



COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR THROUGH LITERARY NARRATIVES.

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Abstract

The absence of history from Nigeria's school curriculum has created a gap filled by literary texts that present narratives about the Nigerian Civil War. This thesis examines how four selected texts—The Last Duty by Isidore Okpewho, Sunset in Biafra by Elechi Amadi, Half of a Yellow Sun by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and There Was a Country by Chinua Achebe—portray the war. These texts are categorized into Igbo and non-Igbo perspectives based on the ethnic origins of their authors. Employing a hybrid thematic analysis approach, this study identifies the themes in these literary texts.

The analysis reveals key themes in each text. Achebe's There Was a Country highlights the incompetence of the ruling class, ethnic hostility, the Igbo massacre, and the dangers of being Igbo. Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun emphasizes resilience, trauma, and in-group/out-group dynamics. Amadi's Sunset in Biafra discusses Biafran aggression, ethnic oppression, conflict profiteering, and comradeship. Okpewho's The Last Duty explores themes of liberation, conflict profiteering, and the destruction of inter-tribal bonds. The study also identifies overlaps between texts: non-Igbo works converge on conflict profiteering and ethnic oppression, while Igbo texts share a focus on the harrowing experiences of Igbos during the war. Based on these findings, the researcher concluded that selected texts have presented a cultural interpretation of the Nigerian Civil War, and recommended that the Nigerian Government should re-enlist history into the school's Curriculum

Key words: Collective memory, Nigerian Civil, War, literary narratives.

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Brief History of the Nigerian Civil War

The Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970) broke out due to several interrelated factors. The highlights of these factors are the first military coup in January 1966 and a counter-coup in July 1966. The first coup was led predominantly by a Yoruba and Igbo military officers. The casualties were non-Igbo political leaders and military officers, primarily from the Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba groups (Obi-Ani & Obi-Ani, 2016; Siollun, 2009). In retaliation, a Hausa/Fulani-led counter-coup resulted in the assassination of the current Igbo head of state, numerous Igbo officers, and a Yoruba military governor (Oluwabiyi & Duruji, 2021). This period also saw massacres of Igbo civilians in Northern cities, prompting Igbos to return to their region and advocate for the Republic of Biafra. Attempts at negotiation between the federal government and Biafran representatives in Ghana failed due to disagreements on the agreement's interpretation (Aremu, 2014; Siollun, 2009). Consequently, the Nigerian Civil War broke out, and lasted for 30 months.

After the war, the federal government implemented the "no victor, no vanquished" policy and introduced the 3Rs—Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, and Reconciliation (Onuoha, 2018). However, the war's history remains largely absent from the school curriculum. History as a subject was removed from junior secondary schools in 1982 and delisted from primary and secondary curricula in 2007 (Akanbi & Jekayinfa, 2021; Abba, 2023). Nonetheless, continuous public references to the war suggest its presence in Nigeria's collective memory (Kobo, 2019; Lodge, 2018).

The theory of collective memory holds that individuals' recollection of events is shaped by their membership in social groups (Roediger III, 2021; de Saint-Laurent, 2018). Social interpretations of past events are preserved and passed down through tools such as texts, storytelling, museums, and school curricula (Paulson et al., 2020; Wertsch, 2002). In Nigeria, despite the absence of formal history education, the Nigerian Civil War remains present in public consciousness through literature, films, and other mediums. These narratives often provide varied perspectives on the war.

For example, Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* explores the suffering of Igbo women and children during the war (Akingbe, 2012), while Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* focuses on the violence endured by the Igbos (Wosu, 2018). Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country* conveys Igbo anger, betrayal, and confusion at the war's onset (Milstein, 2015). Conversely, Elechi Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* highlights the plight of non-Igbo tribes under Igbo soldiers (Omojola, 2022).

This study assumes that literature, memoirs, and films bridge the gap in knowledge left by the absence of the Civil War in formal education. It will investigate how these narratives present the war to their audiences and contribute to collective memory.

Problem Statement

The absence of history in the school curriculum suggests that the Nigerian State does not have an official account of the Nigerian Civil War. Despite the absence of history in the school subject-list, there is continuous reference to the Nigerian Civil War, especially via social media (Madueke, 2024; Nwafor, 2024; Nweke, 2024).

Studies have found that learning is not exclusively limited to schooling (Coombs & Ahmed, 1975; Johnson & Majewska, 2022). Learning can also be in form of could be in form of socialization, self-initiation, home learning, text reading, religious sermons and preaching, through mass media, through social media, and so on (Schugurensky, 2000; Aly, et al., 2020; Coombs & Ahmed, 1975; Johnson & Majewska, 2022). These informal channels have likely filled the gap left by the absence of history in Nigerian schools, though the knowledge acquired may reflect specific social and cultural interpretations of the war.

Literary texts have contributed significantly to understanding the Nigerian Civil War (Achebe, 2013, Amadi, 1973; Okpewho, 1976, Alabi-Isama, 2013). Works such as *There Was a Country* by Chinua Achebe, *Destination Biafra* by Buchi Emecheta, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Adichie, *Destination Biafra* by Buchi Emecheta, *The Last Duty* by Isidore Okpewho, and *Sunset in Biafra* by Elechi Amadi explore various perspectives of the war. These texts focus on themes like the maltreatment of Igbo women and children (*Destination Biafra*), the mental and physical suffering of Igbos (*Half of a Yellow Sun*), and the experiences of non-Igbos within Biafra (*Sunset*

in Biafra). Notably, Igbo-authored texts often emphasize Igbo suffering, whereas non-Igbo narratives highlight other perspectives (Akingbe, 2012; Wosu, 2018; Omojola, 2022)

Despite the abundance of texts on Nigerian Civil War, and the availability of studies that identified the themes in these texts (Nwuga, 2018; Oyebanji, 2024; Ngwaba, 2023; Oganga, et al., 2024; Omojola, 2022; Ismaila, 2012; Oluwaseyi, 2023; Palmer, 1993; Sanka, 2019; Emenike & Asuzu, 2020; Yakubu & Olaoye, 2022; Wosu, 2018; Uzomah, 2022; Nayel, 2004; Alou, 2017; Adhav, 2024; Ehiosun, 2024; Ganguly & Hazra, 2024; Fashakin, 2015; Akingbe, 2012; Milstein, 2015), limited research exists on their role in shaping collective memory. This study addresses this gap by investigating how literary texts present socially-interpreted narratives of the Nigerian Civil War.

Justification of the Study

As previously mentioned, there is abundance of literary works on Nigeria Civil War, and there are ample studies that have examined these literary works. However, there is dearth of literature as regards the relationship between these texts and collective memory. This study will hereby fill this existing gap in knowledge. Expectedly, the findings of this study will inform policy makers in Nigeria to return history to the Nigerian school curriculum.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

This study is guided by the underlisted research questions:

- a) How did Igbo-authored texts present the Nigerian Civil War?
- b) How did non-Igbo authors present the Nigerian Civil War?

Limitation of Study

Due to the absence of history in the school curriculum, Nigeria learners might have relied on other sources of learning such as religious sermons and preaching, texts, through mass media, through social media, and so on. Notably, this study only uses four selected texts out of the abundance of texts on the Nigerian Civil War, and is therefore limited. Furthermore, this study employs a thematic analysis as its method of data analysis. However, thematic analysis is susceptible to subjectivity (Campbell, et. al., 2021). This suggests that this study is susceptible to the researcher's subjective interpretation.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the background of the Nigerian Civil War, outlines the theoretical framework of this study – collective memory, examines the relationship between collective memory and literary creativity, and reviews the submissions of previous scholarships on the selected texts for this study.

Background of the Nigeria Civil War

At independence in 1960, Nigeria was divided into three regions. The North, the East, and the West. These regions housed several ethnic groups within the Nigerian polity and to a larger extent were sovereign and autonomous. However, each region's political terrain was dominated by a particular ethnic group within the region. For instance, the Northern region political party, Northern People's Congress (NPC), was dominated by Hausa/Fulani tribe. For the Eastern region, it was Igbo dominated NCNC (National Council for Nigerian Citizens). In the West, it was the Yoruba-dominated Action Group (AG).

The emergence of these ethnic-oriented political parties would mean that the Nigerian political space would become a theatre for tribal dominance and rivalry (Ayandele, 1970; Oyedele, 2017). The implication of this is such that there was tribal mistrust and hostility (Siollun, 2009). As such, the Nigerian State was fragile at inception. This explains why national issues that followed Nigeria's independence were subjected to the promotion of ethnic interest. For instance, the 1962 national census steered controversies due to ethnic coloration and interpretation (Olorunfemi & Fashagba, 2021; Nwachuku, 2024). Additionally, the 1965 election, like the national census, steered controversy in the Western region (Siollun, 2009). Notably, these events informed the decisions of some military officers in the Nigerian army to organize a coup in January, 1966 (Obi-Ani & Obi-Ani, 2016; Ademoyega, 1981).

Unfortunately, the January 1966 coup, was subjected to tribal interpretations due to the fact that majority of the casualties of the coup were non-Igbo (Easterners) military officers and political office holders (Obi-Ani & Obi-Ani, 2016; Baxter, 2014, Nwaubani, 2020; Siollun, 2009). In other

words, the January coup was interpreted as an Igbo due to the ethnic origin of most of the coup plotters (Easterners, Igbo), while most casualties were non-Eastern politicians and military officers. In response to the January, 1966 coup, a counter-coup and pogrom were carried-out by military officers and civilians from the Northern (Hausa/Fulani) part of Nigeria in July, 1966. Eventually, these two coups led to the Nigerian Civil War in 1967. To give a detailed explanation of the background to the Nigerian Civil War, this section is structured as follows: The January 1966 coup, and the “Araba” Riots and The July rematch.

The January 1966 Coup

At its inception, the Nigerian state was inherently fragile due to its multi-ethnic nature. The political parties were ethnically oriented, reflecting deep-seated regional and cultural divisions (Siollun, 2009). The Northern People’s Congress (NPC) was dominated by the Hausa/Fulani in the Northern region, while the National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) was led by Igbo elites from the Eastern region. The Action Group (AG), on the other hand, was largely Yoruba-oriented in the Western region. This ethnic alignment of political parties highlighted the fragile foundation upon which Nigeria’s unity was built.

Exacerbating this fragility, the ruling class exhibited a high level of political irresponsibility in handling national issues. For instance, the 1962 national census was marred by ethnic biases and controversies, leading to disputes over its credibility (Olorunfemi & Fashagba, 2021; Nwachuku, 2024). Similarly, the 1965 Western regional elections, characterized by voter intimidation and electoral malpractice, resulted in significant unrest in the Yoruba-dominated Western region (Siollun, 2009; Obi-Ani & Obi-Ani, 2016). This chaotic political climate created an environment in which some military officers, primarily of Igbo origin, organized a coup in January 1966 (Obi-Ani & Obi-Ani, 2016).

The January coup dealt a critical blow to Nigeria’s fragile unity. The coup plotters were predominantly Igbo, and the majority of casualties were non-Igbo political and military leaders, including prominent Northern and Western figures (Obi-Ani & Obi-Ani, 2016; Siollun, 2009). Although the coup succeeded only in the North, led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu, it was initially

welcomed with jubilation in some quarters (Onah & Okeke, 2017; Siollun, 2009). Many in the Western region, disillusioned by the 1965 elections, saw the coup as a possible reset. Even in the Northern region, initial reactions were reportedly calm, as noted by Professor Murray Last, who described a sense of ease following the coup (Olorunyomi, 2021).

However, tensions soon escalated due to the conduct of some Igbo civilians in the North, who reportedly celebrated the coup with chest-thumping and mockery, further aggravating Northern sentiments (Olorunyomi, 2021). This perception of Igbo dominance was compounded by the emergence of Major General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, an Igbo officer, as head of state. Ironsi's policies, particularly the Unification Decree No. 34 of May 1966, abolished regional autonomy and centralized power under the federal government. While intended as a unifying measure, this decree was perceived by many Northerners as an attempt to establish Igbo hegemony (Ani & Ezeonwuka, 2019; Obi-Ani & Obi-Ani, 2016).

Ironsi's leniency toward the coup plotters, including allowing them to receive half-pay while incarcerated, further fuelled suspicions of ethnic favouritism (Siollun, 2009; Obi-Ani & Obi-Ani, 2016). These actions intensified tribal sentiments in an already divided society, leading to a Northern-led counter-coup in July 1966. This coup resulted in the assassination of Ironsi and several Igbo military officers (Oluwabiyi & Duruji, 2021). In addition, widespread massacres of Igbo civilians occurred across Northern cities, an event popularly referred to as the Araba riots (Siollun, 2009).

The “Araba” Riots and the July Rematch

The January 1966 Igbo-dominated coup led to a Northern-led counter-coup against Igbo officers in the Nigerian army and a pogrom against Igbo civilians residing in Northern Nigeria (Siollun, 2009; Obi-Ani & Obi-Ani, 2016; Audu, 2017). This retaliation resulted in over 30,000 Igbo casualties (Omeje et al., 2023; Uzoigwe, 2012; Korieh, 2013). Following the assassination of Aguiyi Ironsi and other Igbo officers, Yakubu Gowon, a Northerner, became Nigeria's head of state. Gowon's regime failed to address the ethnic cleansing of Igbos, leaving survivors in discontent and disconnected from the Nigerian state as they returned to the Eastern region (Omeje et al., 2023; Achebe, 2012). The Igbos subsequently began agitating for a sovereign nation.

Amidst heightened tensions, Eastern Governor Emeka Ojukwu requested increased security for the Igbos and greater regional autonomy, but these demands were denied by the Federal Military Government (Aremu, 2014). Ojukwu refused to attend Supreme Military Council meetings, citing safety concerns. To ensure his participation, the council was relocated to Aburi, Ghana, resulting in the agreement referred to as the Aburi Accord (Ikime, 2002; Aremu, 2014).

The Aburi Accord proposed administrative reforms, regional representation, internal security measures, and appointment protocols for the military and police (Obasanjo, 1971; Elaigwu, 2005). Key agreements included regional control of area commands for security and equal regional representation in military headquarters. However, the Federal Military Government failed to implement the accord (Aremu, 2014). In response, Ojukwu insisted on its implementation. This impasse ultimately led to the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War (Williams, 2017).

Theoretical Framework.

Collective Memory

The concept of "Collective Memory" has been widely explored by scholars, though no universally binding definition exists (Halbwachs, 1950; Minarova-Banjac, 2018; Schwartz, 2018; Schwab, 1998; Roediger III & Henry, 2021; Glassberg, 1996; Olumba, 2024; Wertsch et al., 2022). Despite this lack of consensus, these interpretations converge in emphasizing the social and cultural dimensions of memory. Halbwachs (1950), regarded as the pioneer of the concept, defined collective memory as the reconstruction of the past by group members, influenced by their present circumstances. This perspective underscores how shared values, experiences, and cultural frameworks shape memory, highlighting that it is deeply embedded in the social and cultural environment in which it operates.

Minarova-Banjac (2018) expanded on this notion by connecting collective memory to social institutions, such as nations, religious groups, communities, and families. They argued that collective memory is shaped, interpreted, and presented at both micro and macro levels of social interaction. These perspectives suggest that collective memory is fundamentally a social construction of the past, created and maintained by a group.

Schwartz (2018) defined collective memory as culturally induced beliefs, feelings, and moral judgments about the past, emphasizing three core elements: cultural influence, belief systems, and emotional and moral attachment. Cultural influence highlights how culture shapes the perception and interpretation of historical events. For instance, cows are considered sacred in parts of India, while beef is central to Argentine cuisine. Schwartz's use of "belief" implies that individuals often accept their community's historical accounts without question. Furthermore, emotions such as pride, anger, or sorrow play a pivotal role in shaping collective judgments of historical events. For example, the Holocaust is universally condemned as morally wrong, reflecting the collective emotional and moral evaluation of this historical atrocity.

Schwab (1998), Jean-Francois and Francis (2023), and Roediger III & Henry (2021) further explore how collective memory shapes individual perceptions. Schwab (1998) described collective memory as the recollection of events by a group, independent of individual experiences, but which provides a framework for individual understanding. Similarly, Jean-Francois and Francis (2023) emphasized the inherently social nature of collective memory, focusing on shared interpretations of events rather than individual experiences.

Olick (1999) argued that collective memory is the sum of individual memories shaped by social frameworks, indicating that collective narratives significantly influence individual recollections. Roediger III & Henry (2021) supported this view, asserting that individuals' recollections are shaped by their membership in social groups, such as families, political parties, or nations, which influence how they interpret significant events.

Three recurring themes emerge in these scholarly discussions on collective memory: social construction, unexamined belief, and moral and emotional attachment. Halbwachs (1950) and Minarova-Banjac (2018) emphasize the social construction of memory, demonstrating how groups collectively create interpretations of historical events. Schwartz (2018) builds on this foundation by highlighting the role of culture in shaping unexamined beliefs, emotional connections, and moral judgments about the past. Finally, scholars such as Schwab (1998) and Olick (1999) focus on how individual perceptions are shaped by collective narratives, underscoring the social frameworks within which memory operates.

In essence, collective memory is a socially constructed account of the past, serving as a source of unity and identity for a group. However, it is also inherently subjective and prone to bias, reflecting the values and priorities of the group. For the purpose of this study, collective memory is defined as a socially constructed narrative of the past, created by a group with a shared social and cultural identity, often unexamined and deeply sentimental.

Given its importance, groups employ various mechanisms to preserve and transmit collective memory. These mechanisms are often referred to as "sites of memory" (de Azevedo, 2007; Morrison, 1990). Scholars have identified numerous tools used to maintain collective memory, including memorials, museums, monuments, festivals, school curricula, and literary works (Paulson et al., 2020; de Saint-Laurent, 2018; Wertsch, 2002; Gongaware, 2003; Kurniawan, 2023; Gephart, 2012; Liao & Dai, 2020).

Paulson et al. (2020) noted that spaces like memorials, museums, and monuments serve as galleries that preserve historical narratives and representations of significant events for remembrance and reflection. For example, the Holocaust Museum in Amsterdam commemorates Jewish victims of the Holocaust, preserving the Jewish community's interpretation of and emotional connection to this tragic history. Similarly, Liao and Dai (2020) explored how traditional festivals, such as the Guangzhou Winter Jasmine Flower Market in China, help preserve collective memory. Rituals like strolling through the flower streets provide participants with a sense of cultural connection and identity.

Educational institutions also play a significant role in preserving collective memory through school curricula (Kurniawan, 2023; Gephart, 2012). Gephart (2012) argued that schools serve as a medium for transferring collective memory from one generation to the next. Kurniawan (2023) elaborated that official histories often shape collective memory, which is then incorporated into school curricula. For instance, Thomas et al. (2018) found that the Rwandan school curriculum was designed to teach about the genocide from an official perspective, ensuring that this account becomes the shared memory of Rwandans.

Literary works, including novels, memoirs, poems, and historical texts, are also vital tools for preserving collective memory. Gongaware (2003) identified storytelling as a means of transmitting

collective memory to new generations, helping them understand and internalize their group's past. Wertsch (2008) argued that historical texts connect individuals to their past, shaping their perceptions. Such works often contain socially constructed narratives of significant events, which readers accept unquestioningly, forming emotional attachments to these accounts. Similarly, Lachmann (2004) noted that literary works accumulate and store cultural data, offering insights into a group's collective experiences. For instance, novels like *Mine Boy* by Peter Abrahams and *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead* by Athol Fugard embody the experiences of Black South Africans during apartheid.

Collective Memory through Literary Creativity

Studies have examined how literary works function as sites of memory, highlighting the relationship between literary creativity and collective memory (Erll, 2011; Skopljanac, 2012; Milevski & Wetenkamp, 2022; Neumann, 2010). Skopljanac argued that literary creativity shapes the conceptualization of historical memory. They likened the writer to an encoder, the text to data, and the reader to a decoder, emphasizing that both are influenced by their cultural identities. This cultural framework informs, shapes, and constrains the writer's creativity and the reader's interpretation, as the writer encodes within their cultural context, and the reader decodes using their cultural lens.

Milevski and Wetenkamp (2022) posited that the relationship between literature and collective memory is symbiotic, with literature drawing inspiration from culturally dominant ideas and presenting them aesthetically. Conversely, collective memory depends on literature to craft and disseminate its narratives.

For Erll (2011), they argued that historical events inspire literary creativity, which in turn shapes how these events are remembered and understood. Erll identified three intersections between collective memory and literature: condensation, narration, and genres. Erll defined condensation as merging of emotions, ideas, and images into a singular, composite object. That is, compressing the plethora of a people's lived experience into an accessible body of work. For instance, Ferdinand Oyono's *"old man and the medal"* captures the colonial experience of Cameroonians. Narration involves selecting significant historical events and assigning specific meanings to them. This is seen in negritude writings that inspired anti-colonial movements (Galafa, 2018). Genres such as poetry, drama, and prose serve as tools to encode and present a group's experiences. For example,

Maya Angelou's poem "*Still I rise*" explores the pain and struggle of black women during the slave trade era in the United States (Krisna & Soelistyo, 2013).

Erl (2011), and Skopljanac's (2012) submissions highlight the significant relationship between literary creativity and collective memory. Based on this agreement, the researcher will explore how these three genres preserve collective memory.

Collective Memory Through Poetry

Poetry plays a significant role in preserving collective memory. Poets encode and present cultural knowledge and historical experiences through stanzas, metaphors, imagery, and symbolism (Hetherington, 2012; Collins, 2015). For instance, Dennis Brutus' poem *Sun on This Rubble* captures the brutality of apartheid in South Africa (Trinya, 2015). The line "Under jackboots our bones and spirits crunch" symbolizes the oppression of colonial power. Here, "jackboots" represent the regime's brutality, while "bones and spirits" evoke the physical and psychological suffering of black South Africans. Brutus craftily encodes the pain of apartheid using literary creativity, preserving a significant historical memory.

Similarly, Maya Angelou's poem *Still I Rise* highlights the oppression of black women during slavery in the United States (Krisna & Soelistyo, 2013; Igwedibia et al., 2019). The first stanza depicts the disregard and dehumanization experienced by enslaved black women. Krisna & Soelistyo identified themes of resilience and hope in the last line of the poem. - "But still, like dust, I'll rise." For them, this line suggests the determination to overcome oppression.

Igwedibia et al. analyzed the sixth stanza. They noted the use of active verbs like shoot, kill, and cut. For them, it symbolizes violence of slavery. The line "But still, like air, I'll rise" symbolizes immunity to oppression, as air cannot be destroyed (Igwedibia et al., 2019).

Notably, Angelou was born in 1928, long after the abolition of slavery in 1865, her poem reflects the collective memory of black women. Her work demonstrates how storytelling shapes poetry, preserving the shared history and resilience of a social group through literary creativity.

Collective Memory Through Drama

Drama is a genre of literature that uses performance and dialogues to present a story. Works in this genre are referred to as plays, they are presented in acts and scenes. Notably, what differentiates

drama and poetry is that drama is presented in acts and scenes, while poetry is written in stanzas and lines. Drama can be in form of prints (books) to be read or theatres, cinemas, film (movies), television for audience to watch. As such, Drama involves the use of characters or actors to present a story.

The relationship drama and collective memory is that the stories presented in acts and scenes might be inspired, informed, and shaped by how a particular social group remembers and understands historical events (Lénárt, 2023). For instance, the movie titled *Selma* presented one the remarkable victory for civil rights movement in United States. In the movie, the notable role played by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights activists in the 1965 Selma to Montgomery march to demand for the right of black people to vote during elections in the United States (Schnose, et al., 2015).

Similarly, Chimamanda Adichie's "*Half of a Yellow Sun*" was adapted into a movie by Biyi Bandele. In the movie, the collective trauma experienced by the Igbo ethnic group during the Nigeria Civil War was presented aesthetically (Onwuliri, 2024).

Collective Memory through Prose.

Unlike poetry and drams, works within the prose genre are referred to as novels, memoirs, autobiographies, and so on. Prose is written in chapters. In prose, the author either adopts a first-person perspective or a third-person perspective to narrate a story. In a first-person perspective, the narrator is a participant of the story. Hence, the first-person pronoun "I" is always used. As regards third-person perspective, the narrator is not involved. Instead, they assume a ubiquitous position.

Prose is either a fiction or a non-fiction. However, the similarity between prose and other genres of literature is such that prose can also be inspired by collective memory. Notably, the selected texts for this study fall under the prose category. Due to the word limit for this thesis, the researcher will only discuss the themes of these selected texts as examples of prose genre of literature.

Themes in the Selected Texts

In this section, themes in selected literary works that has been identified in previous studies will be discussed. The selected literary works include *The Last Duty* by Isidore Okpewho, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Adichie, *Sunset in Biafra* by Elechi Amadi, and *There was a Country* by Chinua Achebe. Additionally, these works can be categorised into the prose genre of literature. They are written in chapters, and the authors employed first-person and third-person perspectives narrative techniques. Notably, *Sunset in Biafra* and *There was a Country* were presented in a first-person narrative technique. In Isidore Okpewho's "*The Last Duty*", all the characters narrated events and happenings from their own perspective and understanding (Palmer, 1993). Regardless, one might infer that the author conveyed the story using a third-person narrative technique due to their non-involvement in the story. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the author presented the story in third-person narrative style.

The Last Duty by Isidore Okpewho

Isidore Okpewho's "*The Last Duty*" was first published in 1976. The fictional novel centres around the Nigerian Civil War. Interestingly, Okpewho did not use Nigeria as the physical setting of the novel. Instead, Okpewho referred to Nigeria as the republic of Zonda and the Biafran forces as Simba. Notably, events in the novel happened within the town called Urukpe, which is within the territory of the republic of Zonda, and constantly under attack by the rebels – the Simban military forces. The major characters in this novel are chief Toje – a Urukpe businessman, Oshevire – chief Toje's business competitor, Aku – Oshevire's wife and a Simba woman, Odibo – chief Toje's relative and gofer (Sanka, 2019; Emenike & Asuzu, 2020).

It is pertinent to note that Isidore Okpewho was born in 1941, he is from Delta state in Nigeria, the South-South (Niger Delta) region of Nigeria. Hence, his work falls under the category of non-Igbo literature. Additionally, the name of the characters suggests a Niger Delta setting.

In Isidore Okpewho's "*The Last Duty*," studies have identified themes of power profiteering, exploitation and predation, sexual exploitation, patriarchy and class oppression, and power mongering (Oluwaseyi, 2023; Palmer, 1993; Sanka, 2019; Emenike & Asuzu, 2020; Yakubu & Olaoye, 2022). To begin with power profiteering, exploitation and predation, Oluwaseyi (2023) described the action of chief Toje against Oshevire as that of exploitation, greed, and predation. Chief Toje exploited the ongoing civil war to take out Oshevire, who was Toje's business competitor, and took advantage of Oshevire's absence to have sexual relationship Oshevire's wife – Aku. To take out Oshevire, Chief Toje suborned another indigene of Urukpe to testify that Oshevire is a collaborator with the Simban army.

As regards sexual exploitation, Palmer (1993) identified Aku as a major victim. Initially, Aku rejected Toje's sexual advances. However, due to her financial incapacity to meet the basic needs of herself and her child, which was caused by Oshevire's (her husband) incarceration, she yielded to Toje's proposal (Palmer, 1993).

Similarly, in Emenike & Asuzu's (2020) study, they also identified Toje as a sexual predator and opportunist who sexually objectified a female character in the novel. For them, Toje's action of eliminating Oshevire by bribing another man to stand witness against Oshevire, and proceeding to make sexual advances to Oshevire's wife – Aku, suggest that Toje used Aku as an object of sexual satisfaction, capitalizing on her husband's absence.

In the study of Sanka (2019), they identified the theme of patriarchy and class oppression. They used Marxism to examine Isidore Okpewho's "*The Last Duty*." In their study, they argued that people of affluence use patriarchy to exploit women in the society and men within the low socio-economic class. Sanka identified chief Toje as the person of affluence who uses patriarchy to oppress men of lower socio-economic class, and women in the society. For Sanka (2019), Toje's conception of manhood as the possession of material wealth, fame, and influence suggest the presence of class consciousness in the society. Notably, the victims of Toje's conception of manhood are Aku and Odibo. As previously noted, Toje used Aku to gratify his sexual fantasies. Interestingly, Toje is impotent, he thought he could use Aku to regain his sexual potency (Sanka, 2019). For Odibo, he ran errands for Toje due to his low social economic status.

The findings of Yakubu & Olaoye's (2022) study synthesize the findings of Sanka (2019), Palmer (1993), and Emenike & Asuzu (2020). For Yakubu & Olaoye, chief Toje action towards Oshevire suggest power mongering. They noted that Toje's action was driven by his selfish desires to exploit labourers and his voracious appetite to cheat others to make money, even the government. The quote interpreted from the novel goes thus:

“Before long, Oshevire was already attracting labourers away from me because he paid better... not much later the government came up with all that nonsense about unadulterated latex and in no time the buying agents began to turn their focus away from me... and Oshevire began to enjoy increasing attention. Oshevire began to grow bigger and bigger, and even throw his weight about” (Okpewho, 1989; p. 122).

Half of a Yellow Sun by Chimamanda Adichie

The title “*Half of a Yellow Sun*” is derived from the sun on the Biafran flag (Wosu, 2018). The novel is a fiction inspired by the Nigerian Civil War. The main characters in the story are Odenigbo (a university lecturer), Olanna (Odenigbo's wife), Kainene (Olanna's sister), Ugwu (Odenigbo's domestic servant), Uncle Mbaezi (Olanna's Uncle who resides in Northern Nigeria), Abdulmalik (Uncle Mbaezi's friend, who is a Northerner), and Richard (A British expatriate) (Wosu, 2018; Rajkumar, 2019; Uzomah, 2022; Adhav, 2024). Notably, Chimamanda Adichie was born in 1977, seven years after the Nigerian Civil War ended. As such, she did experience the war. This suggests that her work was influenced by cultural understanding of the Nigerian Civil War. Additionally, Chimamanda Adichie is from Enugu state, which is in the South-East (Igbo) region of Nigeria. More so, the names of the characters suggest an Igbo setting. Hence, her work falls under the category of Igbo literature.

Studies identified physical and psychological violence against the Igbos, economic loss, identity transformation, misrepresentation, Islamophobia and Igbo-centrism, African womanism, and feminism (Wosu, 2018; Uzomah, 2022; Nayel, 2004; Alou, 2017; Adhav, 2024; Ehiosun, 2024; Ganguly & Hazra, 2024; Fashakin, 2015).

To start with physical violence against the Igbos, Wosu (2018) argued that Chimamanda Adichie's "*Half of a Yellow Sun*" illustrates the physical violence and the mental trauma the Igbos residing in Northern Nigeria suffered during the pogrom. Wosu noted that through characters such as Olanna, Uncle Mbaezi, Arize, and Anty Ifeka, who were Igbos living in the Northern part of Nigeria, Chimamanda Adichie was able to paint a clearer picture of the pathetic experience of the Igbos in Northern Nigeria at the eve of the Nigerian Civil War. Additionally, through the cheerful involvement of Abdulmalik (who was a friend to Uncle Mbaezi) in the killing of an entire Igbo family, Chimamanda presented the horrific encounters and interaction between the Igbos and the Northerners during the pogrom in Kano (Wosu, 2018).

Notably, Olenna witnessed Abdulmalik's actions and his cheerfulness after killing an Igbo family. Consequently, she suffered mental trauma (Wosu, 2018). The severity of the mental trauma is such that Olanna was too fatigued to the extent that she lacked the strength to cry, all she could push herself to do was to swallow the pills Odenigbo gave to her (Wosu, 2018). Hence, Abdulmalik's words and action symbolize the physical violence, and Olenna's experience represents the mental trauma suffered by the Igbos.

For economic loss, the Igbos suffered greatly (Uzomah, 2022). Uzomah noted that due to the pogrom, the Igbos who have migrated to many parts of the country were forced to move back to their region. As a result, they abandoned their investments and properties in these areas. To validate their submission, Uzomah gave an example of Odenigbo, whose lifestyle before the war captures the definition of comfortability. Odenigbo had his own vehicle and house, which was well-furnished and congenial.

Uzomah further noted that due to the war, many Igbos experienced socio-economic decline and regression. For instance, Odenigbo moved out of his comfortable home into a smaller apartment (Uzomah, 2022).

Nayel (2004) observed that Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* depicts identity transformation, as Olanna's experiences, including witnessing the Igbo massacre, shifted her from being ethnically neutral to aligning with the Biafran cause. However, Alou (2017) argued that the novel misrepresents Northern Nigeria by portraying Muslims as genocidal through Abdulmalik's actions and using "Allah" to imply Islamophobia. Alou also noted Igbo-centrism, as Adichie condemned Igbo massacres but appeared to justify reprisal killings, suggesting bias in her narrative.

Concerning the theme of African womanism, Ganguly and Hazra (2024) argued that Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* portrays African womanism, emphasizing the resilience and self-reliance of Black women. Female characters like Olanna and Kainene demonstrated bravery and strength during the Nigerian Civil War, stepping up as men like Odenigbo faltered under the war's pressures. Similarly, Fashakin (2015) highlighted feminism in the novel, where Adichie used Olanna's voice to advocate for women's empowerment. Strong-willed characters, such as Olanna, Kainene, and Auntie Ifeka, serve as tools for feminist authors like Adichie to reinforce themes of resilience, independence, and gender equality (Ogwude, 2011; Fashakin, 2015).

[Sunset in Biafra by Elechi Amadi](#)

Elechi Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* is a non-fictional work detailing the author's experiences as both a civilian and a Nigerian military officer during the Nigerian Civil War (Omojola, 2022; Ismaila, 2012). Born in 1934 in Rivers State, part of Nigeria's Niger-Delta, Amadi's work falls under non-Igbo literature and provides an eyewitness account of the war. Scholars have identified the themes of necropolitics and Igbo jubilancy in the book (Omojola, 2022; Ismaila, 2012).

Omojola (2022) highlighted the necro-political dynamics between the Igbos and ethnic minorities like the Isoko, Ikwerre, and Ibibio within the Biafran enclave, as portrayed by Amadi. Necropolitics, as described by Mbembé and Meintjes (2003), refers to the power to decide who lives or dies. Amadi captures the maltreatment of minorities during the war. Similarly, Ismaila (2012) explored the theme of Igbo jubilancy, citing Amadi's observations on Igbo celebrations after the January 1966 coup, which overthrew Northern political leaders.

There was a country by Chinua Achebe

Chinua Achebe, a renowned Nigerian literary icon, shared his personal experiences of the Nigerian Civil War in *There Was a Country*. Born in 1930 in Anambra State (Igbo region), Achebe's work is categorized as Igbo literature. Scholarly analyses of the book have explored themes such as double consciousness, solidarity and polarization, ethnic rivalry and corruption, and elitism and ethnic sentiments (Nwuga, 2018; Oyebanji, 2024; Ngwaba, 2023; Oganga et al., 2024).

To begin with double consciousness, Nwuga (2018) borrowed the concept from W. E. B Du Bois. For Du Bois, double consciousness refers to the understanding by African-Americans, caused by racial discriminations in the United States, that they have an African ancestry alongside their American citizenship. As a result, they construct a sense of self with both identities (Du Bois, 1903; Nwuga, 2018). That is, due to racial inequality in the United States, the African-Americans are conscious of their dual identities. The first is rooted in their African heritage and the other (American) is within their society of birth.

The implication of the concept of double consciousness to Nigerian State is such that during the massacre of the Igbos in the Northern part of Nigeria, the federal government of Nigeria did not intervene, and after the massacre, the federal government of Nigeria (Nwuga, 2018). Consequently, this led to ethnic consciousness among Igbos in Nigeria (Nwuga, 2018). As such, the massacre of the Igbos in the North resulted into double consciousness among the Igbos.

Oyebanji (2024) identified the use of personal plural pronouns like “us,” “we,” and “them” in Achebe's *There Was a Country* to highlight themes of solidarity and polarization. This suggests an in-group versus out-group dynamic, as seen in Achebe's statement, “*The country had not embraced us, the Igbo people and other easterners, as full-fledged members of the Nigerian family*” (Achebe, 2012, p. 87). Similarly, on page 95, Achebe reflects, “*As we fled home to eastern Nigeria... we saw ourselves as victims*” (Achebe, 2012, p. 95).

Achebe meticulously described the themes of ethnic rivalry and corruption in pre-civil war Nigeria in *There Was a Country* (Ngwaba, 2023). He argued that within six years of independence from Britain, corruption became ingrained in the ruling class. National activities, such as elections and censuses, were manipulated, while public officials prioritized self-interest over national progress. Achebe noted, “*Within six years of this tragic manipulation, Nigeria was a cesspool of corruption and misrule... Public servants helped themselves freely to the nation’s wealth. Elections were blatantly rigged... The social malaise in Nigerian society was political corruption*” (Achebe, 2012, p. 51).

Similarly, Oganga et al. (2024) highlighted the theme of elitism, noting how political elites exploited ethnic sentiments to consolidate power. Achebe criticized Sir Ahmadu Bello, a Northern political elite, for inciting fear among the Northern lower class to gain their support against elites from other regions, fueling ethnic divisions (Oganga et al., 2024).

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology employed to conduct this study. Hence, the subtopic include: research approach, data collection, selection criteria, data analysis, research philosophy, and ethical consideration.

Research Approach

This study investigates how literary works have presented the Nigerian Civil War to their audience. To carry out this investigation, this study employs qualitative method of research. Qualitative research involves studying people, ideas, events, and so on with the aim of exploring and identifying deeper meanings (Ugwu & Eze, 2023, Fossey, et al., 2002). In other words, qualitative research aims to understand and provide detailed description of people's belief, behaviour, experiences and worldview, and so on (Patten & Galvan, 2020; Vibha, et al., 2016). As such, the data in qualitative research are non-numerical in nature (Cropley, 2022).

Notably, the goal of this study is to examine how literary works presented the Nigerian Civil War. The information I these literary texts are not numerical, they are textual. Hence, the adoption of qualitative research approach. Fo r this study was informed by the nature of data to be used for this study.

Data Collection

This study is guided by two research questions. These research questions inquire about how Igbo-literature and non-Igbo literary works present the Nigeria Civil War to their audience. Two literary texts were Igbo-authored, while the other two were non-Igbo authored literary texts. Notably, the non-Igbo texts were written by authors from the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. This decision was informed by the fact that the Niger-Delta region also had first-hand experience of violence during the Nigeria Civil War.

The Igbo-authored texts are Chimamanda Adiche's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Chinua Achebe's *There was a Country*. The non-Igbo texts are Elechi Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* and Isidore Okpewho's *Last Duty*.

Selection Criteria

he selection of Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country* is based on his prominence and influence in African literature, earning him the title "father of African literature" (Otiono, 2013, p. 31). This underscores the authoritative significance of his works. Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* was chosen for its validation of the study's theoretical framework—collective memory. Born in 1977, Adichie's fiction reflects stories passed down about the Nigerian Civil War, shaped by cultural understanding.

For non-Igbo perspectives, Elechi Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* and Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty* were selected. Amadi's memoir provides a firsthand account as a Niger Delta soldier in the war. Okpewho's *The Last Duty*, a fictional work, balances the study alongside Achebe's and Amadi's memoirs, complementing Adichie's fiction.

Data Analysis

To analyse the selected texts, this study employs thematic analysis, which involves identifying themes through careful reading and re-reading of textual data (Dawadi, 2020). A theme represents the main idea in a piece of art, writing, or discourse (Kampira, 2021). Since the data for this study are literary texts, thematic analysis is appropriate as it focuses on non-numerical information.

This study adopts a hybrid thematic analysis, combining inductive and deductive approaches. The inductive approach allows themes to emerge naturally without pre-defined guides (Dawadi, 2020; Schreier, 2012), while the deductive approach relies on themes identified in prior studies.

Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the assumptions and beliefs guiding a research process (Saunders et al., 2009). Before conducting research, the researcher adopts a set of assumptions that serve as a framework for the study. These assumptions include ontology and epistemology (Blaikie & Priest, 2017; Kuhn, 1970). Ontology relates to the nature of reality and how it is conceptualized, reflecting the researcher's initial stance on the subject of study. Epistemology concerns the methods of investigation, focusing on how knowledge about the subject is obtained.

Ontology is categorized into objectivism and constructionism (Bryman, 2012; Schutt, 2012). Objectivism, derived from realism, posits that reality exists independently of human perception (Jonassen, 1991). Constructionism, however, suggests that reality is continuously constructed through human interpretation (Jonassen, 1991). In terms of epistemology, positivism relies on hypothesis testing and views knowledge as objective (Park et al., 2020). Interpretivism, in contrast, emphasizes the subjective creation of meaning by social actors, with the researcher interpreting events, occurrences, or texts (Crotty, 1998). Post-positivism combines elements of both paradigms.

This study's theoretical foundation is collective memory, defined as a socially constructed understanding of the past shared by a group. This aligns with the constructionist ontological paradigm. Epistemologically, the study uses interpretivism, specifically hermeneutics, to identify and interpret themes within literary texts on the Nigerian Civil War (Crotty, 1998). Hermeneutics focuses on interpreting textual or written data, which is central to this study's methodology.

Ethical Consideration

To ensure that this study is conducted within the framework of research ethics, the researcher ensured that all studies used in this work were acknowledged and properly cited. Also, the researcher avoided plagiarism by including all the relevant references. Additionally, the researcher interpreted the studies and selected texts without distorting the findings and content. In other words, the researcher did not deliberately misinterpret literature and selected texts to fit any preconceived idea or notion.

Chapter 4: ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher conducts data analysis by identifying the key themes in the selected texts for this study. These texts include: *The Last Duty* by Isidore Okpewho, *Sunset in Biafra* by Elechi Amadi, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Adiche, and *There was a Country* by Chinua Achebe. Notably, the Analysis is arranged in the order the selected texts are arranged.

The Last Duty by Isidore Okpewho

Theme 1: Liberation

Liberation refers to granting freedom from imprisonment, oppression, or invasion. This definition suggests that a group is set free from the oppression of another group. Hence, there is a liberator, the invaded, and the invader. In his novel, Isidore Okpewho presented the Nigerian Military as the liberators, the Biafran military forces as the invaders, and his native Niger Delta as the invaded. For instance, a major character in the novel, Major Ali noted that

*“It was quite clear to me that we had to be very careful how we conducted our military duty here. When the federal army **liberated** this town from the rebels just over three years ago, many Simba people had to flee the town for fear of losing their lives” (p.4).*

Another character, Chief Toje, agreed with Major Ali. For Chief Toje, the federal troops unshackled the town from the grips of the Simba (Biafran) army, people like him were acknowledged as the dignitaries in the society. In Toje’s words:

*“When the federal troops **liberated** this town over three years ago, the first thing that the commander wanted to know was who the elders were. Of course, my name could not have been left out after that of the Otota of Urukpe, our big chief” (p.5).*

Toje appears to possess a mental scale with which he attributes importance to people, primarily based on their material possession. Despite this material-oriented attitude, Toje agreed with Major Ali that the Federal forces (Nigerian Army) liberated them from the Simba Biafran (Army). Interestingly, these characters used the word liberate in different monologues in the novel. This suggests that the Simbas were seen as the invaders in the town.

Interestingly, Godwin Alabi-Isama, who fought for the Nigerian Army during the Nigerian Civil War, mentioned this in his book titled *“Tragedies of Victor”* that the arrival of the Nigerian Army in the Niger Delta was met with celebration and applause by the indigenes, as the indigenes regarded the Nigerian Army as their liberators from the Biafran invaders (Alabi-Isama, 2013). He further noted that the indigenes supported the Nigerian Army with food supplies and the region’s road network (Alabi-Isama, 2013). One might infer that this jubilation was captured in the opening scene, which was Major Ali’s monologue, of the fictional novel. Major Ali remarked that:

“I am greeted with a deafening applause from a grateful population” (P. 3).

Theme 2: Conflict Profiteering

Conflict profiteering involves exploiting conflict for financial, social, or political gain. In *The Last Duty*, Chief Toje uses the Nigerian Civil War to fabricate sabotage charges against his business rival, Mukoro Oshevire, showcasing self-interest during wartime. Toje admits, *“I have not hesitated to recommend a citizen here for detention on charges of collaboration with the rebels... For I felt that Mukoro Oshevire stood in my way”* (p. 5). He secretly enlists Omonigho Rukeme, who abhors a family feud with Oshevire, to aid in the plot (p. 120). Toje’s actions illustrate how conflicts create opportunities for individuals to manipulate situations for personal gain.

Theme 3: Destruction of Inter-Tribal Bond and Relationship

In *The Last Duty*, Isidore Okpewho explores how the Nigerian Civil War damaged the longstanding bond between the Igbo (Biafrans) and Niger Delta communities. Before the war, these groups shared political affiliations within the Eastern region and historical ties predating colonial rule. Major Ali’s monologue acknowledges this unity, stating, *“Time had long ago forged a tie between the two tribes”* (p. 4). However, the war fractured these relations.

Additionally, Okpewho illustrates this through Aku, a Simban married to an Igabo man, symbolizing pre-war unity. After her husband’s imprisonment for alleged collaboration with Simba rebels, Aku faced hostility and isolation from the Igabo community. She laments, *“I can hardly work on the street... hostile eyes assail me”* (p. 11). Major Ali and Aku’s words project the war’s destructive impact on intertribal unity and relationships.

Sunset in Biafra by Elechi Amadi

Theme 1: Biafran Aggression

Elechi Amadi explained that the parties involved in the Nigerian Civil War, Nigeria and Biafra (Igbos), adopted two different approaches at the initial stage of the Nigerian Civil War. For the Nigeria Federal Government, it was restraint at the initial stage of the conflict by responding to the declaration (secession) of the Biafran State with a police action. In contrast, the Biafrans were confrontational and aggressive. For instance, the Biafrans conducted air strikes in Lagos (the capital of Nigeria at the time), Kaduna (a major Northern city), and Niger Delta.

Amadi (1973) further explained that the Biafrans launched on a swift attack on the Midwest, and simultaneously conducted an aerial attack on Kaduna (a major Northern city). Interestingly, the Biafran Government established a government for the Midwest after the attack was successful. Thereafter, the Biafran Army began to plan to launch an attack against Lagos. In Elechi Amadi's words:

“In spite of their military setbacks, the secessionists launched a fast quixotic operation in the Midwest. The state was overrun in a matter of twenty-four hours with the collaboration of Ibo officers of Midwestern origin. Simultaneously there were air strikes in Apapa and Kaduna. In less than a fortnight the rebels entered Ore and began to threaten the Western State. Ojukwu installed Major Albert Okonkwo as Administrator of the Midwest. A branch of the rebel forces began to plan a water-borne invasion of Lagos through the creeks near Okitipupa” (P. 48).

Importantly, the Biafran Army also murdered Italian workers on oil fields in the Midwest region of Nigeria during the Nigerian Civil War (Amadi, 1973).

Theme 2: Ethnic Oppression

Ethnic oppression involves systemic mistreatment based on ethnic identity, often driven by power dynamics. In his memoir, Elechi Amadi highlighted the oppressive behaviour of Igbos, Biafran soldiers, and leadership towards other ethnic groups within the Biafran enclave. Amadi described the Igbos' actions as dominance and insensitivity to the interests of other ethnicities. He recounted that, during the war, Igbos who had previously coexisted peacefully in his village became aggressive and tyrannical. They seized private property, harvesting crops like plantains and

oranges without consent, dismissing protests with the phrase, “*This is Biafra land*” (p. 52). This suggests their disregard for others’ rights (Amadi, 1973).

Amadi further recounted his personal experience of the Igbo ethnic tyranny and oppression. He noted that he was a victim of an Igbo tenant who refused to pay his rent, the Igbo tenant even advised Amadi to seek redress in court (Amadi, 1973). In the book, Amadi noted that:

“A palm-cutter who had hitherto been exploiting my family's palm plantation for a rental refused to pay any more rent soon after the proclamation of secession. What was more, he walked fearlessly on to my family land and cleared a considerable chunk of it for farming purposes. When I confronted him, all he said was ‘This is Biafra land.’ I could go to court if I liked, he advised” (p. 52).

Regarding the conduct of the Biafran Army, Elechi Amadi recounted the dominance of the Biafran Army over ethnic minorities within Biafra during the Nigerian Civil War. When Amadi and other Ikwerre indigenes resisted the Igbo community's claim over their harvest during a fishing spree, the Biafran soldiers intervened. According to Amadi, “*Secessionist soldiers were posted along the path to the ponds. As the fishermen emerged, they were made to surrender their catch at gun-point*” (p. 54). This incident underscores the power dynamics, where ethnic minorities were denied autonomy and sovereignty within Biafra. Such relationships have been identified as necro-political by Omojola (2022).

Elechi Amadi criticized Emeka Ojukwu, leader of the Biafran secession, for his insensitivity towards the fears and needs of ethnic minorities within Biafra during the Nigerian Civil War. Amadi noted that Ojukwu ignored the worries of these minorities, particularly their fear of Igbo dominance. The Biafran leadership allowed unjust arrests and detentions to persist, further alienating the minorities. This led many to believe that their salvation lay in a united Nigeria. Amadi remarked, “*Ojukwu and his top advisers... ignored or underestimated the fears of the minorities. These fears were fed daily by cruel arrests and detentions*” (p. 52)

Theme 3: Conflict Profiteering

Conflict profiteering refers to taking advantage of other individuals or a group of people for one's personal gains and interest. According to Elechi Amadi, as the Nigerian Civil War progressed, a noticeable shift in societal attitude emerged. People increasingly developed self-serving characters as they prioritize personal interests over communal well-being. Consequently, this led to situation where individuals took advantage of other people. Amadi cited an example of a widow who pocketed a weekly contribution of 2 shillings of other women. Under the guise of a weekly prayer meeting, she collected 2 shillings from every attendant, and diverted the money for personal use. In Amadi's words:

“Every Wednesday morning all the women were called out to prayer compulsorily and were made to contribute two shillings per head each time. A prominent widow who led the various prayer groups appropriated much of the proceeds for her personal needs”
(P.50)

This example highlights how the Nigerian Civil War provides opportunities for people profited from taking advantage of others.

Theme 4: Comradeship

Comradeship means a deep sense of friendship and mutual support between individual who share the same experience and challenges. In the memoir, Amadi mentioned that despite hostilities of the Nigerian Civil War, Soldiers on the side of the Nigerian Federal Government and soldiers on the Biafran side exchanged gifts. Amadi further narrated a personal experience where a Biafran soldier wept on his shoulders when the soldier realised that he was still alive.

“At a later stage in the war, Federal soldiers were to exchange gifts and drink together with rebel soldiers at the war fronts. The crisis had not severed their comradeship. I remember meeting a rebel officer I had taught at the military school, Zaria, convalescing at the Federal military hospital in Port Harcourt. He wept on my shoulders when he saw me alive” (P.48).

The exchange of gifts suggests the presence of comradeship, shared humanity, and mutual respect among the soldiers of the warring parties. It signifies that despite their adversity, their brotherhood in arms and nationality still has a place during conflict. Additionally, the emotional response of a

former student upon realizing that his tutor was still alive indicates the importance of personal relationships and past connections in the face of war and conflicts.

Half of a Yellow Sun by Chimamanda Adichie

Theme 1: Resilience

Resilience refers to the ability to adapt and thrive amidst adversity. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Chimamanda Adichie illustrates the resilience of the Biafran people during the Nigerian Civil War. Despite harsh strategies from the Nigerian Federal Government, such as starvation and currency changes, the Biafrans persevered.

Adichie, through the character of Richard, highlights how starvation, weaponized by the Nigerian State, failed to break the Biafran spirit. Instead, it garnered international attention, sparking protests and support from countries like Zambia, Tanzania, and Gabon, and drawing the International Red Cross's focus to Biafra as a global emergency (p. 296–297).

Regarding the currency change, Adichie portrays the Biafran Government's quick response as an example of resilience. When Nigeria switched its currency from British Pounds to Naira, Radio Biafra promptly announced a new Biafran currency, demonstrating adaptability and commitment to the secessionist cause (p. 327). These instances underline Biafra's perseverance amid challenges.

Theme 2: Trauma

Trauma refers to a deeply disturbing experience with long-lasting effects on an individual's physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Chimamanda Adichie explores the theme of trauma through the character of Olanna. In one scene, Olanna reacts fearfully to lightning, mistaking it for an air raid by the Nigerian Federal Army. Her terror causes her to scream and run into the bedroom. It takes her husband – Odenigbo – to calm her down. Adichie writes, *“Can't you hear it? Can't you hear them bombing us again?” “It's thunder,” Master replied, grabbing Olanna from behind and holding her”* (p. 256).

In another scene in the novel (p. 327), Olenna reacted to series of thunderstrikes by jumping. In Olenna's mind, she thought it was another explosion, air raids, and bombing by the Nigerian Military.

Additionally, in a later scene, through the characters of Kainene and Olenna Adichie depicts how trauma has been normalized in Biafran society. In a conversation between Olanna and Kainene, they laugh as thunder rumbles, comparing it to shelling. Olanna remarks, “*I’m worried they haven’t bombed us in a while,*” while Kainene jokes about an atomic bomb (p. 490). This dark humor symbolizes the bitter normalization of violence and suffering during the Nigerian Civil War.

Theme 3: In group, out group dichotomy

In-group/out-group dichotomy refers to justifying the actions of individuals who share one’s social identity while condemning similar actions by those outside the group. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Chimamanda Adichie explores this dichotomy concerning the January 1966 coup, and the reprisal killings of Northerners in the Eastern region leading up to the Nigerian Civil War.

Through characters such as Okeoma, Odenigbo, and Professor Ezeka, addresses the January 1966 coup. The coup, carried out by mostly Igbo officers, targeted key political and military figures, primarily from Northern and Western Nigeria. Professor Ezeka challenges this narrative, arguing that the British colonial government designed Nigeria’s political structure to favour Northern hegemony. For instance, Professor Ezeka remarks, “*The BBC should be asking their people who put the Northerners in government to dominate everybody!*” (p. 158-159). Consequently, casualties were mostly Northerners due to their high-ranking positions in government. Odenigbo praises Major Nzeogwu, a leading coup plotter, calling him a visionary hero.

Addressing the reprisal killings of Northerners in the Eastern region, Adichie uses a dialogue between Olanna and Ugwu to reflect differing perspectives. Olanna condemns the killings, acknowledging the Biafran leadership’s swift action to protect Northerners by securing their safe passage back to the North. Olenna remarked, “*Ojukwu is a great man*” (p. 222). However, Ugwu shifts the blame, arguing that the Northerners instigated the violence by massacring Easterners first. He states, “*The reprisal killings happened because they pushed*” (p. 222 - 223).

While Adichie highlights the Northerners’ initial aggression, she downplays the Easterners’ responsibility for killing innocent Northerners. Through these dialogues, Adichie demonstrates the in-group/out-group dichotomy by justifying or mitigating actions based on shared social identity while subtly critiquing the broader cycle of violence.

There was a country by Chinua Achebe

Theme 1: Incompetence of the Ruling Class

In his memoir, Achebe identified the source of Nigeria's problem, to which the Nigerian Civil War was a consequence, to be inability of the ruling class to understand, handle, and address Nigeria's historical and social complexity (Achebe, 2013). In other words, Nigeria had a dysfunctional group elite who were unable to understand and manage the country's multi-ethnic nature. These ethnic groups are primordial entities compared to the Nigerian State. That is, they are older than the Nigerian polity. Hence, the inability to manage them properly will definitely spell continuous doom for the country. The highlights of these dooms are the January 1966 coup and its tribal interpretation, the July counter-coup that was ethnically-sponsored as a response, the massacres of the Igbos in the North and the reprisal killings of Northerners by Igbos in the Biafra territory, and sadly, the 30 months long Nigerian Civil War.

Theme 2: Ethnic hostility and False Sense of Nationhood

On the memoir, Achebe explored the themes ethnic hostility and false nationhood. To start with the theme of ethnic hostility, Achebe noted that as the Igbos were returning to the East at the eve of the Nigerian Civil War, there were sneered at by those they have regarded as compatriot. For these compatriots, the exit of the Igbos from in Lagos would result to the fall in the price of food (Achebe, 2013). One might infer that the presence of the Igbos in Lagos has been perceived as source of disruption before the first coup. This explains that such hostility, which were in form of jeers and sneers, towards the Igbos.

Achebe further noted this experience made him realize that he had had a false sense of belonging and nationhood about Nigeria and Nigerians all along (Achebe, 2013). One might infer that other Igbos who experienced the massacre in the North and similar experience with Achebe may came to the same realization as Achebe. Notably, a previous study identified this as the theme of double consciousness (Nwuga, 2018).

Theme 3: Massacre of Igbos and danger of being Igbo

Through his memoir, Achebe explored the horrors of the massacre of Igbos in the North and how it was dangerous for anyone to be Igbo living outside the Biafra territory at the eve of the Nigerian Civil War to begin with the massacre of Igbos, Achebe estimated the inexplicable deaths of Igbo living outside of Biafran territory was about hundreds weekly (Achebe, 2013). Sadly, the perpetrators of these killings might have had government support (Ache, 2013). For instance, a Sierra Leone national living in the North during the massacre of Igbos described it as a State Industry (Achebe, 2013).

As regards the danger of Igbos within the Nigerian territory, Achebe noted that Igbos who had not returned to the East were living in danger. Achebe narrated a personal experience about some drunk soldiers who visited his place of work with the intention of finding which was more powerful, Achebe's pen or their guns (Achebe, 2013).

Theme 4: Nigerian Army Aggression and War Atrocities

Achebe narrated how the Nigerian military were aggressive towards the Biafrans and committed many atrocities against the Biafrans during the Nigerian Civil War. As regards Nigerian military aggression, Achebe explained that in the Nigerian Government responded to the Biafran offensive attacks on the Midwest region of Nigeria with multiple aggressive and overwhelming aerial attacks. The attacks were so severe that the Biafran Government had to relocate its capital after the first capital had witnessed severe destruction (Achebe, 2013).

Regarding the many atrocities against the Biafrans during the Nigerian Civil War, Achebe cited the examples of the Calabar massacre and Oji River Incident. Calabar is a Niger-Delta city that houses ethnic groups such as the Efik, Ibibio, and Igbo, and others (Achebe, 2013). Achebe explained that the Nigerian Army occupied the city with little resistance and they purged the city of its Igbo populace by killing perhaps 2,000 Igbo civilians (Achebe, 2013). Concerning the Oji River Incident, Achebe mentioned that killed 14 medical personnels and the patients in an hospital close to the Oji River.

Chapter 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher discusses how identified themes in the previous chapter interact with themselves and draws conclusion from this discussion. Hence, this chapter has two sub-topics: discussion and conclusion.

Discussion

The research questions guiding this study focus on how Igbo and non-Igbo texts present the Nigerian Civil War to their audiences. The selected texts include *The Last Duty* by Isidore Okpewho, *Sunset in Biafra* by Elechi Amadi, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Adichie, and *There Was a Country* by Chinua Achebe. A thematic analysis of these works reveals significant thematic overlap and interplay between Igbo and non-Igbo perspectives, particularly on themes such as conflict profiteering, liberation versus ethnic oppression, and the harrowing experiences of the Nigerian Civil War.

On conflict profiteering, non-Igbo texts explore how individuals exploit war for personal gain. In *The Last Duty*, Isidore Okpewho's Chief Toje fabricates charges against a business competitor, Mukoro Oshevire, leading to Oshevire's imprisonment. Toje subsequently takes advantage of the situation to engage in a relationship with Oshevire's wife, Aku. Similarly, in *Sunset in Biafra*, Elechi Amadi describes a widow who diverts funds collected during prayer sessions for personal use, highlighting opportunism during crises.

The themes of liberation and ethnic oppression also emerge prominently in non-Igbo texts. Elechi Amadi recounts the oppressive treatment of minority ethnic groups within Biafra. He shared an example of an Igbo tenant refusing to pay rent and advising recourse through court. In *The Last Duty*, Okpewho characters Major Ali narrates the celebration that followed the expulsion of rebels by federal forces.

In contrast, Igbo texts focus on the traumatic experiences of Igbos during the war. Achebe recalls personal encounters, such as drunk soldiers questioning the power of his pen versus their guns, and atrocities like the Asaba massacre and the Oji River incident. Similarly, Adichie, through the character Olanna in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, depicts the psychological toll of war, as Olanna

associates natural phenomena with bombing and air raids, emphasizing the trauma endured by the Igbo people.

The interplay between Igbo and non-Igbo texts extends to themes of Biafran leadership and the attitudes of the Biafran populace. Adichie, through Olanna, commends the Biafran leadership for ensuring the safe passage of Northerners in Biafran territory during reprisals. Conversely, Amadi criticizes Biafran leaders for failing to address the needs of minority groups, instead perpetuating fear through arrests and detentions. Regarding the populace, Adichie, via Ugwu, contextualizes reprisal killings as a reaction to Northern aggression, while Amadi highlights the Igbos' oppressive behavior toward minorities.

Overall, these texts reflect the cultural interpretations and collective memories of their respective communities. Igbo texts emphasize the suffering and resilience of the Igbos, while non-Igbo texts focus on the struggles of minorities within Biafra, illustrating divergent yet interwoven narratives of the Nigerian Civil War.

Conclusion

This study examines how Igbo and non-Igbo texts have presented the Nigerian Civil War, addressing the gap created by the absence of history in Nigeria's school curriculum. Without formal historical education, alternative sources, such as literature, provide a means for Nigerians to learn about the war. To this end, the study analysed *The Last Duty* by Isidore Okpewho, *Sunset in Biafra* by Elechi Amadi, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Adichie, and *There Was a Country* by Chinua Achebe.

The selection of texts was purposeful. Achebe's *There Was a Country* was chosen for his prominent role in African literature, while Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* aligns with the study's theoretical framework of collective memory, given that Adichie was born after the war. This suggests that her novel on inherited stories. Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* reflects his Niger Delta heritage and firsthand experience as a soldier in the war. Okpewho's *The Last Duty* was selected as it provides a fictional counterpart to Adichie's narrative. The study thus analysed two memoirs and two fictional novels.

A hybrid thematic analysis was employed. hybrid thematic analysis refers to the combination of inductive and deductive thematic approaches. Deductive analysis used a guide informed by previous research, while inductive analysis allowed themes to emerge organically. Achebe's *There Was a Country* revealed themes of *incompetence in leadership, ethnic hostility, the massacre of Igbos, and military aggression*. Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* explored *resilience, trauma, and in-group/out-group dynamics*. Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* highlighted *Biafran aggression, ethnic oppression, and conflict profiteering*, while Okpewho's *The Last Duty* addressed *liberation, conflict profiteering, and inter-tribal tensions*.

Thematic overlaps emerged across texts. Non-Igbo works emphasized conflict profiteering and the interplay of liberation and oppression, while Igbo texts focused on the harrowing experiences of the Igbos during the war. Shared themes between Igbo and non-Igbo texts included critiques of Biafran leadership and the treatment of minorities within Biafra.

From these findings, it is safe to conclude that the selected texts provide a cultural interpretation of the Nigerian Civil War. That is, they reflect collective memories shaped by the authors' cultural contexts.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- ⇒ The Nigerian government should introduce history to Nigerian Primary and secondary schools, including the Igbo and non-Igbo narratives into the syllabus.
- ⇒ Subsequent studies should employ empirical approach to investigate the relationship between collective memory and literary texts.

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