

# Disintegrating Bonds: an Exploration of the Effects of War-induced Migration on Family Structures and Relationships in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

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## Abstract

War is futile and should be avoided. Many creative writers have in their literary works, mirrored the devastating effects of war in societies with the aim to discourage the youths of the contemporary era of aspiring to engage in war of any sorts. This study examines the devastating impact of war-induced migration on family dynamics and relationships as mirrored by Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The novel, with its setting as a Biafran land, during the civil war, vividly portrays the disintegration of traditional family norms, reconfiguration of relationships, and emotional struggles that accompany forced displacement. This research adopts Postcolonial theory as the most apt theoretical framework for the analysis of the experiences of the characters in the text. The research findings reveal that war does no one any good and that war-induced migration not only disrupts family structures but also challenges characters' sense of self and belonging. This study is significant as it reveals the dangers of war and the consequent effects of war on individuals and society at large who participate in wars.

**Keywords:** War-induced migration, relationships, postcolonial theory, Biafran war, Adichie.

## Introduction:

War-induced migration has become a pervasive global issue, with millions of people and properties displaced due to conflict, violence, and human rights violence. Migration, either domestic or inter-border migration, is a serious issue in the contemporary society because a lot of issues necessitate it. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 80 million people worldwide have been forcibly displaced, with 26.4 million refugees and 4.2 million

asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2022). The submission of the UN High Commissioner indicates clearly that the issue of migration is not peculiar to a particular society. In Nigeria, however, it is a perturbing issue because a lot of issues trigger migration in Nigeria. Both natural and man-made factors are responsible for migration among Nigerians. Migration due to natural occurrence such as flooding and pollution happen in few places in Nigeria. Most cases of migration among Nigerians are as a result of man-made factors. By man-made factor, we refer to those factors caused by

humans rather than natural occurrences.

Historically, conflicts such as the Nigerian-Biafran War (1967 – 1970), has necessitated massive displacement, separation, and trauma for families. War-induced migration, research has revealed, disrupts traditional family units, leading to dynamism in roles and responsibility, emotional trauma, and psychological distress. Women and children are the more vulnerable as they are disproportionately affected; children separated from their parents, wives separated from their beloved husbands who are the head of their homes. The Nigerian-Biafran war, a pivotal movement in modern history, exemplifies the catastrophic consequences of war-induced migration, resulting in millions of people displaced. As the international community grapples with the complexities of war-induced migration, it becomes necessary that academics should carry out more researches and come up with more workable recommendations to discourage war and anything that would induce war.

### **Literature as a Means of Social Reformation**

Literature is believed to be a product of the society as the popular saying has it that no writer writes in a vacuum. Creative writers aim to use their works to righten the wrongs in the society by writing about the abnormalities in their societies in a way that the ills would be lampooned for corrections to be made. According to Uche Nnyagu in “History as a Central Focus: a Study of Peter Abraham’s *Mine Boy*,” literature writers are inspired by what happens around them so they mirror societal facts in their works and subtly craft them in a way that such works entertains the reader. He made it vivid that literature does not

only entertain, rather it educates and reforms the society by talking about societal facts, usually in a way that readers would through the works of art, understand their own society. In words of Nnyagu, “If the sole aim of the writer in a particular work of art is to entertain, then such work should not be taken very seriously. Works of imagination are usually the author’s weapon to fight certain abnormalities in a given society. This is why it is believed that fiction is a mirror through which a society is seen” (39). According to Abrams, M. H., “literature” has an evaluative as well as descriptive function, so that its proper use has become a matter of contention. Modern critical movements, aiming to correct what are seen as historical injustice, stress the strong but covert role played by gender, race, and class in establishing what has, in various eras, been accounted as literature... (153).

Today, migration has become a common phenomenon in Nigeria, necessitated by natural and man-made occurrences. War is part of the many reasons for migration in the contemporary society and so, African writers in this era, write on the theme of futility of war. Literature has long served as a powerful medium for exploring the human experiences of migration. Chimamanda Adichie is one of the creative writers who believe that the onus lies on the creative writers to use their novels to correct impressions in the society. In her historical novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, set against the backdrop of the Biafran War, offers a poignant portrayal of war-induced migration and its impact on individuals, families, and communities. Adichie in the novel, provides a unique lens through which the complexities of forced migration could be examined. The novel vividly sheds light on the experiences of those displaced and the resilience they

exhibit in the face of adversity.

## Theoretical Framework

The researcher considers forced migration theory as the most appropriate theoretical framework for the analysis of the text. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a historical novel about the Biafran War which lasted between 1967 and 1977. Within the period, millions of people were massacred and millions more, displaced. People migrated to different parts not because they so wished but were forced by the war to leave their comfort zones. This historic fact was so profusely mirrored by Adichie in her *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

According to United High Commissioner for Refugee, Forced Migration Theory evolved over several decades, with significant contributions from various scholars in different disciplines. The theory was developed based on different factors. The theory actually evolved in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1950s – 1970s), known as the Early Foundations when the Refugee Convention established international refugee law. Social scientist, Barbara Harrell-Bond in 1955 began researching refugee issues and in 1960s sociologists like Aristide Zolberg and Barry Stein started exploring migration and refugee studies. Then war and such other issues led people to become refugees. Scholars began to publish articles on forced migration. Between 1980s and 2000s, many scholars such as Stein and Tomasi, in 1981, published: “Refugee Policy: Canada and the United States” which is seen as pioneering other works. In 1982, Zolberg *et al* published “Escape from Violence”. The work introduces the concept of forced migration. In 1991, Susan Martin published “Refugee Women” which highlights gender specific

issues. Other works followed till the contemporary era (2011 – present) when a group known as contemporary developers published on contemporary issues that herald forced migration which includes the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the theme of the novel, the research considers Forced Migration Theory as its theoretical framework to examine the effects of war-induced migration on family structures and relationships in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*. This theory provides a comprehensive understanding of displacement and its consequences.

## *Purple Hibiscus* as a Historical Novel

Historical novel, though a work of fiction, is indispensable as it brings to our knowledge, what has happened in the time past, it helps us to understand our past. According to Chris Baldick, historical novel is such in which the action takes place during a historical period well before the time of the writing. He believes that the central character of historical novel – real or imagined – is usually subject to divided loyalties within a larger historic conflict of which readers know the outcome. Abram, M. H. vivifies that historical novel not only takes its setting and some characters and events from history, but makes the historical events and issues crucial for the central characters and the course of the narrative. As a fascinating genre, historical novels offer insight into past eras and civilization. Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* centres on the Biafran war that took place between 1967 and 1977. The plights of the people were so vividly chronicled by the author, making the message very clear that war is futile and should be avoided. Since the publication of the novel, many researchers have written extensively on the novel as a historical novel, exploring its representation of the Biafran war and Nigeria’s post-

colonial identity. Ato Quayson praises the author's meticulous research, noting the novel's remarkable historical fidelity. To him, the author has so categorically represented the society as it were, using the novel to educate the younger generation on the need to avoid war.

According to Nnolim, Charles in "Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*", historical novel broadly reconstructs a series of historical events and the spirit of a past event. He made it very clearly that historical novel brings to the knowledge of the audience, the truth about the society past as such would aid the audience who probably didn't know much about the remote society to understand the tenets of the society. In the real words of Nnolim, "In these historical events personages and characters are introduced who participate in actual historical events and move among actual personages from history. The fictional characters interacting with actual historical personages, through their actions give expression to the impact which the historical events have upon people living through them, with the result that a picture of a bygone ago is created in personal and immediate terms" (145). With Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, many youths today who were ignorant of who caused the war, the effects of the war on individuals and society would be made abreast of all that. That is one of the major roles of literature, to help the audience understand a particular society. Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs in *Literature: an Introduction to Reading and Writing*, write that Literature helps us to grow, both personally and intellectually. They go further to vivify that Literature opens door for us and that it stretches our minds. According to them, Literature "increases our understanding, and enlarges our power of sympathy. It helps us to see the beauty in the world around us" (1).

Matthew Arnold of Victorian era had argued that among all the disciplines, it is only literature that would help one to understand the society. He believes that literature does so by interpreting life to man. The importance of literature to humans and the society can never be overemphasized. That is why Edgar and Jacobs maintain that literature shapes our goals and values by clarifying our own identities – both positively, through acceptance of the admirable in human beings, and negatively, through rejection of the sinister. According to them, literature "enables us to develop perspectives on events occurring locally and globally, and thereby it gives us understanding and control. It is one of the shaping influences of life. It makes us human" (2).

### **An Exploration of Family Bonds and War-induced Migration in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun***

Though Adichie published the novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* in 2006, many centuries after the civil, the novel is a historical novel that so masterfully portrays the disintegration of family bonds due to war-induced migration during the Biafran war that lasted between 1967 to 1970. Adichie in the novel, vividly mirrored the society and the effects of the war on families in society. Adichie used the fictional characters to effectively pass across her message. The central theme of the novel is **futility of war**. War does nobody any good. Through the lives of Olanna and Kainene, two sisters who are the central characters in the novel, and their loved ones, Adichie aptly vivifies the futility of war, illustrating how war destroys society, including family relationships and cultural identity thereby forcing individuals to adapt and survive in unimaginable circumstances. Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country: a Personal History of Biafra* makes

the experience more lucid when he writes that:

*Beginning with the January 15, 1966, coup d'etate, through the counter-coup (staged mainly by Northern Nigerian officers, who murdered 185 Igbo officers) and the massacre of thirty thousand Igbos and Easterners in pogroms that started in May 1966 and occurred over four months – the events of those months left millions of other future Biafrans and me feeling terrified. As we fled “home” to Eastern Nigeria to escape all manner of atrocities that were being inflicted upon us and our families in different parts of Nigeria, we saw ourselves as victims (95).*

In his own observation, Ralph Uwechue in *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War*, gave his own personal experience about the futility of war when he writes, “I expressed my regret at the fact that blood was shed in January and again in May and July 1966 (34). Many families were displaced as their loved ones massacred. This realistic truth is made more vivid by Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun* through the dialogues of the characters. Ugwu listens as his master dialogues with his kinsman who, according to the novel, placed the bottle of water down and said quickly. “They are killing us like ants.... I saw a whole family, a father

and mother and three children, lying on the road to the motor park. Just lying there” (144). It is so pathetic the experience during the war. While people were killed in their millions, others are starved, majority others are displaced and innocent young girls and people’s wives were raped. All these consolidate the fact about futility of war. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the pathetic episodes of rape of innocent women from the vulnerable sect during the war is made vivid through the fictional characters. In a dialogue between Odenigbo and Olanna, we understand that some powerful group take advantage of the war to rape the innocent women. Olanna in a response to Odenigbo, says, “Am I joking? How can you sound this way after seeing what they did in Kano? Can you imagine what must have happened to Arinze? They raped pregnant women before they cut them up!” (191). These pathetic experiences of people are the reasons why people migrate, seeking refuge in other environments. Adichie writes in the novel that, “Ugwu was the first to see people trooping on the dirty road that ran through Abba” (194). The novel disclosed that not only human beings were displace. As people leave their places that are no longer conducive to them, they take with them everything belonging to them. According to the novel, “They were dragging goats, carrying yams and boxes on their heads, chickens and rolled-up mats under their arms, kerosene lamps in their hands. The children carried small basins or pulled smaller children along. Ugwu watched them walk past, some silent, others talking loudly; many of them, he knew, did not know where they were going (194). Obviously, the people did not just voluntarily decide to migrate: war, rather than economic factor, induced the migration from their comfort zone. Odenigbo and his people migrate to any society they are told that is still safe. Aniekwen, one of the characters says, “We are ready to go, Odenigbo, and your mother has refused to pack her things and



come.”

The dialogues below, from the novel, gave a true picture of the fact that war induced the migration. Thus:

*Master closed the bonnet. ‘Mama, I thought we agreed that you would go to Uke.’*

*‘Ekwuzikwananu nofu! Don’t say that! You told me that we have to run and that it is better that I go to Uke. But did you hear me agree? Did I say “oh” to you?’*

*‘Do you want to come with us to Umuahia, then?’ Master asked.*

*Mama looked at the car, parked full. ‘But why are you running? Where are you running to? Can you hear any guns?’*

*‘People are fleeing Abagana and Ukpo, which means the Hausa soldiers are close and will soon enter Abba’ (195).*

As the war ravages Nigeria, Adichie skillfully weaves together themes of dislocation. The novel sheds light on the traumatic experiences of refugees, child soldiers, and families torn apart by conflict. Ugwu, thirteen year old boy was conscripted. Ugwu’s experience as an infant soldier is pathetic. According to Anna Keller in her “War and Sexual Violence – An Analysis of Ugwu in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*”, “Ugwu has just been named “Target Destroyer,” so his identity has just begun to collapse in on itself. Once this implosion occurs, Ugwu is vulnerable to the pressures that his comrades place on him as well as the larger pressures of a patriarchal Nigerian society”. Adichie writes, “His throat was scorched. The infantrymen carrying him were talking about how rescuing him had given them a reason to run away, how their bullets had finished and they had sent for reinforcements and nothing was coming and the vandals were advancing...” (393). The experience of Colonel Madu, as a soldier from Igbo is not different. As a young man, he was separated from her people as a result of war. Kainene who sat with Madu while he shares the trauma he passed through as a soldier fighting in the Biafran side. Kainene says, ‘They said they shot you in Kaduna, then they said they buried you alive in the bush, then they said you escaped, then they said you were in prison in Lagos.’

As Madu narrates his pathetic experience, the trauma associated to war-induced migration becomes pictorial. Madu experienced trauma as a result of the perilous experiences he encountered, being separated from his people. He managed to escape death being assisted by a friend who is a northerner. He says to Kainene, ‘Ibrahim saved my life.... He drove me to his cousin’s house, but I didn’t really understand until he asked his

cousin to take me to the backyard, where he kept his domestic animals. I slept in the chicken house for two days' (139).

The trauma experienced by the displaced becomes so pathetic as the individuals suffer intense jeopardy occasioned by the war. During the war, the conscripted lived in perpetual perils. This is well mirrored by Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun* where she makes the experience of the displaced person so pathetic. With the apt presentation of the characters and their experiences, the message of the novel is well passed. Colonel Madu, in the novel, goes further to recount his experiences. He says to her, 'And do you know that soldiers came to search his cousin's house to look for me? Everybody knew how close Ibrahim and I were, and they suspected he helped me to escape. They didn't check the chicken house, though.... I did not know how bad chicken shit smelt until I slept in it for three days. On the third day, Ibrahim sent me some kaftans and money through a small boy and asked me to leave right away. I dressed as a Fulani nomad and walked through the smaller villages because Ibrahim said that artillery soldier had set up blocks on all the major roads in Kaduna. I was lucky to find a lorry driver, an Igbo man from Ohafia, who took me to Kafanchan (139 -140).

### **War Casualties and the Traumatic Effect on Women**

Though women did not physically participate in the war, they suffer greater perils. Many of them were raped and others feel the trauma of the loss of their loved ones. Most of the women, against their wish, began to cohabit with the soldiers in order to survive. Women watch without help as their children are

maimed. The incessant killings of young ones was pathetic but more pathetic case was the fact that the living have nothing to eat. Achebe expressed it very clearly in his *There was a Country*, the state of affairs during the war. According to him, "Food was short, meat was very short, and drugs were short. Thousands – no, millions by then – had been uprooted from their homes and brought into safer areas, but where they really had no relatives, no property, many of them lived in school buildings and camps" (171). Adichie consolidated Achebe's assertion by disclosing weird creatures eaten as meat during the war. She writes, "A hawkler walked into the compound with an enamel tray covered in newspapers, holding up a browned lizard on a stick, chanting 'Mme mme suya! Mme mme suya!'" (352).

Then human life was nothing. As women feel the pains of being separated from their husbands, their sons conscripted into the army before they knew their right from their left, intense hunger among others, their children are killed before their eyes. Adichie mirrored this traumatic experience of, especially women in the novel. Olanna embarks on perilous adventures in order to survive. She is seriously traumatized, being forced to engage in perilous adventures she would not imagine herself doing under normal circumstance. According to Adichie in the novel:

*'The train swerved and Olanna bumped against the calabash again; she liked the firm feel of the wood. She edged her hand forwards until it was gently caressing the carved lines that crisscrossed the calabash. She closed her eyes, because they*

*burnt less that way,  
and kept them closed  
for hours, her hand  
against the calabash,  
until somebody  
shouted in Igbo, 'Anyi  
agafeela! We have  
crossed the River  
Niger! We have  
reached home!'"*  
(149).

The above excerpt illustrates the adventures and the risks women took during the war just to survive. In the exact words of Nnolim Charles, "*Half of a Yellow Sun* is a sad story of monumental loss for the Igbo objectively rendered.... The horrors of the Nigerian civil war evoked world-wide passions.... *Half of a Yellow Sun* becomes a spill-over, a carry-over of this sad phenomenon" (148).

Further, through the conversations of the fictional characters in the novel, Adichie made it more categorical, the emotional torture that women experience on daily basis as a result of war. As men are the hunted specie, the task of taking care of the surviving members of the family lies on the women as their husbands and sons have either been killed or been taken to join the army. Some of the men were fortunate not to be killed in the war front but they came back deformed as a result of war. As victims of the war, they become more burden to their wives. One of the characters, Mrs Muokelu laments the traumatic effect of the war on her family as she has to carry out every responsibilities of the family, including feeding her war deformed husband. She says to Olanna, 'I have twelve people to feed.... And that is not counting my husband's relatives who have just come from Abakiliki. My husband has returned from the war front

with one leg. What can he do? I am going to start *afia* attack and see if I can buy salt' (293).

### **Disintegrating Bonds: An Analysis of Few Instances in the Novel**

The Biafran war's devastating impact is so poignantly captured in the disintegrating bonds between characters, mirroring the fracturing of their world. The greatest devastating implication of the civil war is separation of family members. During the war, family members in a bid to survive, part ways and many were never fortunate to reunite. Able bodied men feign indisposed as not to be forcibly taken to join the war. Adichie reels off the story of Harrison who has to smear some blood-like chemicals on the bandage which he tied all over his body to look like a war casualty in order not to be apprehended and forced to join the army. This alibi looks so real that Richard feels so empathetic. Adichie writes, "When Harrison raised his hands to untie the bloody bandage on his head, Richard said. 'No, no, there's no need to do that. No need at all, I will call the driver right away. We will take you to the hospital' (302).

Instances abound in the novel of disintegrating bonds. Glaring include that of Olanna and Odenigbo's complex relationship which constitute almost the central theme of the novel. The couple are united in love, heralded by their intellectual connection and passion. They live almost like a married couple with hope that the relationship would climax in marriage just like Kainene's too with Richard. But war shattered the plan. Olanna's affection for Odenigbo diminishes tremendously as Odenigbo exhibits traits of infidelity made possible by the civil war. Olanna feels so deeply hurt and betrayed and that leads to emotional distance



which kills the relationship. Olanna feels the pain of the trauma the most because she had trusted Odenigbo so much. The intense emotional feelings for Odenigbo immediately disappear because of Odenigbo's infidelity. Obviously, the disintegration is as a result of the war; Odenigbo wouldn't have developed the feeling for Amala if war had not given room for the hiatus.

The pangs of the war is so heavily felt in Olanna's family. Olanna and her twin sister, Kainene who are so fond of each other got disintegrated by the war. These two had always been close and had never thought of parting but war induced their undesired separation. While Olanna feels the pain of disappointment from Odenigbo, the disappearance of her sister, Kainene pierces her and her parents like a dagger. The theme of the novel, *futility of war* is well demonstrated by Adichie, using the family of Olanna for illustration. The civil war made a lot of people to engage in perilous ventures they would not have dreamt of under normal circumstances. Kainene and her twin sister, Olanna are well educated as they come from a wealthy family. War is respecter of nobody, when it comes, united families get disintegrated and millions of lives lost. Achebe, in *There Was a Country*, laments the sorry state of the nation as a result of the war. According to him. "The Biafrans found themselves under heavy assault after the Mid-West' (177). He quoted *The Times of London*, a popular newspaper then as giving the statistics of the number of casualties to be running in thousands. According to the report, 'On entry into Aba, the Nigerian soldiers massacred more than 2000 civilians.... Nigerian troops came from behind, shooting and firing everywhere, shooting everybody who was running, firing into the homes' (138). The incessant firing into people's homes made

the people to abdicate their homes to take refuge in other places. This led to loss of people. Women no longer depend on the men for survival. Kainene, like other women, in a bid to survive, joins the *afia attack*, a very dangerous business. The war ends and Olanna unites with her parents but then there is no joy as Kainene, her confidant is nowhere to be found. This portrayal of loss of human beings realistically mirrors the aftermath of the Biafra war. Then, after the war, losses were counted. Adichie writes:

*Grieve was the celebration of love, those who could feel real grief were lucky to have loved. But it was not grief that Olanna felt, it was greater than grief. It was stranger than grief. She did not know where her sister was. She did not know. She raged at herself for not waking up early the day that Kainene left for afia attack and for not knowing what Kainene wore that morning and for not going with her.... (431).*

On the part of Ugwu, the Biafran war's devastating impact is so poignantly captured in the disintegrating bonds between characters, mirroring the fracturing of their world. Ugwu's experiences as an infant soldier and refugee at his age, lead to a disconnection from his family and society. He almost enjoyed no relationship with his mother and sister thus, he suffers trauma being separated from his loved ones. His conscription completely shatters his family ties, leaving his poor

mother's desperate pleas echoing in his mind. The war's relentless brutality erodes the connections between siblings, friends and community, leaving behind a trail of emotional scars. Those who witnessed the war never wish to have a similar experience. Adichie x-rayed the fact about war, vivifying that war heralds total disintegration among united folk. As relationships crumble, identities are lost, and the very fabric of society begins to disintegrate. Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus*, masterfully portrays the corrosive effects of conflict on human bonds, illuminating the heartbreaking consequences of a war that tears people and societies apart.

### **Adichie's Message to the Youths of the Contemporary Era**

One of the major roles of literature is to pass a message across to the audience. This is why it is universally acknowledged that no writer writes in a vacuum; a writer draws an inspiration from the environment. The writer focuses in the society and recreates a fictional image of the society, applying satiric techniques to condemn societal ills with the intent to correct impressions. In his "The Truth of Fiction," Chinua Achebe argues that although fiction is made-up, it has a bearing to the society and therefore, a means of relating a fact about the society. In his own word, "Actually art is man's constant effort to create for himself a different order of reality from that which is given to him; an aspiration to provide himself with a second handle on existence *through his imagination*" (106). To Laurence Perrine in *Literature: Structure, Sound and Sense*, "The experience of humankind through the ages is that literature may furnish such understanding and do so effectively – that the depiction of imagined experiences can provide authentic insights.... Literature takes us, through the

imagination, deeper into the real world: it enables us to understand our troubles" (3 – 4).

In order to achieve credibility, Perrine suggests moderation in the presentation of fact. Thus, "Having established a distinction, however, we must not exaggerate or oversimplify it" (4). This view of Perrine is so evidently illustrated by Adichie in the novel. Although *Half of a Yellow Sun* was written by one who did not participate in the war; Adichie was born in 1977, seven years after the war, she so aptly gave a very vivid account of the war of the war. She did not exaggerate any fact neither did she give an insignificant information about the war. The novel, according to Charles Nnolim, is a weeping novel about what happened to the Igbo of Nigeria at a certain point in their history. Adichie understood the loss Igbo people especially, suffered during the Biafran war and she was moved to write the novel to remind contemporary youths about futility of war and the need to avoid war of whatever sort.

Achebe, while chronicling the role of literature in his "The Novelist as Teacher", believes that writers should educate the audience through their creative writing. By educating the audience, it includes teaching them about their past for the knowledge of the past would help them to understand the present. In Achebe's parlance, he who did not know where rain started beating him would never know where his body dried. In his words, "The writer cannot be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. In fact he should march right in front. For he is after all – as Ezekiel Mphahlele says in his *African Image* – the sensitive point of his community. Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, no doubts, is an

interpretative fiction. An interpretative fiction, according to Perrine, “is written to broaden and deepen and sharpen our awareness of life” (4). The novel, while entertaining, educates the reader about the society in the past, serving also as a means of teaching the unwary, the societal norms of the present and facts about the present society are not concealed by the author. Nnolim has this to say about the novel,

It is a historical novel, going by the standards. The historical novel broadly reconstructs a series of historical events and the spirit of a past age. In these historical events personages and characters are introduced who participate in actual historical events and move among actual historical personages, through their actions give expression to the impact which the historical events have upon people living through them, with the result that a picture of a bygone age is created in personal and immediate terms (145).

Nnolim goes further to illustrate the aims of historical

novels as discernible in the novel. To him, the responsibility of the historical novelist is to give a truthful picture of the age he or she describes and to establish a historical context. The major function of the novel is telling historical truth about the Nigerian civil war which lasted between 1967 to 1970. Apart from the picture of Biafran war so aptly painted in the novel, contemporary facts about the south eastern Nigerian society is vividly illustrated. We understand from the novel that the dynamic nature of the society favoured women in the 21st century as against the patriarchal 19<sup>th</sup> century of the same society. Nnolim vividly illustrates in his words thus:

The women she [Adichie] creates [in *Half of a Yellow Sun*] were no longer there to carry foo-foo and soup to men discussing ‘important Matters’. They had been empowered by education so that at Odenigbo’s parties, they held their own among world-class intellectuals, like Odenigbo, Dr Patel, Professor Ezeka, and Professor Lehman. The two central female characters, Olanna and Kainene had been educated abroad and Lara Adebayo was no push-over. The women we

encountered shared  
complete equality  
with their male  
counterparts (146).

## Conclusion

Adichie has in this novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, vividly unravelled the truth about war generally, using the Biafran war to educate the masses about futility of war. She has been able to use her fictional characters, made rounded to pass her information. Through the shattered lives of the major characters, such as Olanna, Odenigbo, Ugwu and Kainene, Adichie so poignantly illustrates the devastating consequences of war induced migration on family structures. As the characters in the novel navigate the perilous terrain of loss, displacement and trauma, the novel aptly x-rays the fault lines that fracture family bonds. The novel, with its beautifully developed characters which cohered with the setting, serves as a perpetual reminder, reminding the younger generation of the irreparable damage inflicted on families by the chaos of war and how many families have, up to date, not recovered from the plights of the war.

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