events with several shifts in perspective. The war story is told using the third person narrator who comes in to give general discussions and comments on the narration. She does this narration effectively through the perspectives of Ugwu, Olanna and Richard. The analysis

of the perspectives, as used by Adichie, is essential in determining the focus of the author's narration and what she wants readers to know about the war experience.

3.3 Dimensions of Focalization (Perspective)

3.3.1 Olanna's Perspective (The Eye Witness)

Olanna, in *Half of the Yellow Sun*, is another important character whose perspective covers most of the chapters in the novel. Despite the fact that Ugwu is considered an important focalizer because of his role as an author of the metatext and because of the information he gives at the beginning of every chapter, Olanna also contributes tremendously towards the development of the plot with her first hand experiences of the war at Kano and the metamorphosis in her life at the onset of the war.

First of all, Olanna's perspective can be considered as the writer's way of projecting the female's perspective of the war situation because the novel elevates her by giving her the role of a narrator. Apart from that, she projects exactly what a woman feels and goes through as her security, comfort and family tumble down because of war. Olanna, from the onset, is projected as a woman of "class", born to an affluent family who has had the highest form of education in England. She is projected as an independent woman who does not necessarily need a man to live or survive. She is strong willed and has her own opinion about what and how she wants her life to be, to the extent that she is able to stand against her parents' desire to force her to marry chief Okonji or even have an affair with him in exchange for a political favour. His father wanted to win a building contract

from chief Okonji (the finance minister), so he wanted to use his beautiful daughter as bait to influence him into granting the contract (30) but she refused. She even has that ability to go for the man that catches her fancy. She goes ahead to marry her “revolutionary” boyfriend against her parents’ wishes. She is also projected as a beautiful young lady, the taste of most men who everyone wants to meet (59). There is a sharp contrast between her and her sister, Kainene. She is seen as the soft and beautiful lady “with a more approachable beauty with the softer face and the smiling graciousness and the fleshy, curvy body that filled out her black dress, a body Susan, Richard’s British woman, will call *African*” (60).

Olanna has so much control that she is even seen taking charge of her love affair with Odenigbo. She decides on the course of action when it comes to intimacy and determines when they should have a ‘quickie’ or not. Eromosele attempts a definition of the kind of relationship that exists between Olanna and Odenigbo, in her article “Sex and Sexuality” and says that their relationship is;

unlike the typical African man-woman relationship, a relationship which the woman takes the lead. ...It is clearly evident that it is Olanna who initiates the lovemaking, Odenigbo only follows her lead. Just as in the lovemaking, Olanna calls the shots of matters such as whether or not to get married, whether or not to have a baby, whether or not to keep Amala’s child, when and where to have the wedding etc. (105)

This freedom she has to be in charge is, however, enhanced by the fact that she is well educated and an independent person who can have an opinion of her own. For instance, she can choose to move in or out of Odenigbo’s house; she can

choose to sleep with whoever she wants, for example, Richard etc. However, the strong willed, educated, self-accomplished Olanna was forced to leave her comfort and pleasure in Nsukka to become a fugitive at the onset of the war. As if letting go of her comfort was not enough, Olanna was forced to stoop as low as to even beg for food for the survival of her family.

Olanna hurried over to join [the queue], but the woman who was dishing out the yolk stood up and said, “Egg yolk is finished! *O gwula!*”

Panic rose in Olanna’s chest. She ran after the woman. ‘Please,’ she said.

‘What is it?’ the woman asked. The supervisor, standing close by, turned to stare at Olanna

My little child is sick – ‘Olanna said’.

The woman cut her short. ‘Join that queue for milk.’

‘No, no, she has not been eating anything, but she ate egg yolk.’ Olanna held the woman’s arm. *‘Biko, please; I need the egg yolk.’* (269)

This portrays the effects of war on the individual, especially women, and how it is that the once pleasant and well organized life of an individual is thrown into shambles. Olanna’s well-planned and thought out life in Nsukka was left behind and long forgotten at the onset of the war.

It is also significant to note that it is through Olanna’s perspective that we get a detailed narration of the sordid deaths and merciless killings that the southern people living up north were subjugated to. She becomes the eye of the

reader when she witnesses the fatal and animalistic way that the northerners massacred the Igbos on their land. We witness how a Hausa family friend to an Igbo family is able to betray the friendship he has with that family to mercilessly massacre that whole family all by himself. We also see how some Igbos disguise themselves in order to pass through the barriers to save southern lands; how some had to stay in barrels of water for long hours to escape being killed.

Closely linked to the fall of the strong willed Olanna is the declining nature of the lives of the women in the novel. Olanna's commentary on the declining nature of the lives of the women around her and of her own life is a commentary on the effects of these wars on the woman in the society. The women struggle to keep the sanity in their family despite the insanity around them. They struggle for their children by joining long queues and fighting for protein yoke, milk and other things to ensure that their children do not suffer from kwashiorkor. Other women become "accomplished thieves", as Mama Oji puts it. They steal food and clothes to keep their children warm. If Olanna should leave her container of kerosene in the kitchen, or her soap in the bathroom or if she hangs her clothes and does not keep an eye on them, they will develop wings and fly off to other women's homes (326). Yet their children contract various diseases and die before their eyes every now and then because of the harsh nature of the war around them makes every effort to keep their family fruitless. For instance, Mama Oji says; "My children have asthma. Three have died since the war started. Three are left" (326). Therefore, Olanna's life mirrors the changing scenes of a woman who goes through the experience of war. For instance, Olanna's life moves from

the composed and comfortable life to that of hardship where she has to struggle to keep her sanity and that of her family. Like Olanna, Kainene and the other minor female characters like Mama Oji, Mama Adanna, Alice, and Mrs. Muokelu are also affected in one way or the other by the war.

Thus Adichie uses the woman's perspective to discuss how war affects the lives of women and children and how a woman works hard (more than the man who only comes back home drunk) to keep her family by making sure that they are well fed by the food from the refugee camp. She also ensures that none of her family members are abducted into the war or killed by any of the bombs and air raids. It is significant that this important scene is witnessed and told through Olanna because of Adichie's projection of the female personality as strong in most of her novels. Olanna is akin to Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) who grows strong and gains the voice to assert herself as a result of her experiences. She is also akin to Nwamgba, Ayaju and the headstrong historian, Afamefuna in Adichie's short story, *The Headstrong Historian* which is a kind of write back or pastiche to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). She is given a strong female personality to withstand and survive the war just like these other women who were faced with challenges in one way or the other but overcame them through their strong female personality, as for instance, Nwamgba is able to choose her own husband contrary to the wishes of her parents; Ayaju is the one who despite her slave decent had the liberty to hate the looks of her husband which was a "taboo" in Achebe's world, and Afamefuna is the revolutionist who changes her whole community. Just as her name connotes, "my name will not be lost", Afamefuna is the one who fights for her grandmother, Nwamgba's

culture and practices that were rapidly giving way to Christianity. She, instead of her brother and father, writes the book, “Pacifying with Bullets: A Reclaimed History of Southern Nigeria”, to preserve the Nigerian culture.

3.3.2 Ugwu’s Perspective (The Native Observer)

In Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Ugwu, apart from being the forerunner of the narration of the other chapters and whose perspective begins the narration, is used by Adichie to highlight the effects war has on a child. Ugwu is an embodiment of how war affects the private lives of children. Secondly, Ugwu, a houseboy, is strategically positioned among the intellectual community and among the four main characters of the novel (Olanna, Odenigbo, Kainene, Richard) to purposely serve as a commentator on the before, during and after the war lives and actions of these characters. This role, as the embodiment of the sufferings of a child, tells us of the writer’s concerns for children experiencing war. She also makes this child a commentator in order to control and manipulate what he says. His perspective emphasizes certain aspects of war that is not usually obvious in a male authored novel.

Through his perspective, the reader learns about the agitations among the Igbo intellectuals after the British administrative body handed over the power of governance to the indigene. He eavesdrops on the conversations of Odenigbo and his colleagues during their formal evening dinners and comments on their mannerisms. This commentary furnishes readers with some important information concerning the war as discussed among the university intellectuals. “I will call him mah, Ugwu said, but Miss Adebayo had hurried ahead into Master’s

study. He heard her say, ‘There is trouble in the north’, and his mouth went dry...” (142). The reader gets to know about the killings soon after they occurred in the North through his perspective.

Furthermore, Ugwu’s perspective throws more light on the life of an intellectual in the city. It is noted that the life of the intellectual living in the city is in sharp contrast to the life of the ordinary man living in the village (or in the rural area). The room of the university intellectual is nicely decorated with carefully arranged books, curtains, furniture, plates and elegant lamps as against the thatched houses of the villager with the palm oil lamps that cast long shadows on the wall (7).

Additionally, we do not only learn about the domestic lives of the characters but also get a glimpse of lives lived in the Biafran army and the preparation for the war. It is through Ugwu’s focalization that we get to know about the deeds and the day-to-day activities of the Biafran army camp. It is a camp where “in the afternoon the sun sapped energy and goodwill and the soldiers quarreled and played Biafran *whot* and spoke of the vandals they had blown up in past operations” (359). We learn about the way the soldiers train constantly with no proper arms or guns:

but when he went to the first training session, he stared at what was before him: a dull metal container full of scrap metal. He wished he could tell Eberechi about his disappointment. He wanted to tell her, too, about the commander, the only one with a full uniform, sharply ironed and stiff, how he

often barked into a two-way radio, and how, when the teenager tried to run away during a training session, he beat him with his bare hands until blood ran down the teenager's nose and then screamed, 'Lock him in the guardroom!'... Sometimes younger women came and went in the commander's quarters and emerged with sheepish smiles (359-360).

We also learn about what they do during their leisure time when they are back from war or training. They go to the drinking bar to drink beer after a hard day's work but more importantly, we get to know the abuse that these soldiers mete out to poor innocent girls who happen to be the victims of war.

The bar girl greeted them and said there was no beer.

'Are you sure you don't have beer? Are you hiding it because you think we will not pay you?' one of the soldiers said to her.

'No, there is no beer'. She was thin and sharp-featured and unsmiling.

'We destroyed the enemy!' he said. Give us beer!' Ugwu snapped. The soldier's loudness annoyed him.(364)

As the soldiers settle for the local gin (*kai-kai*), and drink to the point of drunkenness, Ugwu gets out to urinate and to breathe in some fresh air:

When he finally went back inside, he stopped at the door. 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*’. Her blouse was still on. Between her legs, High-tech was moving. His thrusts were jerky, his small buttocks darker-coloured than his legs. (365)

Despite a description of the war scenes which most writers will use as an opportunity to describe the gory, vivid war scenes, the female writer rather describes the soldiers in the army barracks and drinking bars but not the war front. That emphasizes the claim that female writers focus their narration on the personal and private lives of the people with the war as the background.

Thirdly, it is Ugwu who gets to write the novel on the Biafran war and not Richard, the foreigner and the initially imagined author of the metatext. Ugwu develops intellectually through the novel and rises up from being a mere houseboy of Odenigbo to a writer. It is significant that he gets to write the novel because the Biafran war is his country’s own history and he must tell his own story not the Whiteman, Richard’s. It is interesting that the novel does not only put a mere house boy in an intellectual community but makes him the author of the metatext. This buttresses the author’s idea that the African story can best be told by the African and not the Whiteman who did not experience it (Adichie, 2008). Consequently, the authorship is taken from Richard who came to Nigeria purposely to write about Nigerian history, and given to a house boy who is an indigene of the land to suggest that (even) the history of an intellectual and highly respected Whiteman cannot be as authentic and true as the history of an indigenous houseboy Ugwu.

Furthermore, through Ugwu's perspective we get to know what Emmanuel Mzomera Ngwire describes as the witnessing of authorship in history. He says in his article, "He Writes about the World That Remained Silent": Witnessing Authorship in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*", that;

Adichie's novel draws the reader into a position of witnessing both the events of the Biafra war and, more importantly, the process of turning those events into narrative. The novel reflects upon the moment of writing history through a meta-fictional element known as self-reflexivity, which in postmodernist thinking, refers to how a text reflects upon its own making (43).

Through Ugwu, we get to learn about the processes involved in writing history. Apart from all the important information that we get through the perspective of Ugwu, he is what I call, the native observer who is at the centre of all the actions including the lives of the characters in the novel. Ugwu, is likened to Elias Cole in *The Memory of Love* due to the basic reason that they are both placed at the centre of discussion, they open and close the narration and they write the meta-discourse in both novels. Aside from that, Ugwu in my opinion represents the author who experienced the war as a child and grew up to learn how her family was affected by it. What has the process of writing got to do with war narration? One may ask. Instead of focusing on the war scenes to tell of its experiences, the female author deems it important to point readers to the process of writing history. This is an aspect that will not be a concern for the other war novelist.

3.3.3 Richard's Perspective (Foreign Observer)

Richard Churchill, in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, is another important character. He is influenced, as earlier mentioned, by his desire to write a book about the history of Nigeria and Igbo-Ukwu art. Hence we see the process as well as the challenges he goes through to ensure that the book is written. Through his focalization, we see the British administration and their opinions about the Africans. The readers' first encounter with him tells us how these ex-colonial administrators and business people from John Holt and Kingsway and GB Ollivant and United Africa Company think about Nigerian politics and their ill preparedness for self-governance. Richard's focalization allows us into the mind of the European imperialist; we learn about the exploitative impetus and motive that guided and influenced their calculated impoverishment of the African mainland for the gain of Europe. His perspective makes us believe what Adichie said that "there is no doubt that we are all equally human, but the course of history has made it possible for some people to question the humanity of others" (Adichie, 2008). Richard's perspective is also primarily based on his relationship with Kainene, Olanna and Odenigbo and Harrison, his houseboy.

An intriguing part of the novel is its treatment of the European presence before, during and after the war. The European, in the person of Richard, is projected as a stooge who has no confidence in himself and is ill-treated by the women around him. Richard is first controlled by Susan, who takes him to balls and parties against his will and orders him around as to who to speak to and who not to speak to. Even when this European moves to the African woman

whom he thinks is more docile and not as domineering as Susan, he is reduced to a lowly status because he cannot perform a basic role like having sex. It is noticed that Kainene is the one who plays the man in her love affair with Richard. And for an African woman to have such dominion over a Whiteman in such a domestic environment as the bedroom is significant. It first of all justifies the freedom of the African woman to explore and articulate the power or the mandate that Adichie gives to her female characters to be in control. She also does this to politically signify the overthrow of the European power and control over the African.

3.3.4 Relevance of the Multiple Perspectives

The use of this type of focalization, where the narration moves across several perspectives, is significant in diverse ways. As Jeremy Hawthorn says in his book *Studying the Novel* (2010), “it is always worth asking to whose thoughts we are made privy in a novel or a short story, as the answer gives us significant information about the author’s focus of concern” (122).

Hence, knowing who speaks and what is spoken is seen through who is relevant in the study of the techniques of a novel. First and foremost, this novel adopts a multiple perspectives style of narration that helps in recounting the complex African experiences of Biafra during the war. This war was experienced by people in various ways, thus a single narrator might not be able to satisfactorily narrate the experiences of the people. The tendency for a single narrator to gloss over bits of information that might be peculiar to many is high; hence the choice of this narrative style. In addition, these focalisers, in one way or the other, had a

closer and personal experience with war and “show classic traumatic symptoms of disassociation and withdrawal, including the inability to locate the words to recount their experience” (Novak, 33). Hence their perspectives are much more reliable and believable compared to the third person distant narrator.

Furthermore, a multiple view point is important for the simple reason that it gives the writer the opportunity to explore a subplot. *Half of a Yellow Sun*, obviously, does not focus on those at the centre of war – the soldiers, war scenes – but relates the effects of war on the intimate, private and domestic lives of the people. Thus, the main plot is an account of the Biafran war. However, the novel makes use of a subplot which is a focus on the un-stabilized, traumatic and intimate interpersonal relationships of characters. Hence, the adoption of a multiple points of view is necessary for the easy maneuvering from main plot to subplot. More importantly, the multiple perspectives give the author the opportunity to articulate her perspectives on war. Readers get to know what is of importance to the author as she glosses over the scenes that describe the gory nature of war but describe into details the intimate, private and domestic lives of the characters.

3.4 The Plot Structure (Order of Narration)

As Genette suggests, narrative time is divided into three sub-categories, Order, frequency and duration. However, this thesis focuses only on the order category of time since what is being studied here is the narrative time of both *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *The Memory of Love*. This category, as mentioned in Chapter One, has to do with the arrangement of events: which action comes first and which one

is delayed, highlighted, or glossed over and for what reason they are presented in such a manner. What intended effect does the novel seek to achieve through the arrangement of events? Thus this section examines the anachronism of narration which is a sub-division of order. i.e. the analepsis and the prolepsis. Anachronism is the umbrella term for prolepsis and analepsis. It is simply “discordance between the two temporal orders of story and narrative” (40). In other words, it is the departure from the order of presentation in the text or when the narrative takes a different order from what the story depicts or starts with. A narration can either come earlier or later than its normal position. This earlier or later form of narrating events is what Genette terms analepsis and prolepsis. Analepsis is the technical term for a flashback or when the story is taken backwards in time and prolepsis is when the story is taken forward in time (flash-forward).

Adichie, in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, employs a similar strategy to what she used in her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) where narration does not follow the logical, sequential flow but moves back and forth. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie starts her narration in *media in res*, the height of tension (where things begin to fall apart) and undertakes an “analeptic” leap to narrate the events that led to the actions in the *media in res*. The narration then moves back to after “things have fallen apart” to when Jaja has defied his father by not going to church. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, however, Adichie adopts prolepsis as the order of narration, that is flash-forward where the narration is fast-forwarded to give readers a fore taste of the beginning of the coup that led to the civil war. The beginning of her narration set in the early 1960’s, discusses the period of independence in Nigeria. She describes the lives and relationships of the intellectuals of the University at

Nsukka during the period when Nigeria had just gained the power of governance from the British.

The narration then moves to the late 1960's to talk about the beginning of the coup and the counter-coup which led to the war. Provided the narration had not moved back to the early 1960's in part three but had continued to describe the coup and its gradual development into a civil war, the plot structure would have logically and chronologically followed these events. Hence there would have been nothing like a back and forth narration. However, after the narration moves from its last scene where Odenigbo's mother "dramatically" misbehaves and insults Olanna in the absence of her son, to narrate the beginning of the war and how Olanna "postponed her trip [the first time] to Kano because of the coup" (128), it comes back to continue the discussion on the action Olanna took after that "dramatic" scene, whether she moved back in or not. Hence, in part three, the narration begins with Odenigbo's mother and Amala (Mama's intended wife for her son) back in her son's house without the knowledge of Odenigbo; a continuation of part one. Part three narrates the consequences of Mama's dramatic scene which is the adulterous act of Odenigbo with Amala and consequently, Olanna and Richard. The narration does not end there but moves back again from where it left off in part two to narrate the subsequent events of the war in part four. This prolepsis is an interior one and not exterior, because the narration of the beginning of the coup is a later part of the story that was told earlier than it should be.

In this way the reader of this novel is swayed from one part to the other, one period of history to the other and back. This back and forth movement of the

narration is not done as an abstraction but to aid in understanding the changes, both physically and emotionally, that people go through in war situations.

3.4.1 Relevance of the Order

As mentioned above, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a novel that moves back and forth in its narrative time. The narration of events oscillates between the early sixties and the late sixties. A brief overview of these two dates in history indicates that the early sixties, precisely from 1960, is the post-colonial period of Nigeria when the country had just taken over the power of governance from the British colonial government. According to history, Nigeria severed all links with the British colonial administrative and became independent on October 1, 1960. The new government was a coalition of conservative **government** parties, that is: the Nigerian People's Congress (NPC) dominated by the northerners and those of the Islamic faith and the second part; National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) dominated by the Christian Igbo led by Nnamdi Azikiwe who was also Nigeria's first governor general in 1960. In January 1966 (late 60's) army officials, dominated by Igbo people and led by General Johnson Aguiyi- Ironsi, overthrew the central government, killed the prime minister, took control of government and got rid of the federal system of government and replaced it with a new government with mostly Igbo representation. The coup infuriated the northern officials who saw it as an ethnic, Igbo coup and so [they] counter-acted in July with another coup led by General Gowon and the northern army officials, and Gowon became the head of the new military government. This

second coup which was more or less motivated by ethnic and religious reasons resulted in the loss of many lives, mostly military officials and civilians of Igbo decent.

This genocide against the Igbos increased their desire for autonomy and led to the formation of a new republic in 1967 known as The Republic of Biafra with their own national flag and currency. This new republic was led by General Emeka Ojukwu who encouraged the army and the civilians of Biafra to fight for victory over the formidable Nigerian side irrespective of the fact that they were less endowed in terms of military resources. Hence, despite their determination and enthusiasm to win this race, the fall of the Biafran republic was very much predictable. The majority of the Biafrans army were killed, killed by air raids, disease and starvation by the Nigerian side of the war. This history is what inspired the writer to write her novel, symbolically adopting the flag of Biafra as the title of her novel.

3.4.2 Symbolic Representations of the Shift in Order

The novel, structurally, adopts both a proleptic and analeptic order of narration for specific reasons. There is a way in which one can draw a line of symmetry between the technical (how the novel is told) and what happens in the novel. Firstly, the back and forth narration of the events mirrors the instability in the lives and relationships of the characters and by extension the lives of Nigerian citizens during the war. The back and forth movement in the narration suggests the unstable nature of the romantic, family and community

relationships. For instance, the relationship between Olanna and Odenigbo; Kainene and Richard and some of the women in the novel changes from a cordial to a hostile one. They move from their life of affluence, comfort and security to a life where they live in constant fear for their lives. They live from hand to mouth because of the famine. Hence, their comfortable lives become a life of starvation. Even the romantic intimate relationship between the intimate lovers, is reduced to no or less intimacy. After the sudden death of Ikejide from a vandal's piece of shrapnel that left Ikejide headless, the love affair between Kainene and Richard also ends. The intimacy they used to have has been reduced to a "brief press of their lips" (405). Their day-to-day activities change because of the constant fear of losing their lives if caught unguarded by a vandal or a Nigerian army official. Even the unstable nature of the war influences Ugwu's sexuality because he is not able to have his intimate moments with Chinyere because she has to move away with her employers. He is not even able to fantasize anymore about Nnesinachi and his wish to touch her breasts. Also, his desire for the love of Eberechi is taken away from him because a soldier is able to use his position of authority to snatch her away from him.

Secondly, a shift in time or chronology also reflects the shift in perception or point of view. The novel does not use the conventional third person or first person narrator who tells the story through the perspective of a single character. She uses the third person narrator who narrates through the multiple points of view. Thus, the story sometimes shifts from the central narrator to reveal the perspectives of other characters within the narrative. This shift in focalization

(change in structure) also depicts the change in time of narration and further mirrors what seems to be the movement of the lives of the characters.

Furthermore, the back and forth narration symbolically represents a shift of authorship in the metatext in the novel. Richard Churchill, as he tells Kainene, is driven by his interest in Igbo-Ukwu arts and his desire to write a book on Nigerian history. Thus the metatext, from part one and three, is associated with Richard as the author because throughout those parts, he announces to all the other characters that his interest is to write a book on Nigeria;

‘Sometimes, sah’. He paused. ‘I found a book at our camp. I was so sad and angry for the writer’.

‘What book was it?’

‘The autobiography of a black American called Frederick Douglass.’

Mr. Richard wrote something down. ‘I shall use this anecdote in my book.’

‘You are writing a book.’

‘Yes.’

‘What is it about, sah?’

‘The war, and what happened before, and how much should not have happened. It will be called “The world was Silent When We died”.’ (396)

Also, Richard’s focalization in those parts ends with a short piece on the novel entitled *The World Was Silent When We Died*. That is to say that with the narration of the early 60’s, Richard’s focalization ends with the metatext. However, in the final chapters of parts two and four (late 60’s) when the war has taken place, the metatext does not end with Richard’s focalization but with Ugwu’s focalization. That notwithstanding, there is no confusion created as to the authorship of the novel because Richard is a learned Whiteman with a profession as a writer and Ugwu is just an illiterate houseboy

as a writer and Ugwu is just an illiterate houseboy. And so the writing of the metatext is in no way associated with Ugwu until the very last chapter when it is realized that Ugwu is the one writing the novel because Richard gave up his desire to write the book saying that “the war isn’t [his] story to tell, really” (425). Thus the metatext came from Ugwu’s little notes made from his observation of the war, people and the little interviews like Olanna narrating her experience in the train from Kano. This shift is an extended metaphor of the back and forth style of narration.

Also, the shift in narration represents the political climate of the history that Adichie describes in her novel. The period of narration is the early 1960’s and the late 1960’s when there was a coup and a counter-act coup to overthrow a constitutionally elected government to give way to military rule. Thus the country was plunged into a whole lot of anxiety as to the next step of the defeated people. Hence, one can infer that the emotional lives and expectations of the people were moving back and forth. Additionally, the swing in narration mirrors the dichotomy between the north and the south; Christianity and Islam; Biafra and Nigeria which were all represented in the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The northern state of Nigeria is chiefly made up of Hausas and Yorubas who are predominantly Islamic and the Southern state consists of the Igbos and several other ethnicities who later became the republic of Biafra and is predominantly Christians. This sharp contrast between these two groups is what eventually causes and fuels the conflict, which develops into the civil war, between the two groups. Thus, since this novel is a narration of the civil war between these warring factions, Adichie opts for a ‘pendulum’ style of narration which swings to and fro.

Furthermore, the shift in narration also depicts the metamorphosis of Ugwu from a simple houseboy into an intellectual who becomes the author of a book. This novel, with special attention to Ugwu, can be an example of a *Bildungsroman* because it talks about the life of the young boy Ugwu and the changes he encounters from an innocent, impressionable, illiterate adolescent to a young adult intellectual and the author of a book on his country. (Ouma, 16)

Finally, the oscillating style of narration aligns with the psychological and emotional trajectories of the lives of the five central characters, especially Ugwu and Olanna, through whom the bulk of the story is focalized. In other words, the emotional feelings and the minds of the main characters in the novel are seen not to be stable because their emotions move with the flow of the war which in itself is full of anxieties. For instance, Olanna lives in perpetual fear of the possible perils that threaten the lives of the people around her. She joins the other women at the relief centre to fight for food for their respective families. She worries about how dangerous it would be for Ugwu to be abducted by the Biafran soldiers to join the army. So she warns him to stay indoors all the time during the day. She worries her heart and mind about her husband who has taken to drinking and staying out late after work. She also worries about the health of 'baby' who is at risk of contracting kwashiorkor due to lack of protein. Thus, she lives a life of perpetual fear of the lives of everyone around her, even of her female neighbours at Umuahia. Similarly, Kainene also thinks about the physical health of her surrogate family at the camp and how they will survive the war

without dying of hunger or strange sicknesses. This distress is what pushes her to go over to the enemy's line to trade for food to feed her family.

In a nutshell, the novel does not use the traditional, sequential development of plot. Adichie purposely alters her style of narrating the time by moving in-between the two time periods of the civil war to mirror the issues discussed in the novel. She does that to depict the unstable lives and relationships of individuals involved in war. Their once composed and serene life is thrown into a frenzy where everything around them is uncertain. Additionally, Adichie adapts a back and forth narration to depict the unbalanced state of Nigeria during these periods and to draw a dichotomy between Biafra and Nigeria; to tell how unstable everything including the lives of individuals are during a war experience; to depict the change in the narrative perspectives; to portray the change in authorship of the metatext and its significance

3.5 The Metatext

The French literary theorist, Gerard Genette, in his discussion of paratext talks about his concept of transtextuality. This concept reveals the relationship a text has with other texts where a text changes or expands the content of another text. He further provides subtypes of this concept such as hypertextuality, metatextuality, paratextuality and intertextuality. This project, however, focuses on metatextuality which is a form of intertextuality whereby a text makes

comments on another text. Thus, in relation to *Half of a Yellow Sun*, this concept is employed in the form of ‘the Book’ written by Ugwu titled: *The World Was Silent When We Died*. This “Book” is termed the metatext because the main discourse is what is narrated by Adichie, yet the narration of “the book” is a commentary on the main work. It sometimes discusses the same issues and provides further and detailed information about what has already been discussed in the main text. It even serves as a precursor to the main narration because it gives the reader background information to the actions and scenes in the novel.

The metatext is written in the third person narrative told in simple present tense and in chronological order as opposed to the episodic structure of the main narrative. It is attached to chapters focalized through Richard in the first three parts except for chapter eighteen in part two when the metatext shifts to Ugwu. Subsequent chapters and parts till the very last chapter, when “the Book” is appended to the chapter focalized through Olanna, the metatext moves back to the focalization through Richard. The author of the metatext is not known till the very last point when it is revealed that it is Ugwu when it says; “Ugwu writes his dedication last: for master, my good man” (433). One would readily have attributed the authorship to Richard since he was the one with the interest in writing about Biafra and since the Book appeared mostly at the end of his focalization.

3.5.1 Relevance of the Metatext

Adichie's use of this metatext is open to various interpretations. As mentioned early on, the metatext provides the historical background to the narration. It functions both as an exposition and a glossary page where readers can get answers to certain questions that may arise in the reading process. For instance, in the prologue to "the Book" on page ... "he" writes about the experience Olanna had on her way to Nsukka from Kano even before it happens in part two.

She tells him how the bloodstains on the woman's wrapper blended into the fabric to form a rusty mauve... and describes the child's head inside: scruffy plaits falling across the dark-brown face, eyes completely white, eerily open, a mouth in a small surprise O (82).

It further gives background information on what started the war. It refers to how "the British preferred the North" (115) and did everything possible to create division between the North and South just to protect their interest. This background information ensures that vital information that can get lost due to the episodic nature of Adichie's narration is not lost and does not obstruct the flow of the main narration. As Akpome articulates, "The information in the metatext functions as a subtle and unobtrusive framework for the unfolding story in the main narrative" (Akpome, 2013).

Thirdly, Adichie uses the metatext to negotiate what I will term ethno nationalism, a kind of nationalism that privileges the Igbo ethnic group. Hence it does not come as a surprise when almost all her characters are Igbo. In her meta-

discourse, she points out the wrongs committed against the Igbo and by extension justifies the war and advocates for a strong Igbo state. She tries to make a case for the Igbo state and how the Igbo were ill-treated and thus a second look must be taken at the war scenes. In the representation of the historical background of the war in the metatext, the novel is significantly silent on the disruptive effects of the war on the northern part.

Finally, the metatext takes readers through the process of writing or rewriting history. Readers get to know how history is rewritten in the form of a novel. As Emmanuel Mzomera Ngwira articulates in his articles: “He Writes About Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*’ Witnessing Authorship in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*”, Adichie “draws the reader into witnessing not just the Biafran tragedy but also the attempt to narrate the tragedy by taking the reader into intimate moments of witnessing the scripting of “The Book” (52) and also:

...bring the reader into the act of writing through the use of the present tense, while creating some distance, even a fly on the wall’ perspective, through the use of third person narration in which the focalizer slips in the process of reading the novel from one character, namely Richard Churchill, to another character, namely Ugwu (44).

3.6 Gender and Technique

Due to the intense nature of a formalist study which takes into consideration each word, punctuation, tense, sentence structure, syntax etc. of a text, it will be a quite difficult to do such a thorough study of entire novels. Hence this study takes

sample but relevant excerpts from each novel as a pseudo text for the formalist study and further uses that analysis to draw conclusions on the relationship between the gender of an author and the choice of technique.

3.6.1 A Formalist Reading of Adichie's *Half Of A Yellow Sun*

Ever since the second coup some weeks ago, when the Igbo soldiers were killed, he had struggled to understand what was happening, read the newspapers more carefully, listened more clearly to Master and his guests. The conversations no longer ended in reassuring laughter, and the living room often seemed clouded with uncertainties, with unfinished knowledge, as if they all knew something would happen and yet did not know what. None of them would ever have imagined that this would happen, that the announcer on ENBC Radio Enugu would be saying now, as Ugwu straightened the tablecloth, ‘We have confirmed reports that up to five-hundred Igbo people have been killed in Maiduguri,’”

A formalist reading of this excerpt, with particular focus on tense, structural patterns and sentence types, reveals some significant details about sequencing and temporal significance of narration as regards plot structure. The first sentence begins with 2 subordinate clauses, each with temporal subordinators: “ever since” and “when”. The superordinate clause “he had struggled to understand...” contains the past perfect tense “had struggled to understand” which establishes the time continuum that suggests that his “struggle to understand” precedes the simple past tense of the verb forms “read” and “listened”.

In the second sentence that follows, a logical (semantic) relationship is established between the first and second sentence – information that was provided in the first sentence is carried on into the second. The second sentence begins thus: “the conversations **no longer ended** in reassuring laughter”, and continues: “the living room **often seemed** clouded with uncertainties, with unfinished knowledge, as if they all knew something would happen and yet did not know what.”

The suggestion of “no longer ended” alludes to a time that was, that is no longer the situation. Thus, the formalist interpretation of this, allows us to perceive how sentence pattern and sequencing is used to establish or organize events within a temporally logical plot structure.

In the last sentence, we have another structure that reiterates the narrator’s time-specific narration. The narrator, again, seems to allude to a time before; the narrator says “None of them would ever have imagined...” it is pertinent to point out that, in this sentence, the comma that separates “imagined” from the rest of the structure suggests that that part of the sentence is a parenthetical aside – it exists to explain or give extra information about what it is that they would never have imagined, which is that “up to five-hundred Igbo people have been killed in Maiduguri.”

Sentence structure reveals the narrator’s commitment to exploring “the personal” instead of the spectacular. The personal, as has been explained, is removed or detached from the actual war setting. A careful examination of the

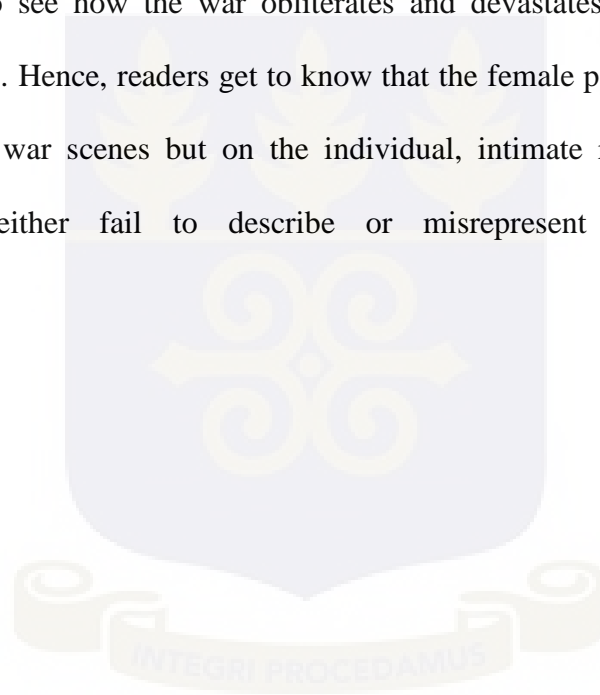
nature of the dependent and independent structures, shows how the narrator employs structure to provide context for “the personal” situation. The verb tense of the past perfect and simple past tense allows for a reading that situates the narrative in appropriate time and space to facilitate comprehension of events.

Thus, the technique is deliberate and focused; it facilitates an understanding of the agenda of the female war novelist – to use the narrative to explore the intimate, social, personal context or circumstances of the war narrative.

3.7 Conclusion

In a nutshell, This chapter has carried out a formalist analysis of Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* with specific reference to some aspects of narrative technique: multiple perspectives, the order of narration and the metatext. It has discussed these techniques and how they are used in the novel as well as their relevance or the purpose of their use. It has looked at the use of the multiple perspective narrated through several shifts in perspectives. The relevance of this style of narration, as identified, is that it helps Adichie discuss and explore multiple perspectives of the effects the war has on the individual. Her use of different fictional agents in the process of narration allows her to highlight the perceptual or ideological limitations or restrictions inherent in individual perspectives and also to facilitate an understanding of the differences and similarities evident in the different points of view. The study also did a close study of the sentence structures, punctuations marks, language use etc. to create a nexus

between the gender of the author and the technique and also to help in theorizing West African female war novels. As the process of storytelling invariably involves diverse choices of selection and projection on different levels, Adichie uses this style of narration to reveal the intimate, selected and projected perspectives of these narrators in articulating their private relationships and interpersonal relationships within the narrative. Adichie does not only presents graphic tearing down of physical structures and plundering of property, but also allows readers to see how the war obliterates and devastates the private lives of the characters. Hence, readers get to know that the female perspective on war is not a focus on war scenes but on the individual, intimate relationships which male authors either fail to describe or misrepresent in their war novels.



CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis of Forna's *The Memory of Love*

4.0 Introduction

Since Forna's novel deals more with the psyche of the characters than the historical narration of the war events, this chapter does a close study of how the narrative structures employed by Aminatta Forna propels the discussion of the psychological trauma of war on both the citizens and the entire Sierra Leonean nation. The analysis of the narrative structure is influenced by the trauma theory which, according to Saylor, "examines the ways in which traumatic occurrences are processed by and through literary texts"⁶. Hence this study on *The Memory of Love* focuses on 'how' traumatic occurrences are demonstrated, processed, exposed and repressed through the technique employed by the author. As was done in Chapter Three for *Half of a Yellow Sun*, this chapter looks at the character perspectives, the order of narration and the metatext (in the form of Elias Cole's confession) in narrating the traumatic experiences of the Sierra Leoneans. Since this study seeks to establish Forna's novel as part of a large 'women-centered' dynamic of writing war novels, this chapter does a formalist study of the sentence structures, syntax and the style of writing which female writers of West African war novels privilege. This chapter concludes with an emphatic stance that, this novel is an extended confession of the betrayal of a nation. Elias Cole's narration is at the centre of the discussion. The study

⁶ <http://saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/ENGL301-Trauma-Theory.pdf>

identifies the novel as engaging in a truth and reconciliation exercise in a novel form.

4.1 Trauma

Trauma, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is a very difficult or unpleasant experience that causes someone to have mental or emotional problems usually for a long time. In other words, it is the “sudden intrusion of new and unexpected knowledge into someone’s psyche, usually due to a sudden confrontation with violence or death” (Saylor). A traumatic event affects the psychological well-being of an individual and the best way of treating such is for “the victim [to be] helped to speak the horrifying truth of her past—to speak of the unspeakable” (Herman 179). Even though Caruth proposes the opposite in her most acclaimed article on trauma, “Unclaimed Experiences: Trauma and the Possibility of History”, that narrativization of traumatic memory is to be seen as a loss of incomprehensibility, and an impossible saying” (9), I could not agree more with Herman on helping the victim psychologically to speak. This is because according to clinical psychology, when a traumatized victim is given the opportunity to confront his past and put his pain in words and in proper perspective, that person is gradually on the way to recovery. This is the aim of therapy sessions for people with psychological problems.

The Memory of Love is a novel about love, companionship and betrayal engulfed in the political unrest that attacked Sierra Leone and the subsequent civil war in the 1990s. It speaks of the silences that a nation descends into whilst its people try to survive and cope with the physical and mental scars of those years.

The novel does not focus on the war scenes that it depicts; instead the narration hovers around clinics, relief centers and psychiatric hospitals. Hence, the novel focuses on the post-traumatic stress disorder that a nation has to address. To maintain this focus requires the deliberate avoidance of the narration of the war scenes (forced to the background) and the focus on the impact of social turbulence on the private spaces of people. The study investigates how the writer's technique is able to link and discuss the psychological trauma of the characters in a novel.

4.2 Multiple Perspectives (Focalisation)

Using the technique of internal focalization, specifically the variable type, Aminatta Forna portrays the traumatic effects of war through the stethoscope of the third person narrator who narrates events with several shifts in perspectives. However, Forna's use of multiple perspective style of narration is slightly different from Adichie's, in the sense that, with the exception of Elias Cole's account which is done in the first person, her novel is narrated primarily by an omniscient narrator whose narration is fused with the points of view of Adrian and Kai. This omniscient narrator has knowledge which makes him a zero focalizer who knows more than the characters. The narrator also gives accounts of events that make up the story through the perspectives of three characters: Kai, Adrian and Elias Cole. One difference between the narrative style of *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *The Memory of Love* is that Elias Cole's narration is done from the first person instead of the third person omniscient narrator. This is necessitated by the truth and reconciliation role which Elias Cole plays in the

novel. He gives the kind of confession an individual gives on the brink of death and asks for the purgation of sins. Since confessions are done personally with a priest and not by proxy, Elias Cole is the best person to narrate that portion of the novel.

4.2.1 Kai's Perspective

Kai's perspective in *The Memory of Love* exposes the several effects of war on Sierra Leone. By reason of his position as a medical doctor, readers get to know how war affects women and children as well as giving us a sense and a glimpse, a foretaste of the pain that the entire nation experiences. Unlike Adrian, whose contact with the people reveals the psychological trauma, Kai's experience with the patients reveals the general discomfort and pain, be it physical, emotional or psychological, experienced as a result of war. For instance, his first perspective in chapter ten depicts the effects of war on children. He goes to the children's ward and observes a group of children rejoicing and frantically opening their gifts brought to them by a Western charity. He notices that, "one parcel contains a plastic gun. A scuffle broke out between the boys. One of them, in fact the smaller of the two, wrestled the gun successfully from the other, forced his companion on his knees, hands behind his head and shot him in the back of the skull" (92-93). The war has seared the minds of the children to the extent that the games they play have traces of the violent acts of war they have experienced. This is evident in the fact that even the youngest of them knows how to easily and skillfully unarm his opponent.

Through the perspective of Kai, we also see how war permanently disfigures people and consequently makes them unable to accomplish their dreams and ambitions. Foday's scars represent the permanent scars branded on citizens by the war experiences, be it a destruction of properties, loss of lives, a weakened economy, the loss of dreams and aspirations. These scars hinder the realization of dreams. In the case of Foday, marriage was the dream. A young man's dreams to "walk straight and find a bride" (117) has been threatened since very "few [fathers] would give their daughter to a cripple, especially a poor one" (117). Foday has apparently sustained scars "on the heel of the right hand, [and] another on the back of the leg upon which they are operating" (117). Additionally, Kai's perspective highlights the destruction of relationships as a result of war. Kai is engaged to be married to Nenebah, but the advent of the war causes him to abandon that desire together with his dream to travel to practise medicine. The experience of these sweethearts tells us how war can negatively instigate misunderstanding and subsequently destroy a relationship that hitherto, was peaceful.

Furthermore, Kai, mirroring the lives of most citizens, is a man with secrets which haunt and torment him at night. Kai's tormenting episode with Bailia, in their encounter with the soldiers renders him insomniac. Readers are given a glimpse of the war scenes through the perspective of Kai when he retrospectively describes the tormenting experiences he had on the peninsular bridge with the nurse Bailia. In chapter fifty five, Kai, under hypnosis, recounts that sordid experience with the soldiers who kidnapped him and Bailia to tend to

their injured colleague. This account tells us what went wrong during those periods and how the soldiers raped and sexually harassed both male and female citizens. The majority of Sierra Leoneans suffer from a dissociative amnesia which involves a temporary or permanent loss of information from memory, usually as the result of disease or injury to the brain. With dissociative amnesia, the memories still exist but are deeply buried within the person's mind and cannot be recalled. However, the memories might resurface on their own, or after being triggered by something in the person's surroundings. Thus it is through the perspective of Kai that readers are made privy to this information.

One unique and perhaps the most important feature of Kai's perspective is the novel's way of symbolically projecting a feminist perspective of war through his viewpoint. This projection does not immediately emerge, like Olanna's. Nonetheless, a careful study of his viewpoint reveals that his focus, as compared with Adrian, is more on the effects of war on women. Through Kai's focalization, we see what Agnes and her daughters had to go through during the war experience; how she lost her husband and two daughters to war. We also see how women and children were killed and thrown into gutters. Hence we can infer that, Kai's perspective projects a feminist perspective of war. Agnes and her daughters were living alone without the protection of a man after the "dramatic" killing of her husband. Thus, Isatta invited them to stay in her house together with her fifteen year old precocious boy, Hassan, who "had run out of time to become a man" (310). They were staying together so they could solidarize and survive by clinging to each other. They "[queued] for food, [washed] their cloths in the river,

[fetched] water, [hunted] for firewood and edible plants in pairs so they could survive the war. Yet, Agnes' suffering did not end. She lost her daughter, Yalie, to a cholera epidemic that started in the first year of the war and her other daughter, Marian, also died "six months later, poisoned by a cut on her foot" (311). As if losing her entire family was not enough, she was forced to live with the killer of her husband, without the knowledge of his real identity, since her only surviving daughter and beacon of hope (Naasu) got married to him. without the knowledge of his real identity. Agnes is manipulated by the man to keep quiet about his identity in order not to lose her only daughter. These happenings psychologically affect her till she becomes a fugue. As Adrain says, "European fugues one hundred years ago were all men. Here they are women" (120), hence, there is an emphasis on the effects of war on women and not men.

Furthermore, owing to the lack of jobs caused by a weak economy, girls are forced into prostitution and other odd jobs such as waitressing. Many more are raped, killed and dumped into gutters for their bodies to be discovered later on in the mornings. Thus, young women are always on guard by wearing tight jeans under their clothes because of the fear of being caught and raped by soldiers. As Mamakay says;

...we wore jeans under our dresses. There was a time we dressed like that every day, because nobody knew when they were coming. One day the radio would say the rebels had been pushed back to the border, another day people arrived in the city saying

they were at Port Loko. We stopped believing the government. We wore blue jeans (279).

This projection of the plight of females in a war torn country through Kai's perspective is a way for Forna to project what the study finds to be an agenda to write about female perspectives of war. Hence Kai's perspective is significant and unique by virtue of the information he gives on the effects of war on women. Apart from this, between him and Adrian, he is the best person to tell the story of the effects traumatization. This is because he is a witness of the war as compared to Adrian who only comes to help with the traumatic disorder of the nation.

4.2.2 Adrian's Perspective (Foreign Observer)

Adrian's focalization in *The Memory of Love* is also important because his role of projecting the psychological trauma of the people further emphasizes the female writer's concentration on the personal and private spaces instead of on the battlefield. Whilst Kai's perspective reveals the effects of war on, especially, women and children, Adrian mainly projects the traumatic psychological effects of the Sierra Leonean war on the entire nation. This is effectively done because of his work at the psychiatric hospital. Through Adrian, we learn that when people join the army, they abuse drugs such as cannabis and other hard drugs which they call "booster morale" (86). Additionally, we learn how they get addicted to these drugs even after their time in the army. The use of these drugs provides a temporary haven and an escape from the traumatizing memory of the war period. His perspective indicates the extent of the psychological damage of

the country until the timely intervention of Dr. Attila, who apparently cannot handle these ‘nutcases’ alone because of the consistent increase in numbers.

Furthermore, the presence of Adrian helps Kai and many other mentally distressed patients to face their past memories and confront their deepest fears that have robbed them of sleep for so many years. He is like the litmus paper dipped into the very soul of the nation to test and ‘diagnose’ the PH, the acidity or alkalinity of the nation. In other words, he comes to the country to diagnose the psychological state of the people affected by war. Adrian’s presence also gives Elias Cole an opportunity to have a listening ear that is ready and willing to hear his confession and the story of the love between him and Saffia. Thus, his presence in the country further allows the patients to up, to refocus, acknowledge, desensitize and to inform readers of the impact of the war and the trauma that has become a pandemic in the nation.

We also get a glimpse of the war experiences through the focalization of Adrian when he focuses on helping the patients at the psychiatric clinic gain confidence and strength to overcome this trauma. We see this through his routine sessions where the patients reveal some aspects of the war and how they are affected by them. Additionally, when he becomes the notepad for Elias Cole to write down his story which talks about the period and the beginning of the war and how it affected and even killed some of his friends and lecturers, we are let in on how the war started some years ago. We get to know about the political upheaval during that period and how some lecturers rebelled against the government. Adrian’s session with Agnes also gives us a feel of the war and what

women and their families are forced to live with. Even though Kai's perspective reveals the plight of women and children, Adrian is the one who first brings us into contact with this fugue woman when she runs into him to say certain things that are incomprehensible. Hence, one unique and significant feature of Adrian's perspective is his role as the one who brings to the fore the extent of the psychological effects the war had on the citizens. This role is what the study sees as a projection of the female perspective of war. War novels, by reason of its name, are supposed to be a telling of battlefields, army, guns and killings. However, this novel only refers to these bloody scenes in a form of a memory or remembrance and concentrates on the post-traumatic stress disorders. This way of writing can be interpreted as the writer's deliberate way of avoiding a revelation of the battlefield.

Finally, Adrian's encounter with Mamakay (formally known as Nenebah) reveals some deep truths which, in my view, Fornia wants to bring to her wide readership. During Mamakay's routine lovemaking with Adrian, she discusses in an intellectual manner the main causes of the war and the negligence of the government to do something to end the plight of the nation. On her first encounter with Adrian in the bar, she narrates a story of a thief who was caught and lynched. She links this with the government officials as she wonders;

Don't you think it's strange?' continues Mamakay. 'The government stole from their own people for decades. They're still at it. Did people say anything? Did they protest? No. Their children dressed in rags and went hungry. Nobody stood up

to those men. And yet a poor man would be lynched for stealing tomatoes (253).

In her view, the government continues to steal from the people but goes unpunished while a poor young man who steals tomatoes to survive the war is caught and lynched. This political statement draws the attention of many. Hence, Forna uses her novel on war to make these strong political annotations on corruption and exploitation. This style of using literature to make political comments is reverberated in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) and Kwakye's *Clothes of Nakedness* (1998) as they thematically explore the plight of citizens in a country where corruption is the order of the day.

Adrian's perspective is significant because he is used, metaphorically, to represent a foreign aid worker serving as a healer of people in a country full of violence. However, this foreign aid worker is himself full of internal conflicts such that he does not stand a chance of doing what he intends to do. Adrian comes to Sierra Leone with grand ideas as to how to help the country without knowing exactly what the country is faced with. Besides, he comes to the country with his own internal emotional turmoil which markedly prevents him from bringing that healing. Adrian is running away from a failing marriage and a daughter to seek refuge in Sierra Leone. Hence the conflict and displacement in the nation is represented in his own life. Therefore, comparing Adrian and Kai, Adrian is the better person to give the accounts of the traumatized patients in the hospital because, first of all, he is a medically qualified psychologist who handles

patients with post-traumatic stress disorders against Kai the orthopedic doctor. Secondly, he can easily identify with the turmoil going on in their lives due to the conflict he has with his family.

4.2.3 Elias Cole's Perspective (Eye Witness)

Elias Cole's narration of the story is an important one because his narration provides readers with a direct account of the events that led to the war and also gives us the metatext of the narration through his confession/autobiography. His narration is done in the first person instead of the third person through the perspective of the characters. He narrates to Adrian, a psychologist, his past life and selfish desires. This was 30 years ago, before the war. His narration dangles between the present and the past because a greater part is done in retrospect. When he moves to the past, he recounts the selfish desire he had for Saffia, Julius' wife, which led to an act of betrayal that resulted in the imprisonment and subsequent death of Julius. The entire narration of his story to Adrian is an effort to justify this act of betrayal.

It is through the perspective of Elias that readers catch a glimpse of the beginning of the unstable political climate which gradually develops into a civil war. It is during his days on the university campus as a history lecturer that a publication against the government is authored by Julius and his colleagues. Prior to that, there are political upheavals and conspiracies that make the entire campus and nation apprehensive. There is also a ban on academic articles with suggestive

titles and content which might incite the people to rise up against the ruling government. However, some workers angered by this restriction, rebelled, resulting in commotion on the campus. This political rebellion is what led to the imprisonment of most of the intellectuals including Elias. However, Elias sacrifices Julius to save his own life by betraying and telling the corrupt officials of Julius' secret publications and intentions to fight against the ruling government. In addition, Forna makes political commentary through the perspective of Elias. The conversation held among Julius and his colleagues, Kekura Conteh and Ade Yansaneh especially on the day of the moon landing, is a political commentary on government, the nation and on Africa as a whole (146-148).

Furthermore, his narration is a good foundation to the novel because it foreshadows the main idea or the thematic concerns of the novel. In the first chapter, he opens the narration with a discussion of a song he heard while in college. This song gives the entire novel a peculiar tone. The song suggests a tone of longing for something pleasant that was lost. He says;

I heard a song, a morning as I walked to college. It came to me across the radio playing on a stall I passed. A song from far way, about a lost love... but in the low notes I could hear the loss this man had suffered. And in the high notes too that it was a song about something that could never be...

For the purpose of analysis, the man in the song, in this instance, may represent the entire Sierra Leonean nation. The loss that this nation has suffered,

represented by the low notes, is the loss of lives, property and peace. The low notes stand for the deep silence that ironically screams out the loss suffered by the entire nation. The high notes symbolize a strain or a force to attain something sweet. However, even in those straining moments to overcome the low note (loss), the note produced is a song of something that cannot be, something that cannot be forgotten and will always remain a memory on the mind of the man (the Sierra Leonean nation). He goes ahead to say;

The song was indeed about loss, but not of a woman. In the song, a young man longed for a time past, a time he had only heard about in the words of those who'd lived it, a time of hope and dreams. He was singing of the life lost to him, because it had been his misfortune to be born much later, when the world was already a different place (2).

This tells us that the novel is going to be about a memory of something, a yearning for something that was lost in the past. And later on in the narration, we realize that the people of Sierra Leone long for those beautiful moments in the past when they lived in peace and tranquility without any psychological trauma. They yearn to regain what was lost during the war just like a man longs for the love of his lost lover.

4.2.4 Relevance of the Perspective

The novel's treatment of the style of narration in terms of the narrator is significant in various ways. First of all, the author says in an interview with BBC that when she wrote the book, her focus was not limited to only the Sierra

Leonean nation but extended to many people all over the world. She explains that when she is writing, she thinks of two audiences: her South African step-mother on the one hand and her British mother-in-law on the other hand. Her goal is for both ‘mothers’ to read the book and find something in it⁷. Thus, in my view, she adopts a shift in point of view so that people outside Sierra Leone can also relate to the story. Additionally, the novel is not just about the traumatic impact of civil war on Sierra Leone but also about the betrayal of both friendship and nation. This other phase of the novel is epitomized by the character and narration of Elias Cole. The metatext in the form of Elias’s confession, reveals how he has helped in the death of the nation by betraying his colleagues who were willing to fight against the incumbent corrupt government. His account reveals the selfish attitude of citizens who are ready to sacrifice anything, including their nation, just to save their life and family. (207-213; 222)

4.3 The Plot Structure (Order of Narration)

The order of narration in *The Memory of Love* does not exactly follow the back and forth pattern that Adichie adopts in her narration. Forna uses a unique order of narration which is somewhat similar to Adichie’s pendulum form of narration but with a few distinctive features that help her discuss the post-traumatic effects of war on the people of Sierra Leone. The story focuses on the period after, not the time during the war. However, she talks about the war scenes

⁷ http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/2010/05/100518_aminatta_forna.shtml

through characters' memory, story-telling, nightmares as well as the deafening silence that plagues the entire country due to the traumatic experience of war. Thus, instead of the narration moving back and forth in time (between years and periods of the war), it moves from the present traumatic situation of the people to the past events of the war. She moves to the past, through the memory of her characters, to inform readers about the cause of the current state and behaviour of the characters and the nation. She also moves to the past through the narration of Elias. This is the similarity it shares with Adichie's style, where the narration moves to the past and back to the present. However, she tells her war story through the memories of characters and discusses the psycho-traumatic results of the war on the people. Hence her story is a narration of the past war experience as a causative factor of the psycho traumatic and resounding silence that has plagued the entire Sierra Leonean country.

The Memory of Love uses a combination of both the first person narrator and the third person, omniscient narrator. The first person narrator, Elias Cole, begins the story before the omniscient narrator comes in to tell Adrian and Kai's perspective of the war. Just like Adichie, Forna also adopts the story-within-a-story- concept with Elias Cole narrating his story while the omniscient narrator also narrated the events of the other characters. Thus a story begins and yet another story is being told in a different voice and with a different perspective. For instance, in Henry James' *Turn of the Screw* (1896), the third person narrator starts the story and hands it over to the governess who continues her account of

the story in the first person. Nonetheless, Elias Cole's narration, just like a mother watching over her child, comes in from time to time to narrate his story, just to keep the narration in perspective.

Furthermore, the third person narrator relating Adrian's and Kai's perspectives can be seen as an extradiegetic narrator because he is on a higher level than the story and knows everything about the characters, even their past and innermost thoughts; "He leans back and waits for the caffeine to snap through his system, the nerve endings quivering into life, prickling his skin. Right now he'd like to talk to somebody, but who?" (45). The narrator is able to describe Adrian's childhood and his life with his mother who was almost born in a foreign land (63-66). Thus the narrator relating the events of Adrian and Kai is an extradiegetic one just like the narrator in *Sons and Lovers* who tells the story from the third person (1913). However, Forna's adaptation of the extradiegetic narrator is different from D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. He narrates with the recurrent indicator, "... said Agnes" or "Agnes says". But Forna's narration goes straight to quote what the characters say. Nonetheless, she makes reference to the fact that a character is about to speak before quoting the words of that character so that readers will not get confused. Elias Cole's narration is also an autodiegetic narration where he is the main character of the story he tells. Despite the fact that novels are written documents, authors can present the events as if they were spoken or are thoughts rather than a written piece. Elias Cole does exactly this in his narration. The question is why would Forna choose this kind of narration/What is the aim of this style of narration? Is it to achieve realism in the

novel? The subsequent paragraphs on the relevance of the order, attempt a response to these questions.

4.3.1 Relevance of the Order of Narration

To better situate and justify the novel's choice of such an order, this section looks at the historical background of Sierra Leone. The Sierra Leonean war is one war in Africa which lasted a whole decade and led to the loss and dismemberment of uncountable lives. Sierra Leone is a country which should have been an "economic haven" for most African countries because of its rich natural resources, like alluvial diamonds, arable lands and rain forests;

Sierra Leone was meant to be the shining light of Africa; it had all that was needed to engineer economic and political prosperity. It was also the first country to have the first University in West Africa: the Fourah Bay College. These factors ought to have made Sierra Leone a living paradise⁸

However, due to corruption, pilfering and political assassinations, what should have been a paradise becomes a living hell for most people since thousands lose their lives with many more becoming refugees in other countries. The political history of Sierra Leone after independence was characterized by a succession of corrupt autocratic leaders who did not think about the people but about themselves and how best they could benefit from the resources of the country. Sierra Leone wrestled and gained its independence from the British.

⁸<http://sierraleonecivilwar.com/>

in 1961. After the death of Prime minister, Sir Milton Margai, the political climate was “characterized by corruption, mismanagement and electoral violence that led to a weak civil society, the collapse of the education system [etc]”⁹. The mismanagement of resources worsened when Siaka Stevens unconstitutionally became the leader for 17 long years. He turned the once democratic country into a one-party state which destroyed and perverted every state institution (including schools). He undermined parliament, bribed judges and often resorted to state sanctioned executions and the exile of leaders in government who did not cooperate with his one-party rule and his decisions. These disruptions are what Forna describes in her first novel, *The Devil that Danced on the Water* (2002), a memoir of her father who was involved in government and was unjustly assassinated by Siaka Stevens for being the most loved and cherished presidential option of Sierra Leoneans.

The corruption in the country persisted till 1991. For their selfish gain, the revolutionary United Front (RUF) assisted by Charles Taylor of Liberia, invaded the country and overthrew Joseph Momoh, had taken control of the resources of the country and had failed to help improve the economy or the lives of the people. This resulted in the civil war which lasted for eleven years. Each year of the 11 years, was characterized by military coup d'états, peace conferences like the Lome Peace Accord and the Abidjan Peace Accord and UN interventions targeted at ensuring peace. This unstable nature of governance led to the death of over 50,000 Sierra Leoneans with more than half of the population who

⁹http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sierra_Leone_Civil_War

Survived the war being plunged into traumatic psychological disorders as a result of the gross experiences of the war.

This historical account of the Sierra Leonean civil war, is a benchmark in determining the sequential order of events as narrated by Forna, whether she narrates the war experiences as they are or changes the order to suit her style of writing. It also informs readers that the after effect of the war on the population is what influenced Forna to write her novel. After introducing readers to the period after independence in the novel, *The Devil that Danced on the Water* (2002), she continues to talk about the war and its effects in *The Memory of Love*. The main aim of this technique is to analyse the war events through the traumatic effects which somewhat helps her escape from narrating that painful, bloody aspect of the war which might bring back the unpleasant memory of what happened some years back. Forna's entire family fell victim to this war to the extent that her father was politically assassinated which makes this war personal for her. Thus, in order to escape from a confrontation of that sordid past, she tells her story focusing on the traumatic experiences of the population but goes back, in the interim, to give her readers a taste of the war through the memory, the hallucinations and nightmares of her characters.

Apart from the movement from the effects of the war to the war scenes, the narration also moves from present to past. We see this in the chapters that discuss Elias Cole's story-telling to either Adrian or to Kai. Elias Cole in his narration of his impossible and forced love for Saffia and the act of betrayal

against Julius due to his selfish unrequited love, lets his narration oscillates between the past and present. Chapter One begins with a remembrance of “something in the past, something lost” (1). This beginning is significant; it foreshadows what is yet to happen in the novel. It gives the impression that the novel is going to be a memory or remembrance of the past. The narration then moves to the present (after 30yrs) and his current life with his illness, immobility and his houseboy, Babagaleh. Elias’s account moves from one period to the other without any prompting to determine the change. Unlike Adichie’s which moves to different time periods through the parts, Forna’s narration shifts without any indication that there has been a shift in narration from current to past events. For instance, in Chapter One the narration moves in between story-telling (the past) and the present without any prompting. After Babagaleh leaves Elias for the mosque, he begins with a talk about a notebook he is looking for and while in this process, he chances on the book, *Lethbridge Banbury* which brings back memories of his days as a lecturer in the university. He then suddenly leaps to:

That January evening I watched her, she and her husband. They moved through the party with ease, never alone for more than a few moments... At the murmured insistence of the room he rose to his feet, suddenly energized, jumped on the stage and delivered a few words... what was it he had said to them? It’s gone” (8-9).

In the next sentence, the narration immediately moves to the present where Elias “spent the rest of the morning and the best part of the afternoon searching. [His] search was by necessity, both slow and painstaking. When Babagaleh arrives back

from the mosque...” (9). After Babagaleh had shown him where he could find his notebook, the narration once again and suddenly moves to 25 November 1968, two months before the faculty wives’ dinner. “I recalled I had included mention of his address in my report for the Dean” (9). This back and forth movement is significant of Elias’s state of mind and his emotions. His “confession” to Adrian is his bid to justify his act of betrayal that leads to the death of Julius. It also shows the guilt he feels for such an act which one can say: makes him fumble in his narration. Hence his account is presented in an oscillating manner to represent his desperation to expose let out his emotions before dying.

The back and forth narration is also seen with the patients at the psychiatric hospital where Adrian works. These mentally deluded characters are suffering from the aftermath of the war. For Adrian to be able to treat them, they must confront their past and be free from the “dark shadows” that continually haunt them and make their lives unbearable. In this process, the patients are forced to describe the war scenes and how they affect them. Hence, they shift from the current circumstances to narrate the past (the war period).

Finally, Kai also contributes to the swing in narration when he occasionally, either through his nightmares or his daydreaming, discusses his experience with Baila on the peninsula bridge. He changes the order of narration when he describes the horrible scene that they were subjected to when captured by some soldiers to attend to their wounded soldiers. Thus we learn about the

rape of Baila and about his own sexual exploitation by the opponent soldiers who later attacked, defeated and killed all the soldiers who had captured and promised them safety after they had taken care of all their wounded.

The effect of this style of writing is that Forna uses this oscillating order of narration to create a background or context to link them to the present events currently unfolding. By using this technique, Forna allows readers to gain insight into a character's motivation and behaviour or provides the background to certain conflicts occurring in the story. Therefore, the narration of the story moves from past to present with Elias Cole's account of the war just to provide a background to the beginning of the war. The constant shift to the past is an avenue for readers to know that the stirring unrest in the nation happened thirty years ago and led to a war that lasted for almost eleven years. Also, both the patient at the psychiatric hospital and Kai's hallucinations contribute to the change in order to give insight into their behaviours and current motivations. The movement to the war scenes through these characters' hallucinations, dreams and medical treatments, provides an explanation of their behaviours. Readers get to know that these characters act in certain traumatized ways due to the severity of their experiences which have consequently seared their consciences and have marked them for years.

4.4 The Metatext

A metatext, as earlier established in chapter three, is a narration within a narration. It is a kind of narration that throws more light or makes comments on

the main text. Thus, Forna's metatext is in the form of Elias Cole's recount since it throws more light on the main account of the effects of war. Elias Cole's account does a different thing from what is done by the other characters in the sense that he does not tell readers the post traumatic effects of war, but informs us of the unstable political climate that gradually led to the war. In the metatext, he is telling a story about his life thirty years before the time of narration. While he tells us of the selfish love he had for Saffia, he inadvertently describes the political scene, thirty years ago. Hence readers are able to know what happened thirty years ago that gradually led to civil unrest. Furthermore, the metatext reveals the effects of unrequited selfish love. The selfish desire that Cole had for Saffia, even though she was married, led to the betrayal of his friend and colleague, Julius. The true identity of Mamakay, who is the same as Kai's childhood lover, Nenebah, is also revealed in the metatext. We learn about the background life of this important character and the circumstances surrounding her birth as well as her current state as a bar girl. Thus the metatext serves as reference point for the understanding of some of the actions of the novel since it basically tells readers what happened thirty years ago.

The effect of this technique (metatext) is for Forna to first of all provide background information or the context to certain behaviours and motivations in her narration of the traumatic effects of war. More importantly, this style of writing exposes the emotions and feelings of the past, which creates an effect of closeness to the reader unlike the style that weaves this account into the main fibre of the story. Also, since Forna's concentration is on the human responses to war,

that is the post traumatic effects of war, she sets aside the narration of the war scenes and its happenings in a form of glossary or reference page which explains some of the events in the novel. In other words, the account of war scenes is not inculcated into the main narrative for the simple reason that the author's aim is to give an account of the traumatic effects of war and not the war scenes or the direct experiences of the war by characters. Additionally, this technique also helps the author to "literally" hold up Elias Cole's acts of betrayal to the characters in the book and to the readers for reproof and correction. She advocates that such selfish behaviour of looking out for only oneself and family by betraying others during a period of national crisis leads to the death of an entire nation. Hence she sets it aside from the main narration and relates it in the first person for readers to internalise the confession and learn from it.

4.5 Formalist Reading of Forna's *The Memory of Love*

-I heard a song, a morning as I walked to college. It came to me across the radio playing on a stall I passed. A song from far away, about a lost love. At least so I imagined, I didn't understand the words, only the melody. But in the low notes I could hear the loss this man had suffered. And in the high notes I understood too that it was a song about something that could never be. I had not wept in years. But I did, there and then, on the side of a dusty street, surrounded by strangers. The melody stayed with me for years.

The excerpt adopts a syntactic structure that projects or emphasizes the main participant in the event as his reaction is being described, and it also foregrounds "the song" as an important factor in the description. The first sentence, for

example, highlights this syntactic structure quite well. Adopting the simple sentence structure of S+V+O, the narrator succeeds in projecting the essential elements in this prose context: himself (the narrator) as well as the song.

I heard a song, a morning as I walked to college.

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

(Subject (Main Verb) (article) (Direct Object) (optional adverbial
structure)
Pronoun)

A performative interpretation of syntax reveals that given the syntactic roles, “I” (the subject pronoun) performs the action of “hearing” (the song). Thus, this formalist reading of the narrative lends support to the status of the “I” as the active narrator in this context. Also, given the performative structure, “a song” is located in object position. Given the transitive usage of the verb in this instance, “a song” becomes the direct object of the verb “heard”. It is important to note that the transitive usage of the verb makes “a song” an indispensable element in the sentence structure. It is important to achieving both grammatical and semantic completeness. The comma that separates, ‘a morning as I walked to college’, from the rest of the sentence, positions it as an optional element in the sentence structure.

The next sentence also adopts the simple sentence structure, however, this time, the roles of subject and object are reversed.

It came to me across the radio playing on a stall I passed.

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

(Subject (Main Vb.) (Prep) (Obj) (adverbial structure)
Pronoun)

The pronoun referent of “it” is the song. In this sentence, we find that the performative roles have been reversed. The song assumes subject position whereas the narrator moves to the object position. Interestingly, if we were to compare the grammatical and semantic merits of the sentences being discussed, we could argue that they are one and the same. “I heard a song” (sentence 1) suggests or implies that the song came to the narrator. A little acoustic science would demonstrate this quite succinctly. Sound travels to the ear of the listener. Perception (of sound) operates on the mechanics of sound waves travelling across a medium or channel to the ear of a listener, thus the expression “It came to me”. In the same vein, perception (of sound) requires that sound waves be picked up by the listener, thus the sentence “I heard a song”.

Further analysis of performative roles in this excerpt lends further support to this Subject-Verb-Object dialogic. Also, the verb tense is consistent- the entire section is rendered in the past tense. This reiterates Genette’s time construct of the Order of narration which has to do with the arrangement of events in the narration; which action comes first, which one is delayed, highlighted or glossed over. The event or character highlighted with more prominent roles determines an author’s main concern. The war story was rendered as memories to deliberately avoid the narration of the war event.

The performative nature of the sentence structure employed by Forna lends support to the argument of the peculiarities of the female war novelist's agenda; the formalist interpretation shows how technique is connected to purpose. Performative structures thrive on the use of the Subject-Verb-Object dialogic. What this means is that the performative sentences employ personal pronouns that describe a relationship between one participant and the other; "I – you", "We – them" "They – me" relationships are discussed.

Essentially, the pronouns employed lend support to the focus on the intimate, personal lives of the narration. The technique employed allows the narrator to employ sentence structures that stress "interpersonality" and relationships among characters in the narrative

4.6 Conclusion

After a close study of the identified narrative techniques and their relevance, it can be noted that where earlier war novels relied on "spectacle" at large, Forna's novel allows us to see war at the level of the private, the intimate and the personal. Thus, after a close reading of the techniques used, the study discovered that there was a "de-familiarization" of meaning which is a move from the usual talk of war scenes, done by many other writers, to a discovery of the inner or the private and domestic lives ravaged by war. The question however is: how do the techniques employed bring out the discussion of the inner, private lives of the characters? Forna uses multiple perspectives to get first-hand information from the

characters who suffered during the war, instead of a re-telling by a third person narrator. This choice of focalization is significant because, private and intimate lives are best told by individuals themselves or someone close to them. The possibility that a distanced person might overlook certain deep and inner occurrences is high in a war situation because that person might only be looking at the country as a whole and the 'graphic' destruction of property. In order to avoid that tendency, Forna chooses to personally probe the psyche of characters through her choice of the multiple perspectives.

Furthermore, her use of an oscillating narrative time signifies the change in the daily lives of the people and the nation as a whole. To depict the psyche of the traumatized people instead of just the war scenes, Forna has to go deep into the minds of characters. Since the brain of an individual is not one that thinks straight all the time, but changes or oscillates in its thinking patterns, Forna decides to adopt that kind of narration to reflect the unstable nature of the mind. This tells readers that the minds of the people in a war torn environment are depressed ones that cannot think properly and straight. Hence, she projects her character's state of mind through her order of narration.

Finally, Forna's novel is more of an extended confession. Elias Cole's meta-discourse can be seen as a secular confession. The process of unburdening oneself before dying means, first of all that one is looking for solutions to some pending questions and would want to get them before dying. It also implies that there might be communally recognized standards that have been flouted, thus in

the confession one intends to make things right with oneself and the community. In a sense, this is what Forna does with her metatext. She is doing a truth and reconciliation exercise in a novel form so that Elias Cole ceases to be an “individual” but becomes a ‘paragon of a community’s conscience’. What he seems to be doing is what Forna is suggesting that everyone in the community needs to do. The entire populace has been plunged into a deep well of secrets and deep fears of the past that haunt them. Hence they all need to confess and confront these secrets to be cleansed. Like the Bible verse which says, ‘let him who has no sin cast the first stone’, and since there is none without sin (secrets/pain from the war) in the community, they all need not blame Elias Cole by casting stones at him, but follow his example and be cleansed. Consequently, her portrayal of Elias Cole’s confession is to suggest that all Sierra Leoneans must look within themselves, identify their similarities with Elias Cole and do a similar confession in order to be free of guilt and fear. In other words, the use of the metatext is to suggest that the entire nation must go through a therapeutic cleansing of sins (facing fears) in order to solve the psychological disorders that have become pandemic due to the war.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study examines the West African civil war novel by investigating how female civil war novelists present West African civil war narratives. It examines how the female perspective on West African civil wars ushers in new dimensions of the war that may be missing in earlier male authored novels. In other words, the study researched (into) the female novelist's style of writing war novels and revealed the possible reasons and meanings attained from the close study of the narrative techniques employed. This act of studying the structure, according to formalist structures, leads to a rediscovery or a 'de-familiarization' of meaning. The thesis further analysed the authenticity of Machiko and Emenyonu's claim that female war novelists 'shy' away from describing terrible battle scenes and instead focus on the home front. They claim that these writers are preoccupied with the narration of the war story without subscribing "to the axiom of art for art's sake"; that is the intrinsic value of art, divorced from any didactic or moral function. To investigate this, the researcher conducted a formalist study of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love*.

The study identified similar narrative techniques adopted by both writers, closely studied them and highlighted their relevance. This led to the acknowledgement that these writers are doing something different with their war novels. These writers focus on the private, the intimate, the domestic and the interpersonal relationships of their characters in order to narrate the traumatic

experiences caused by during war and the post traumatic experiences of war, respectively. It was identified that instead of the usual “vivid” and “graphic” description of the bloody scenes as experienced by various characters, (a feature of male war writers), these female writers focus on the domestic through their astutely chosen narrative techniques.

The argument of this thesis is that female novelists writing about West African civil wars in their novels embark on a social agenda through their form of writing. Their perspective (narration) is one that goes beyond the blood curdling details of the battlefield to explore the intimate and interpersonal relationships of characters within the war setting. Thus female novelists wield their art (narrative technique) in a manner that enables them to fulfil the social objective of revealing the extent to which war impacts the private and intimate lives of their characters. Hence, the study realizes that these female writers are not only preoccupied with the telling of the war story as it is but are able to come up with technical innovations to tell their story. Indeed, a close reading of the structure of these novels shows that Adichie and Forna carefully use similar narrative techniques to communicate certain social messages on the traumatic effects of war on a country.

It was discovered that Adichie does not only narrate the war experiences, but that through her style and focus of narration, she also makes clear –the link between colonialism and the ethnic and political strife of the new [independent] nation (Novak, 34). She questions the ‘post’ in post-colonialism and through her

narration of the discussions between Odenigbo and his intellectual friends, she suggests that the British are to blame for the war and misunderstanding which happened as a result of their “divide and rule” policy. This policy leaves Nigeria divided into regions, states and ethnic or tribal factions.

Forna’s novel, on the other hand, discusses the prelude and aftermath of war. It emphasizes the psychological trauma that a nation is plunged into due to war and violence. Forna’s choice of characters and form of narration (who says what and in what form) emphasizes her criticism of the selfish approach of some leaders who become accomplices to the death of their nation, leaders who only think of salvaging and protecting their own life and that of their family instead of sacrificing themselves for their entire nation. For instance, her presentation of Elias (she says in an interview on BBC West Africa) is influenced by how some people who confronted and challenged the government on the corruption and autocracy in the country survived when everybody else who did same had been murdered, disappeared or lost their jobs.

In investigating the argument of the thesis, the study looked at Adichie’s novel for which purpose the articles of Akpome, 2013 Ouma, 2011, Ngwira 2012; Sadai, 2012; Vambe, (2008, 2012) were of tremendous benefit since they served as reliable secondary readings. Beyond this, the study also took a closer look at the relevant contribution of multiple perspectives (focalization), order of narration and metatext to the war genre and to literature. It also looked at some literatures and articles written on the war genre to establish the claim that there have been some debates and controversies about the form and content of war novels. Writers

are faced with the challenge of resuscitating or fictionalizing historical accounts and repressing some sordid and violent scenes or even compromising on some of the facts of the war. Other articles also bring out the fact that most of the novels produced as a result of war are produced by authors who were “onlookers” and who did not “wield the gun”. Hence their writing on the war experience is not authentic and cannot be reliable.

However, the literature review argues that women writers of war have debunked this notion and have gone ahead to produce war literature that is both structurally successful and that manages to bring forth their feminist perspectives on war. The study has revealed that irrespective of the fact that Adichie and Forna were not a part of the civil war they write about, their narration can be reliable and read as an authentic representation of history. Consequently, the close reading of the primary novels reveals that both writers use multiple perspectives, an oscillating order of narration and a metatext to best articulate their views on the respective wars of their country.

As far as the multiple perspective (focalization) is concerned, this study has shown that multiple perspectives are used so that authors can get personal and intimate relationship details and other information from characters about themselves and other characters. The researcher has established that the authors chose this style of narration in order to effectively narrate the intimate and personal lives of characters and not just the graphic destruction of bodies and property.

With regards to the order of narration, the study has revealed that this form of narration is privileged by both authors because it allows them to depict the swings in the lives, the emotions and psyche of the characters. The changes depict the change in the case of Adichie, (i) Authorship of the metatext (ii) Perspectives or point of view (iii) Psychological and emotional trajectories of the lives of central characters (iv) The metamorphosis of Ugwu (v) Richard's beliefs from his foreign ideologies to the acceptance of the ways of the Igbo culture. In the case of Forna, the swing of narration signifies the psychological distress that the entire nation is plunged into. She writes her novel as if she is in a therapy session with characters without directly focusing on the war. That is, she narrates the war through the private lives of three characters, each of whom is in one way or the other fighting some form of personal conflict.

5.1 Theorization of the Female War Novel

One question that may be troubling the minds of some readers of this thesis is: what exactly constitutes a female war novel and what are the features that make it different from that of the male? To ensure that this thesis is put into proper perspective, it is important to provide a description of what constitutes the female war novel and what peculiar features it has that distinguish it from the male authored novel on war. This section attempts to address this issue.

First and foremost, this study has noted that the narration of events in the female war novel does not focus on the war scenes and how the war was fought but on

the lives and metamorphosis of the lives involved in the fight. As hinted earlier, even though their narration is about the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean civil wars respectively, Adichie and Forna focus on the inter-personal relationships of the characters and how their intimate and private lives are disrupted by the war. This feature of the female war novel is not frequently seen in the male authored novel since such novels tend to privilege the narration of the war events and the battle field. Hence this is a unique feature of that kind of writing.

Secondly, the language used is subtle and more “friendly” (in terms of its softness) as compared to the harsh, “loud” and punitive tone of the male novels. This might be due to the focus of the narration since the telling of a more intimate and private life requires the use of softer, intimate and calmer words where as a focus on the conflict and war would require the use of swear words or jargons and other military words that communicate hostile or violent intent.

In addition, the plot structure is episodic as compared to the linear narration seen in Kouroma’s *Allah is not obliged*, Elechi Amadi’s *Sunset in Biafra* and Emmanuel Dongala’s *Johnny Mad Dog*. Adichie and Forna narrate their war stories by moving in between time and using multiple narrators and this changes the entire order of each story. The authors use this kind of plot to represent the metamorphosis in the once stable and interesting lives of the characters. The choice of this type of plot structure is also influenced by the fact that when it comes to the narration of the interpersonal, intimate and private lives of characters, things happen spontaneously, changing momentum and throwing everything into a frenzy. Hence, a well-structured linear style of narration will not

be relevant for this mode of writing since it will not adequately reflect the more spontaneously intimate, private and interpersonal relationships. This feature is not seen in the male authored war novels.

Furthermore, there is less attention to the politics that led to the onset of the conflict. Even when the political facts are glaring, female authors of war novels will rather discuss the political issues in a subtler manner or never talk about them at all. For instance, the Biafran war was heavily dependent on the political struggle for power between the Southern Igbos and the Northern Nigerians. Hence, a narration of that conflict cannot go past that political bit. However, Foran, according to my reading, seeks to lay down some troublesome ghost of her life by narrating her story with a focus on men, friendship and the complicity and treachery between two friends which, in time, could swell into matters of life and death, conflict and survival. She does not use the direct approach that is employed by the male writers. Adichie on the other hand finds it more interesting to write about the love relationship between Olanna and Odenigbo instead of the glaring political conflict in the country.

Finally, the study also notes that female war novelists do not just focus on the individuals involved in the war struggle but have a special bias for children and women. Women and children are given priorities in their story. For instance, Adichie makes her female characters possess stronger personalities than the males. Typical examples of the strong personalities are Olanna, Kainene, Alice and Madugbe against the weak and impotent Richard and Odenigbo.

5.2 Similarities and Differences

Although Adichie and Forna share some similarities with regards to the aim of writing about war and the style of narrating it through the intimate interpersonal relationships, the extent of their literary output differs considerably. First and foremost, both novels, irrespective of the fact that they narrate civil war, do not focus directly on the bloody scenes of war. The focus is rather on the interpersonal, domestic and sexual relationships of characters; the war story is narrated through the lenses of the traumatic effects of war on the characters. Therefore, the war becomes a backdrop that narrates the interpersonal, traumatic and intimate relationships of the characters. However, both novels slightly vary their lenses through which they tell the war story. Adichie, for instance, focuses on the interpersonal relationship of the characters and how they rely on each other to, as a unit, fight and survive the war. For instance, the novel concentrates on how Odenigbo intimately relates with Olanna when he is “lost” or confused about what exactly is going on in their country or when he doesn’t want to think about the loss of their comfortable life in Nsukka (262). However, Olanna, on the other hand, is not happy with Odenigbo’s “assumed” unconcerned nature of leaving all the burden of fending for the family on her, even to the extent she thinks that he does not show much concern when Baby falls sick. Olanna relies on her husband to give her hope that their baby will not die but since Odenigbo’s response does not come across as expected, she gets angry at him.

‘Nkem, her cough is getting better and her appetite will come back’. He began to comb his hair. She was angry with him for not saying what she wanted to hear, for not assuming the power of fate and

telling her that Baby would be well, for being normal enough to continue to dress for work. His kiss before he left was quick, not the usual lingering press of lips, and that, too, she held against him (267).

This tells us how the characters relied on each other to survive the war. It also tells how Richard, Kainene, Olanna, Ugwu and even 'Baby' relied on each other to survive the war and how devastating it is when one relation is lost or goes missing in the war (405-417). It further tells us how the war changed their once intimate and pleasant lovemaking to an unpleasant encounter; "that night, she was silent as his thrusts became faster. It was the first time she felt detached from him; while he was murmuring in her ears, she was mourning her money in the bank in Lagos" (262). Therefore, *Half of a Yellow Sun* explores the traumatic experiences of people especially women in a war torn zone. It focuses on the destruction of the private, personal and intimate lives of people affected by war.

Forna, on the other hand, focuses on the before and after traumatic effects of the Sierra Leonean war. She focuses on the stress disorders that plague the people after nine years of warring against each other and against government. Hence her story revolves around psychiatric hospitals and relief centers. She treats her characters like people who need special treatment and thus her narration assumes a form likened to a therapeutic session with a doctor. Consequently, both novels privatize war novels in the sense that, their focus of narration is on the domestic, intimate, private and inner lives of the characters, as against the bloody war scenes of other war novels.

Therefore, both writers privilege the personal, as against the public, cost of conflict. In their respective novels about the Biafran struggle and the Sierra Leonean civil war, they focus on the individual, the personal, the civilian, and the ways in which the long-term threat of violence, alongside physical and emotional wounding, reconstructs the daily lives of characters. As Adichie comments: “I was determined to make my novel about what I like to think of as the *grittiness* of being human—a book about relationships, about people who have sex and eat food and laugh” (“Authenticity” 50). For Adichie, the reader must become familiar with the passions of her characters’ daily lives if they would like to learn about the negative impacts of civil war and begin to appreciate the deprivations of conflict.

In addition, the novels have a special way of telling the intimate and sexual relationships of the characters. Instead of narrating the gruesome war scenes, which is expected of any war novel, the novel tells of the sexual encounters between Olanna and Odenigbo, Richard and Kainene.; Kai and Nenebah; Adrian and Mamakay. Neither author leaves her characters in the living room but follow them into their bedrooms.

Furthermore, the novels use a range of narrative strategies to explore complex ideas and characters. Both novels tell the war story through three different character perspectives. That is to say, they make use of **third person narration** to tell the story through three different points of view and adopt the story within a story to help in oscillating between the past and the present, the war period and the current life. These narrative strategies help the authors to

successfully narrate war by looking at its domestic and traumatic effects. The only difference is that Forna used all male characters as her focalizers whilst Adichie includes the perspective of a woman. The reason why Adichie would include the perspective of a woman, one can guess, is due to her “fight” for the full realization of women their voice and potentials. This view is evident in most of her novels and short stories; *Purple Hibiscus*, *Americanah* (2013), *The Headstrong Historian* and some of her interviews. Hence by inference, I can say that she does not only want to project the male perspectives of the Biafran war but also the female perspective, hence her inclusion of Olanna as one of the focalizers.

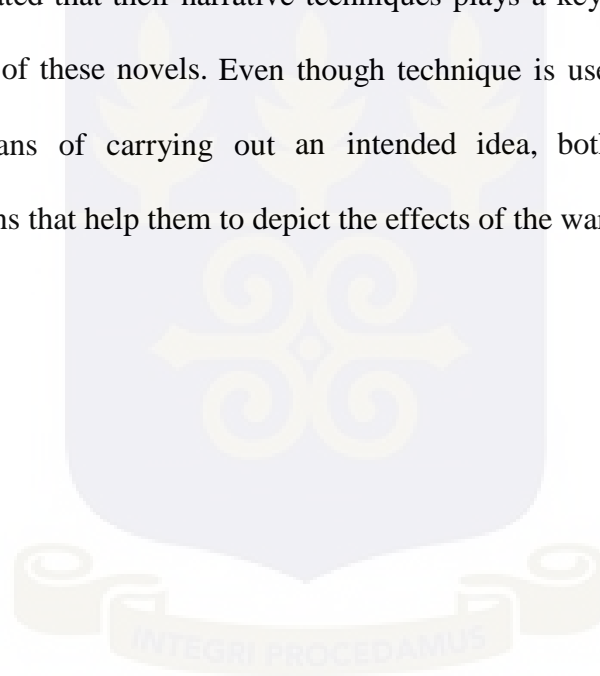
There is also a sense in which both novels are nationalist novels with both doing some form of damage repair. Both novels discuss the ills that once plagued their nation, the causes, effects and after effects of the war. What they do is to expound the damages and suggest some form of repairs for them. However, what Adichie does differently with her nationalist ideal is the flying of the Biafran flag again as against the Nigerian flag. She projects Biafra as a nation that has been shortchanged.

Forna on the other hand, tells us that the nation needs therapy and must be put on the “psychological couch” once again. But on a larger scale, she looks at the killing of a nation by its own citizens who betray their country for their selfish gains. For Forna, it is more of an extended confession (because Elias Cole’s meta-discourse is a confession). Confession implies an unburdening of one’s self from a weight or problem. It implies that one is looking for a solution to a problem he might be carrying. Confession can also imply that there is a communally

recognized standard that has been flouted and in the confession one is making everything right. So a person reaffirms community through his confession. Once you accept that communal definition and declare that you are a sinner, then that is already a ratification of a communal bond. In a sense Forna is doing a truth and reconciliation exercise in a novel form. Therefore, Elias Cole ceases to be an individual. What he seems to be doing is what Forna is saying must be done by the entire nation. As the saying goes, let he who has no sin cast the first stone. By inference, let he who has not betrayed the nation or is not affected by the war, cast the first stone. Since there is none without “sin”, Forna suggests that what Elias Cole is doing is what everyone should be doing. Everyone in the nation should look within themselves to identify how they resemble Elias Cole who contributed to the death of the nation and undertake the same confession. All must go through this therapeutic cleansing of sins (through a confession) to truthfully reconcile the nation to its previous self.

The question is: what do these similar and different features tell about West African war novels. Just like any other genre of literature, this genre has certain features that qualify a novel to be called a West African war novel. The obvious one is that it must be a novel that talks about a particular war that has occurred on West African soil. More importantly, it must describe the war scenes, the actions of the war or talk about the war, whether directly or indirectly. It goes without saying that male authored war novels outnumber those of the female authored war novels in terms of number and popularity. War is seen as the preserve of men; a setting where women are not directly involved.

Thus, a literature on war is, by extension, the preserve of men. Hence not many female writers will go into such an enterprise. However, this study has shown that not only are women involved in the writing of this genre, but they write these novels in a way that is uniquely different from what is done by other male authors. It is established that women writers of war do not directly focus on the war scenes when telling the story but focus on the domestic, intimate and interpersonal relationships of the people experiencing the war. It is also demonstrated that their narrative techniques plays a key role in the realization of the focus of these novels. Even though technique is used by all writers and is a main means of carrying out an intended idea, both novels have technical innovations that help them to depict the effects of the war.









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