

**A NEW HISTORICIST STUDY OF THE PRESENTATION OF CIVIL WAR
AND INSURGENCY IN ADICHIE'S *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN*, AMADI'S
SUNSET IN BIAFRA, IYAYI'S *HEROES*, AND HABILO'S *OIL ON WATER***

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APRIL, 2021

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES,
FACULTY OF ARTS,
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY,
ZARIA**

APRIL, 2021

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation was written by me and that it is a record of my own research work. It has not been printed or presented in any previous application for a higher degree. All quotations are indicated and the sources of information are duly acknowledged by means of references.

ISMAILA, ABDULLAHI AHMAD

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CERTIFICATION

This thesis entitled **A New Historicist Study of the Presentation of Civil War and Insurgency in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Amadi’s *Sunset in Biafra*, Iyayi’s *Heroes*, and Habila’s *Oil on Water***, meets the regulation governing the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, English (Literature) of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, and is duly approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary study.

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Date

DEDICATION

To my mother, Hajiya Safiya (Anye), for whom I applied myself to the rigours of study in order to light her face, but you left just when the candle is being lit. Adieu, Mum!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

God, you have done it for me once more. You have always been there for me at every point of my needs. You have paddled me, an orphan, across rough weathers, guided me through thickets and stone walls. You have been my Sustainer, and for all this, for the life of me, I give thanks to you, I glorify you for the umpteenth time, Alhamdulillah!!!

I pay special tribute too to all the teachers who mentored me from primary school to the university. I have carried you all with me, and inside me, reflecting in the best possible way the attributes you imbued in me as I course through life's many detours. I remember in particular Mr. Attah, my Ghanaian secondary school English and Literature teacher- wherever you are now may God continue to bless you; I remember too my lecturers in the university beginning with my mentor and role model Professor Tanimu Abubakar who has been my supervisor all through my undergraduate to the PhD; Professor Abubakar Liman, Professor Edward Abah, Professor Abel Joseph, Professor T.Y. Surakat, the late Professor Aderemi Bamikunle, Mr. Muazu Maiwada, the man we call fondly as Oga Steve,

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ABSTRACT

This study deploys New Historicist Poetics to evaluate the Presentation of Civil War and Insurgency in Adichie's *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, Amadi's *Sunset, in Biafra*, Iyayi's *Heroes* and Habila's *Oil on water*. In this sense, the study is based on the argument that the previous studies of the selected texts hardly evaluated the little narrative or subtexts which add up to become Othering Practice in the discourse of the Nigerian Civil War and Insurgency in the Niger Delta. As a point of departure, the study aims to examine the othering narrative strategies in the selected texts by focusing on how they structure the little narratives into encodements of the stereotyped, the undermined, the stigmatised, and the discursively categorised as out-groups. Essentially, this study is undertaken to draw attention to the little narratives in the selected texts in order to provide a broad understanding of the discourses of Nigeria Civil War and Insurgency in the Niger Delta. Using New Historicism as a theoretical framework, the study assesses such concepts as narrative fashioning, power relations, historicity, othering practice, and epistemic violence to determine how the discourses of civil war and insurgency in the selected texts iterate stereotyped prejudices and stigma against the Other. In sharp contrast to the earlier notions of textual value by the New Critics, the object of this study is to demonstrate that literary texts are cultural not only because they refer to the world outside their boundaries but also by virtue of the social or cultural values like stereotypes, prejudices, stigmas, and other contexts which they embody. The study finds that the discourse of the Nigerian Civil War and Insurgency has ignored the embeddedness of the little narratives within the larger thematic formation which presents conflict situation in order to project the thematic trend as political persecution and victimisation of the Igbo and Niger Delta people and somewhat an ideological construct. The study uses qualitative research methodology and concludes that the conflict situations presented in the selected texts provide an occasion for the perpetuation of othering practice and epistemic violence in mainstream Nigerian literature.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
CERTIFICATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT.....	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Research Problem	5
1.3 Research Questions	7
1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study	7
1.5 Justification of the Study.....	8
1.6 Scope and Delimitation	12
1.7 Research Methodology.....	12
1.8 Chapter Breakdown.....	13
1.9 Clarification of the terms Civil War, Insurgency and the Novel	14
1.10 Historical Antecedents of The Novel of War and Conflict in Europe, America, and Africa	20
1.11 Literature of War, Conflict and Insurgency in Africa.....	23
1.12 Fictional Works on Nigerian Civil War and Insurgency in the Niger Delta.....	27
CHAPTER TWO	32
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW.....	32
2.1 New Historicism as a Theoretical Framework.....	32
2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW	41
2.2a On Historicity	41
2.2b On the Concept of Narrative Fashioning.....	42
2.2c On the Concept of Cultural Constraint and Mobility	45
2.2d On Power and Discourse.....	47
2.2 On Epistemic Violence	50

2.3 The Nigerian Novel as a National Narrative: Narrating Nigerian Nation.....	53
2.4 REVIEW OF LITERATURES ON THE PRIMARY TEXTS	57
CHAPTER THREE.....	69
3.1 NARRATIVE FASHIONING AS A PROCESS OF OTHERING IN ADICHIE’S <i>HALF OF A YELLOW SUN</i> AND AMADI’S <i>SUNSET IN BIAFRA</i>	69
CHAPTER FOUR.....	100
4.1 OTHERING PRACTICE AND DISCOURSE INTERVENTION IN IYAYI’S <i>HEROES</i>	100
CHAPTER FIVE.....	115
5.1 OTHERING PRACTICE AND HISTORICITY OF OIL WARS AND INSURGENCY IN HABILA’S <i>OIL ON WATER</i>	115
CHAPTER SIX	131
6.1 CONCLUSION	131
References.....	138

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

This thesis deploys New Historicist concepts of narrative fashioning, power relations, historicity, Othering practice and epistemic violence to the study of the presentation of civil war and insurgency in Adichie's *Half of A Yellow Sun*, Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra*, Iyayi's *Heroes* and Habila's *Oils on Water*. In doing so, the study investigates othering practice in the selected texts in order to authenticate how the actuality of the conflict situations generates discourses which create insights that have wider subjective implications. To achieve this, the study is premised on the New Historicist claim that a literary text is not reducible to a single meaning or metanarrative as well as on its rules of situating any text in cultural context or of interpreting a text in its relation to non-literary materials. In other words, new historicists hold the view that a literary text is subject to multiple interpretations with none of them laying claim to absolutism or metanarrative. They thus declare that a "literary text, then, is always part and parcel of a much wider cultural, political, social and economic dispensation" (Bertens: 2008).

The tendency by the New Historicism to see literary texts as subject to multiple interpretations and so part of a much wider cultural, political, social and economic dispensation invariably makes it a part of postmodernism. Essentially, its acceptance of multiplicity of meaning or plurality and rejection of metanarrative links it up with postmodernism's adoption of petit or little narratives which, by implication, is a rejection of the "centering structures that have long given meaning to human history" (Joy: 2019:34).

The core paradigm of this study, therefore, is its focus on the little narratives which are constructed and circulated stereotypes, prejudices, and stigmas about the epistemically

disadvantaged groups in the selected texts. These little narratives have been mostly ignored, suppressed and undermined in the previous studies of the selected texts in relation to the narratives grandnarratives of the conflict situations. Overtime, the grundnorm in mainstream Nigerian literature about the Nigerian Civil War and the Insurgency in the Niger Delta is largely about the political persecution and victimisation of the Igbos and the Niger Delta people as well as the ideological construct of the conflict situations that dovetails into a questioning of the corporeality of the Nigerian state. Hardly are the texts interpreted as a narrative strategy of othering, which is a 'strategy of categorising a group or an individual as the 'other', and establishing or reinforcing one's own identity through opposition to and, frequently, the vilification of this other'. The concept of the 'other' consists of a group that describes itself as part of the people united in a 'we' in relation to the other people constructed or perceived as fundamentally different and united in a 'they' category. Michel Foucault, in Sara Rizmyhr Engelund (2021), "othering is strongly connected with power and knowledge". Therefore, Engelund (2021) states that "when we "other" another group, we point out their perceived weaknesses to make ourselves look stronger or better. It implies a hierarchy". For Foucault, therefore, in Engelund (2021) othering consists of the 'creation and maintenance of the imaginary knowledge of the other'. In terms of cultural representation, othering practice is done in service to 'socio-political power and the establishment of hierarchies of domination'.

Othering practice is realised through epistemic violence, that is, a discursive violence, violence exerted against or through knowledge', and, in our case, the opportunistic use of knowledge of the conflict situations to undermine and denigrate the 'other'. In other words, epistemic violence is the deployment of literary devices like metaphor, metonymy and anthropomorphism- to achieve a premeditated cultural representation. Bunch (2015) states that "traditionally, societies have used the discourse of otherness to

create a common bond within the in-group” and to define others who are “distinctly different” as the out-group. By and large, epistemic violence consists in the “construction of epistemically disadvantaged identities... understood only by their constructed and circulated stereotypes” (Bunch:2015). This means that the distinction between the in-group and the out-group is usually constructed “along the classic axes of discrimination and power differences like sexuality, gender, ethnicity, ‘race’, class and so on (Engelund:2021).

The practice of Othering entails a creative deployment of language and literary protocols of narrativity to structure works and foreground particular social, political and cultural realism. As essentially the domain of words, literature becomes an instrument for signifying the realism of social action such as the Nigerian civil war and insurgency in the Niger Delta. According to Greenblatt (1980)

Social actions are themselves always embedded in systems of public significations, always grasped even by their makers in acts of interpretation, while the words that constitute the works of literature---are by their very nature the manifest assurance of a similar embeddedness.

Similarly, Polleinghorne (1988) foregrounds the relationship between literature and social actions when he states that:

Narrative is a form of meaning making--- Narrative recognises the meaningfulness of individual experiences by noting how they function as part of the whole. Its particular subject matter is human action and events play in these actions and events that affect human beings, which it configures into whole according to the roles these actions and events play in bringing about a conclusion--- The narrative scheme serves as a lens through which the apparently independent and disconnected element of existence are seen as related parts of a whole.

In this wise, narratives embody human actions and experiences. As such, a literary work becomes what Greenblatt (1980) refers to as a “collective construction”. In other words, literary works bear both “the social presence to the world of the literary text and

the social presence of the world in the literary text” (Greenblatt: 1980). This implies that the experiences represented in a literary text are both intrinsic and extrinsic to it. This clarifies the argument that social actions like the Nigerian civil war and insurgency in the Niger Delta are embedded in a system of language as codes of expression of the behaviour of the author, of the social worlds of the literary text, and a reflection upon those codes. It is in this sense that Greenblatt (1980) further states that “the written word is self-consciously embedded in specific communities, life situations, structures of power.” Against this backdrop, this study adopts a two-prong approach, which is that, while it accepts as given the wider interpretation of the conflict situations as the putative political persecution and victimisation of the Igbos, the Niger Delta people and the subaltern groups as well as an ideological construct, it nonetheless argues that this mode of interpretation has become a *grundnorm* in mainstream Nigerian literature. The study further argues that within this wider interpretive or thematic construct are sub-texts which function as rival stories or little narratives that can be aggregated to form another perspective in the interpretation of the selected texts. The study, therefore, focuses on these little narratives which serve as undercurrents in the bigger thematic formations of the selected texts.

In this study, the little narratives are paradigmatically delineated as a construct of the situations of the discursively disempowered, the stigmatised and the stereotyped which are hitherto mostly ignored, suppressed, and undermined in the previous studies of the selected texts. Little narratives (*petite recits*) are slippery fragments and marginalised stories within a text that help to break down grand narratives (big stories or totalising narratives). Little narratives ‘reveal paradoxes, instabilities, and simulacra’. They are “stories that explain small practices, local events rather than large-scale universal or global concepts” (Joy:2019:34). Joy (2019) also states that *petit* narratives are “always situational, provisional, contingent and temporary making no claim to universality,

truth, reason or stability. This study also accepts as given that in postcolonial studies, discourses abound which project the postcolonial nation-state as a site of contradictions and identity crises. Within these nations, many dissident voices or subnational groups emerge to challenge the authority of the state or the entrenched cultural hegemony. This then sets up the paradox in literary works of ‘us versus them’ paradigm which is obvious in the selected texts.

The study thus draws from the postulations of such scholars as Stephen Greenblatt, Michael Karlberg, Benedict Anderson, Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said, A. J. Bunch and Gayatri G. Spivak on the concepts of narrative fashioning, power relations, discourse intervention, epistemic violence, historicity, othering practice, and the historical novel. In other words, the study will assay the narrative strategy employed in the selected texts as that which is couched invariably within the cultural proposition of narrative fashioning, power relations, discourse intervention while determining the historicity of the texts. This study is set against the backdrop of the extant traditions of literature of war, conflict, and violence in the classical, modern European and American societies as well as in Africa to properly foreground how the novel form is used to designate the Nigerian civil war and insurgency in the Niger Delta.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The study notes that since the emergence of New Historicism in the 1980s, it has hardly been applied to the evaluation of the Nigerian civil war and the insurgency in the Niger Delta especially in terms of the contextuality of the novel form as an iteration of othering practices. Previous studies such as Mey (2011), Ohagwam(2018), Onukaogu (2010), Shain (1993), Obafemi (2009), Okoma (1993), Omoifo (1989), Nwankwo (2008), et al, have projected the Nigerian civil war and the insurgency in the Niger Delta as a narrative of instances of political persecution, victimisation of the Igbos, the

Niger Delta people and the subaltern groups as well as an ideological construct with Marxist leaning. On the contrary, this study deploys New Historicist poetics such as narrative fashioning, power relations, historicity, othering practice and epistemic violence to analyse how the Nigerian novel signifies the Nigerian civil war and insurgency in the Niger Delta as an iteration of stereotypes, prejudices, stigmatisation and denigration of the other. Consequently, previous studies of the selected texts hardly evaluated the little narratives which add up to become othering practices in the discourse of the Nigerian civil war and insurgency in the Niger Delta. This remiss has therefore created a gap in knowledge which the study aims to fill up. As a point of departure, the study examines the othering narrative strategies in the selected texts by focusing on the little narratives of the stereotyped, the undermined, the stigmatised, and the discursively categorised as out-groups.

The study, while not discounting the possible existence of a plethora of disquisitions on the Nigerian civil war and insurgency in the Niger Delta, contends that since the selected texts are reconstructions of conflict situation they also iterate stereotypes, prejudices, and undermine others. By so doing, they are subjectivised, empathetic, emplotted, and so, partisan. They, therefore, embody instances of the biases, and prejudices of the period of their production, of the society within which they are produced, and of their authors. This sharply contrasts with the early notions of textual value by the New Critics especially, who claim that the meaning of a text is not only ambiguous, ironic and paradoxical but also located only within the structure of the text itself. Therefore, the subjective nature of a text's meaning means that the language of a text is discourse or culture-bound because the reality it creates is a social construct. It is against this backdrop that the study is based on the suppositions that:

1. The selected novels significantly represent the textualisation of the Nigerian civil war and insurgency in the Niger Delta;
2. The selected novels substantially present the discourse of war and insurgency in tandem with other non-fictional discourses like diaries, historical documents, letters, etc;
3. The situations depicted in the selected novels are distinct from myth and legend in their historical truth claim; and
4. The discourses of the selected novels are iterations of othering practices through the use of epistemic violence and therefore, fit into the assumptions and analytical template of New Historicism.

1.3 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following questions as a way of validating its statement of the problem and the suppositions:

1. How did the texts validate the genesis of the Nigerian civil war and the insurgency in the Niger Delta?
2. How did the texts undertake the narration of the Nigerian nation in the light of national cohesion, nation-building, and cultural integration?
3. As epistemic agents, what biases, prejudices, and stereotypes did the writers express in the course of their use of the novel form to underwrite sub-national concerns and ideals?
4. To what extent are the selected texts conformable to the discourse of new historicism especially its concepts used in this study?

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The overall aim of the study, therefore, is to shift attention away from the normative narrative discourse of the Nigerian civil war and insurgency in the Niger Delta in the selected texts to the little narratives or the subtexts to show their significance in creating

another, often the binary structure of meaning within the novel form. As such, the objectives of the study are to:

1. Authenticate the claim by the New Historicism that analysis of any text should go beyond its formal boundaries to assess values, institutions, and practices in the cultural situation from which the text is produced.
2. Show that literary texts are cultural by the virtue of the social and cultural values like stereotypes, prejudices stigmas and other contexts which they embody.
3. Illustrate the Historicity of the Nigerian Civil War and insurgency in the Niger Delta and the othering narrative strategies of the selected texts.
4. Demonstrate that the discourse of the selected novels are iterations of Othering practice through the use of epistemic violence and therefore bear affinity with the assumptions and analytical template of new Historicism.

1.5 Justification of the Study

This study is justified mainly by the proposition that the discourse of war and insurgency in Adichie's *Half of A Yellow Sun*, Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra*, Iyayi's *Heroes*, and Habila's *Oil On Water* iterates stereotypes, undermines the cultures and authority of the out-groups thereby perpetuates othering. This is done through analysing narrative fashioning and power discourse and authenticating the oil wars and politics in Niger Delta. Hitherto, disquisitions on the Nigerian civil war and insurgency in Niger Delta, as well as interpretation of these texts, have side-stepped the motif of othering apparently used in the selected texts to reify stereotypes and undermine cultures and political/ military power. The practice of overlooking these issues has therefore resulted in one-way traffic of assaying the texts. This situation has created what Chimamanda N. Adichie terms a single story which perpetuates stereotypes and epistemic violence against people perceived as out-groups.

This study, by focusing on the epistemically disadvantaged groups in the selected texts will invariably draw attention to the silencing of the groups through epistemic violence. This silencing as Bunch (2015) puts it is defined as “the damage to a group’s ability to speak and to be heard” She further states that “another aspect of silencing occurs when a group is put at a disadvantage because of their exclusion from participating in the creation of social meaning” (2015). In so far as literary texts are about cultural representation, the authors of the selected texts acting as epistemic agents (producers of knowledge) stand in an advantaged position in relation to the groups on which epistemic violence is exerted. Admittedly, war and violence may be traumatising, but epistemic violence is not only palimpsestic it also seeks to denigrate and undermine the Other’s cultural identity.

This study, therefore, seeks to provide a vista for understanding these salient issues often overlaid by grand narratives but whose pulsating presence in the corpus of Nigerian literature can nonetheless be discerned. Such understanding is necessary to instantiate the fact that the art of textual interpretation is varied. As Bhabha notes in *The Location of Culture* “there can never be one coherent common narrative through which a nation and its people can be satisfactorily represented” (quoted in Raminder: NA).

While this speaks to the varied nature of the interpretive enterprise, it also calls to attention the fact that the creation of a work of fiction is “not for aesthetic pleasure alone or for an intelligent arm-chair critiquing of an existing situation”. (Raminder: NA). Of fact, literary works play a greater and serious role such as Adichie acknowledges when she states that “stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanise. Stories can break the dignity of the people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity” (2009). This study’s focus on the epistemically disadvantaged groups intends to not only point to the danger of the

single metanarrative but also point out how stories have been used to break, malign and denigrate the dignity of groups in the selected texts. This is because the groups are epistemically excluded from any form of intelligibility and are made passive domains and refused reciprocity.

This study's proposition is therefore a departure from the normative assaying of the texts under study. In addition to contributing richly to ongoing debates and growing interest in the discourse of New Historicism, this study also utilises non-literary sources which are relevant to it as a way of foregrounding the interpretation of the selected texts. This is because New Historicism has extended literary studies to the precinct of cultural studies to graft non-literary materials into the interpretive enterprise. New Historicists believe that the domain of culture is dynamic; and so, it is a product of infinite forms of interactions and exchanges. This view of culture repudiates poststructuralist notions of origin, presence, and coherence, and regards forms of cultural practices as a form of power. Literature, in this regard, is seen to participate in the consolidation and construction of discourses and ideologies.

Scholars such as Kate McLoughlin have questioned the utility of literatures of war and violence which thrive essentially on mass death, injury, and loss. It is often asked, 'might war writing even perpetuate war, glorify violence, and obscure suffering?' This kind of question strikes at the core of the relationship between literature and violence. Literatures of war and violence mostly warn against the futility of pursuing armed conflict by exposing atrocities committed during the violence and preaching peace. Since Nigerian literature of war and violence provides leverage for those Allie J. Bunch (2015) terms 'entrepreneurs of hate' to iterate divisive paradigm of 'Us versus Them', it is helpful to pry into such an epistemic agency. This is more so that writings on war and violence mostly serve as means of propaganda and catharsis. Literature of war and

violence is also underpinned by language and literary forms like the novel to instantiate the fragmentary effects war and violence have on individual lives, communities, the human body, and the environment.

The novel form is therefore chosen for this study because of its empiricism, expressive nature and scepticism which are actualised through the deployment of its technical resources such as plot, setting, characters, and underlying idea. In Burgess's view novel takes the man to be unheroic, unredeemed, imperfect, and even absurd which contrasts it sharply with epic poetry or dramatic tragedy. As such, the use of the novel's technical resources makes possible the interplay of extrinsic and intrinsic social and cultural practices that cohere in the selected novels. In other words, these novels conjure an imagined community that is the Nigerian nation with all its chaos, imperfections, sentiments, biases or prevarications. Seen against the backdrop of New Historicism this study will richly contribute to the body of Nigerian and African literature by widening the understanding of the tenets of New Historicism used here especially as they apply to the Nigerian civil war and insurgency in the Niger Delta.

Nonetheless, in the face of the New Media, and as a result of the need to reinterpret discourses on the Nigerian civil war and insurgency, it has become necessary to undertake this study now to assuage the stereotypes being iterated by the texts, to discount the single-story mantra put out by the texts as the definitive story of the civil war and insurgency, and to point to the othering practice that sets up 'Them-versus-Us' paradigm in mainstream Nigerian Literature. This is helpful for enduring nation-building and national integration. This study will bring understanding to those who usually treat literature of war and violence as given that cultural production of any kind as an important aspect of nation-building is not neutral or non-partisan.

1.6 Scope and Delimitation

The scope of this study is the examination of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra*, Iyayi's *Heroes*, and Habila's *Oil on Water* from the perspective of New Historicism using its concepts of narrative fashioning, power discourse and historicity. This is with a view to discursively assay iteration of stereotypes and perpetuation of othering through the reinforcement of cultural identity. Although, these four novels are not the only ones written on the Nigerian Civil War and insurgency in the Niger Delta they are, however, chosen for this study because they are sufficient to represent fictional works on the civil war and insurgency. They also contain the variables which this study seeks to investigate. This study is therefore delimited by this scope as well as the adoption of the novel form. Notwithstanding the paucity of research undertaking in this area of research interest, this study will proceed to examine the selected texts based on the identified variables.

New Historicism is chosen over old Historicism because it gives the leverage for the discussion of the Othering practice in relation to the little narratives of the stereotyped and the epistemically disadvantaged groups. The old historicism is a restricted analysis of text to the background which it regards as the context. However, Historicism regards both the text and the context as objects of interpretation.

1.7 Research Methodology

This study is based on the qualitative research methodology widely used in the Humanities. The methodology allows for the use of two sources, which are the primary and secondary sources. The primary sources in literary research allow for the appropriation of information and data from the personal experiences of the author of a text especially through interviews, historical narratives and documents such as letters, diaries and any such memorabilia as well as through non-textual correlates like observations. The secondary sources utilise the library approach to data collection to

generate materials for interpreting a text. Both the library and the internet are useful for the utilisation of scholarly critical materials that can be applied to enrich a research undertaking.

Qualitative research methodology thus deals with the interpretation of concepts and ideas and the meanings generated from the two sources. This is in sharp contrast to the quantitative research methodology that deals with the analysis of scientific data generated from experiments. This study, therefore, relies on the general and specific materials on New Historicism, reviews and analyses of the primary texts as well as disquisitions on the Nigerian civil war and insurgency in the Niger Delta.

In the main, it is in the nature of New Historicism to place both literary and non-literary materials on an equal interpretive pedestal. That is why, New Historicists have declared that a text is part and parcel of a wider cultural, social, political and economic dispensation. This then provides a methodological template for this study.

1.08 Chapter Breakdown

This study is divided into six chapters. In Chapter One the general thrust of the study is stated in its conceptual background to the effect that it will apply the New Historicist its concepts of narrative fashioning, power and discourse, and historicity to discourses of war and insurgency in the selected texts. Other sections of this chapter are the Statement of the Research Problem along with the Research suppositions, Aim and Objectives, Research Questions, Justification of the Study, Scope and Delimitation, Methodology and Chapter Breakdown. Chapter Two reviews literature and foregrounds New Historicism as a theoretical framework. Chapter Three discusses Narrative Fashioning as a process of Othering in Adichie's *Half Of A Yellow Sun* and Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* with a focus on the iteration of biases, prejudices against the Other. In Chapter Four, Othering practice and discourse intervention is discussed as a strategy by Iyayi in

Heroes to pit the manipulated rank and file soldiers against the military high command and their civilian cohorts. Chapter Five discusses othering practices and historicity of oil wars and insurgency in Habila's *Oil On Water*. Chapter Six presents a conclusion based on the arguments wrought in the study.

1.9 Clarification of the terms Civil War, Insurgency and the Novel

Civil war and insurgency or militancy are conflict situations which occur within the boundary of a given country. Such conflicts are usually used as means of conventional and non-conventional warfare or rebellion against a constituted authority. Civil war is defined as a “politically organised, large scale, sustained physically violent conflict that occurs within a country principally among large/numerically important groups of its inhabitants or citizens over the monopoly of physical force within the country” (Gersovitz and Kriger :2013). It is further stated that civil wars “must entail large-scale and sustained internal political violence to distinguish them from intense but limited episodes of political violence that contest the monopoly of force such as political assassinations, mutinies, or coups” (Gersovitz and Kriger :2013). On the other hand, Merriam Webster (2019) defines insurgency as “an active revolt or uprising; a rebellion against a government that is less than an organised revolution and that is not recognised as belligerency.”

The groups involved in such conflict situations are usually expressing micro-nationalism, that is, the desire for self-independence within a given country, by using methods such as subversion, armed conflict or guerrilla warfare to actualise their aims. The actions of such groups can be seen in two ways, which are as violent non-state actors and rebellious groups without sovereignty. Usually, these groups pose a security challenge to the existence of a sovereign state through their virulent demands for self-determination as micro-nationalist groups. This level of analysis fits into the

postmodernist postulation shared by New Historicism on the construct of power, hegemony and the nature of reality. Post-modernists have grappled with the question of how societies agree upon social concerns like values and ethics since according to them reality is perspectival and depends on different individual's understanding. In their response to this problematic, postmodernists in Bressler (2002) declare that:

Each society or culture contains within itself a dominant cultural group who determines that culture's ideology or using the Marxist term, its hegemony; its sense of personal worth. All people in a given culture are consciously and unconsciously asked to conform to the prescribed hegemony.

The State actor is usually the dominant group. In other words, the state actor is the Nigerian state which exerts its authority and discourse to describe the micro-nationalist groups as violent non-state actors, as subversive, as insurgents or militias. In other words, the Nigerian state uses its state apparatuses not only to profile the dominated groups but also to ensure that they remain subjugated and silenced. Bressler (2002) succinctly enunciates this point further that the dominated groups are constantly harangued and coerced to "live quietly, work quietly, and think quietly". And that the message being sent to the dominated groups by the dominant culture "has been clear and consistent – conform and be quiet: deny yourself and all will be well" Bressler (2002).

All this is because the state views the restive groups as threats to national security that must be contained by all means necessary. And so, once the primary responsibility of the state is threatened or questioned it exerts its authority to subdue or crush the threats. Rasmussen (2001) in Maurice (2013) describes the state as the "supreme legitimate authority entrusted with the exercise of violent force over a group of people".

Legitimate authority, in this case, is not, as Said (2003) puts it, “mysterious or natural”.

It is as Said (2003) further enunciates:

Formal, irradiated, disseminated, it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from certain idea it dignifies, and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces.

This seemingly elaborate and all-pervasive authority of the state, in most cases, challenged and contested by the dissenting groups, is usually constructed through “elaborate cultural, ideological, and political processes which culminate in feeling of connectedness to other national subjects and the idea of a national interest that transcends the supposedly petty divisions of class, region, dialect or caste” (Raminder: NA).

Although scholars like Arjun Appadurai (1993) and Donald Pease (1997) have discredited and dismissed the notion of the nation-state as, in Pease’s view, “an outdated liability---a tolerated anachronism” (Raminder: NA), it is still yet a site of contestation and contradiction. In fact, this study argues that the state is perceived as the threatening other that bears the virulence of epistemic violence. In this case, it becomes out-group, the ‘Them’ against ‘Us’ This is because the authority acquired by the state always brings it into a confrontation with groups that feel dominated and suppressed. Most times these groups resort to violence stemming from their frustrations about as Bressler (2002) puts it, “their direct and personal cultural clashes with the conquering culture and their fears, hopes, and dreams about the future and their own identities”. The groups, therefore, engage in violent demands for self-determination as a last resort.

The term self-determination is a political concept which deals with the desire of a group of people who feel or perceive themselves as being marginalised, subdued, or oppressed, as is the case with the Biafrans (the Igbo) and the Niger Delta people, to seek

freedom from such conditions within a given nation-state like Nigeria. In so doing, the groups often organise themselves within a polity to assert their cultural identity by defining themselves in contrast to the dominant group, culture and a coercive state. The literature created to serve this end becomes protest in nature, and it functions as an instrument of collective search for identity, liberation, self-worth, in the face of a dominant culture. Such literature now tilts toward othering practice as this study argues.

Although the political entities, the Biafrans and the Niger Deltans perceive the Nigerian state as the threatening other, within the post-colonial discourse the Nigerian state itself is a subject/victim of the metropolitan powers and is itself subject to domination. However, the object of interest for this study is how this relationship between the margin and the metropolis playing out within the confines of an entity, a nation-state that is itself a subject at another level of power discourse. Put another way, how one group within a subject nation-state iterates what Gayatri Spivak terms ‘epistemic violence’ against another group.

The novel form provides the stage where this epistemic violence is iterated. Burgess (2019) describes the novel as a “truncation of the Italian word novella (from the plural of Latin Novellus, a late variant of Novus, meaning new”.) This means that the stories contained in the novel are supposed to be “new things, novelties, freshly minted diversions, toys, not reworkings of known fables or myths” Burgess (2019). The Novel is a sub-genre of prose fiction. As an umbrella term, prose fiction is an imaginary story written by someone in everyday natural language. It explores characters and events within the scope of the writer’s imagination. The novel is different from other prose fictions in terms of form and is typically about 60,000 words or 300 pages and above.

In his seminal book, *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watts states that the modern novel form emerged in England in the Eighteenth Century. And that it is concerned with issues such as empiricism,

scepticism, and probing the immediate environment in which it is produced. Its early exponents are Daniel Defoe, David Richardson, and Henry Fielding. Akporobaro (2010) is of the view that:

Daniel Defoe can be rightly regarded as the ‘father’ and pioneer figure in the rise and development of the modern English novel. He transformed the art of narratives in prose from the modes of fantasy and Elizabethan romances of Thomas Nash and John Lyly into the form of the novel as a historical account of individual life, struggles and psychological processes, actualities of human life, by his close attentiveness to ‘facts’, specificity and narrative suspense.

Burgess (2019) corroborates this distinguishing characteristic of the novel by noting that the novel, in the wake of its emergence, “attempts to assume those burgeons of life that have no place in the epic poem and to see man as unheroic, unredeemed, imperfect, even absurd”. He further highlights the novelist’s task, while quoting W.H. Auden’s poem, that he must:

Become the whole of boredom, subject to vulgar complaints like love, among the just, Be just, among the filthy too. And in his own weak person, if he can, must suffer dully all the wrongs of man.

This normative task of the novelist is inscribable within the expressive form of the novel which makes it a veritable means for the expression of the interconnectedness of cultural and social practices. That is why there are different kinds of the novel, which are, mysteries, romance, thriller, science fiction, fantasy and historical novel. The technical resources of the novel which makes it suitable for imagining the community

that is a nation are its plot structure, setting, characters and the underlying idea or thought.

A novel may embody within its structure a sequence of events which are intended either to celebrate or criticise a given society or nation. Its setting may also be expansive enough to bring together disparate people to form a collective whole even if divergent in their views. These characters that occupy this space can be projected as citizens/inhabitants of a given setting with names, caste or creed, sexes. Similarly, the characters will speak a certain language as a distinguishing mark of their cultural identity. Thus, through language and the technical resources deployed in the novel form, social actions such as the civil war and insurgency are presented as a narrative act. According to Greenblatt (1980) “Similarly, Bakhtin in Hartland (1990) states that “words can never be innocent because they are imprinted with the world-view which they have been previously used to assert”. This means that literary works are a significant part of cultural production.

And so, the literary corpus on both the Nigeria Civil and Insurgency in Niger Delta examines the socio-psychological and political dimensions of the Nigerian crisis. In other words, the imaginative fictional works on the civil war and insurgency are couched in resistance, struggle, protest, challenge and confrontation. Such works affirm the people’s strong attachment to symbols, label, attitude, and standards. The war and insurgency for them are means of reactions to situations which they perceived as threatening to their collective cultural identity. This thereby creates a literary representation that shows strong attachment to ethnic loyalty or military ideals to the detriment of the overall effort of nation-building.

1.10 Historical Antecedents of The Novel of War and Conflict in Europe, America, and Africa

This section provides background to the evolution of the war and conflict literature tradition across the world. Essentially, this section is meant to properly situate this study and the discourse of Nigerian Civil War and insurgency in Niger Delta in the World tradition of War and conflict literature. In the main, this is supposed to enrich the understanding of the thrust of this study.

Historically, the tradition of war literature in Europe is rooted in classical writings such as *The Iliad* by Homer, *The Aeneid* by Vigil, and *Beowulf* by Anonymous. These epic poetry texts are the earliest influences on the emergence of the war novel. As treatises of war, these poetry texts document the history and mythology of conflicts between societies. For example, *The Iliad* by Homer recounts the events of the weeks that preceded the end of the Trojan war as well as the siege, by the Greeks, of the city of Troy. *The Aeneid* by Vigil recounts events after the end of the Trojan War, how Aeneas and a group of Trojans flee to Carthage, the sacking of Troy which brings an end to the Trojan War. The two texts, therefore, focus on the Trojan War which, in Greek mythology, originates in the quarrel between the goddesses Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite. Aphrodite, the fairest, receives a golden apple from Paris and makes Helen, the wife of Menelaus, fall in love with Paris in exchange. Paris and Helen elope to Troy. Menelaus brother, Agamemnon and the king of Mycenae leads an expedition to Troy and besieges the city for ten years.

On the other hand, *Beowulf* by Anonymous is an Old English epic poem that recounts the heroism of Beowulf, a hero of the Geats, for defeating a monster called Grendel. The Danish King, Hrothgar, whose mead hall is under attack by the monster, enlists Beowulf who eventually slays the monster and its mother. Beowulf then goes back home victorious and becomes the king of Geatland. Thus, the poem is a blend of the

elements of fiction, legend, and history which heighten the tension that runs through the text. In the drama genre, early war writings include, *The Trojan Women* by Euripides, and *Henry V* by William Shakespeare. Euripides *The Trojan Women* is the third of a trilogy that deals with the events of the Peloponnesian War in which the Aegean Island of Melos is captured and its women are slaughtered. *Henry V* by William Shakespeare is the final part of a tetralogy that recounts events immediately before and after the Battle of Agincourt (1415) during the Hundred Year War.

Subsequent writings in the prose genre include *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes; *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* by Luo Guenzhong. While Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is a tale about the chivalrous quest that incorporates events such as the conquest of the Kingdom of Maynila and battles from the Eighty Years' War, Guenzhong's *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is a 14th Century historical novel set in the years leading to the end of the Han dynasty and the Three Kingdoms period in Chinese history. It deals with personal and military battles among the three power blocs that struggled to achieve dominance for 100 years.

The modern antecedents of the war novel flourished in the 19th century with works like *The Charter House of Parma* by Stendhal; *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy; *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane; *Le Feu* (or *Under Fire*) by Henri Barbusse; *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque; *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell; *The Unvanquished* by William Faulkner; *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway; *The Caine Mutiny* by Herman Wouk; and *From Here to Eternity* and *The Thin Redline* by James Jones. Stendhal's *The Charter House of Parma* (1839) deals with the Battle of Waterloo, Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869) is on the Napoleonic Wars in Russia, and Crane's *Red Badge of Courage* is based on the American Civil War. According to Mastin (2009) all these novels "feature realistic depictions of major

battles, scenes of wartime horror and atrocities, and significant insights into the nature of heroism and cowardice, as well as the exploration of moral questions”.

War novels produced after the First World War include Barbusse’s *Le Feu* (1916) (or *Under Fire*) which Mastin (2009) says “initiated the anti-war movement in literature that flourished after the war”. Ernst Junger’s *Storm of Steel* (1920) reflects on the war as a “valiant hero who embraced combat and brotherhood in spite of the horror” (Mastin: 2009). The 1920s witnessed what is termed the ‘war book boom’. During this period novels like *All Quiet in the Western Front* (1929) by Maria Remarque; *Life in the Tomb* (1924) by Stratis Myrivilis, a Greek writer; *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) by Ernest Hemingway, were published. In the wake of the Second World War, an unprecedented number of war novels were published mostly by American writers, among them Herman Wouk’s *The Caine Mutiny* (1951), James Jones’ *From Here to Eternity* (1951), and Ernest Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). The bombing of London in 1940 becomes the subject of novels by British Writers which include, *The Ministry of Fear* (1943) by Graham Greene; *No Direction* (1943) by James Hanley; and *Caught* (1943) by Henry Green. For the British writers, according to Mastin (2009) rather than see the war as a “period of material destruction, war functions instead as a circumstance that alters normality in people’s lives”.

Thus, the signification of war in the novel genre since the Second World War manifests the following two distinct tendencies: novels about the Holocaust represented in novels like *The Second Scroll* (1951) by the Canadian A.M. Klein; *If This Is a Man* (1947) and *If Not Now, When?* (1982) by the Italian Primo Levi; and *Sophie’s Choice* (1979) by the American William Styron; as well as, the novels dealing with internment or persecution which feature characters who “find themselves imprisoned or deprived of their civil rights as a direct result of war” (Mastin:2009). An example of the novel about

internment is *Obasan (1981)* by a Japanese Canadian Joy Kogawa, which “recounts her experience of being relocated to the internment camp during the Second World War” (Gradesfixer: 2018). Apart from these tendencies, according to Bergonzi (1993), “in the wake of postmodernism and the absence of wars equaling the magnitude of the two world wars, the majority of war novelists have concentrated on how memory and the ambiguities of time affect the meaning and experience of war”. Such ambiguity is usually underscored by a resort to self-reflexive accounts of the experiences of war mediated by memory or imagination.

There is a body of discourses on world literatures on war and conflicts. These include works like *War and Aftermath: English Literature and its Background 1939-60* (1993) by Bernard Bergonzi; *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam* (1982) by Philip D. Beidler; *Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War* (1965) by Bernard Bergonzi; *The Great War of Words: British American and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction (1914-1933)* (1987) by Peter Buitenhuis; *Representing War: Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives* (1993) by Evelyn Copley; *World War I and the American Novel* (1967) by Stanley Cooperman; *The Language of War* (2002) by James Dawes; *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1973) by Paul Fussell; *Extreme Situations: Literature and Crisis from the Great War to the Atom Bomb* (1979) by Michael Egan and David Craig; and *A Muse of Fire: Literature, Art and War* (1998) by A.D. Harvey.

1.11 Literature of War, Conflict and Insurgency in Africa

Africa has had a chequered history of wars, conflicts, and violence which predates colonialism. It is as the title of Yambo Oulougueni's novel proclaims bound to violence. Its history is replete with tales of war between kingdoms, chiefdoms or fiefdoms, and communities. Africa is, indeed, a land of warriors like Chaka the Zulu, Mansa Musa,

Idris Aloomo, with a pedigree of conquests, of slave raids, of resistance to domination by external forces.

In the wake of colonialism and political independence, many African countries become embroiled in atrocious wars and conflicts which take the form of colonial wars, wars of independence, civil wars, secessionist, national conflicts like sectarian, ethnic or tribal riots, communal clashes, massacres, genocide, and insurgency. However, despite the deleterious nature of these wars and conflicts, Nwankwo (2008) declares that their impact on “the human condition in African literature and society has not been taken as seriously as it deserves.” This means that the Oeuvre of literature on war and conflicts in Africa and its study is, as Nwankwo (2008) emphasises, still “wrapped in the wool of fanciful and fashionable paradigms” thereby making it a “shoddy and haphazard diagnosis of the ills of the African continent.”

Although Okey Ndibe and Chengera Hove have written a compendium entitled *Writers, Writing on Conflicts and Wars in Africa* (2009) described by Ikheola (2010) as a “treasure trove of reflections on war by an army of mostly African writers who have been affected by Africans myriad wars and genocides”, access to such writings is largely determined by language factor. This is to say that works of African writers who write in Portuguese, Arabic and French cannot be easily accessible to English speaking readers and researchers without the agency of translation. This, therefore, accounts for the lack of awareness of the existence of such works.

Apparently, virtually all African countries have experienced some form of conflicts, violence and wars, with many still embroiled in such extreme situations. Some of these countries include South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Algeria, Rwanda, Mozambique, Mali, Uganda, Tanzania, Namibia, Kenya, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Egypt, Libya, Sudan etc. As widespread as conflicts and wars are

in Africa, writers in African countries have responded in equal measure to the concatenated wars with diversity. This diversity is mostly underpinned by the nature of the conflicts and wars in African countries which are widespread, protracted, and, in some cases, intertwined at inter-state levels. As a result, most literary works especially those from the Southern and Eastern African regions reflect these transnational characteristics of the conflicts and wars. For example, because of the participation or interference of South Africa in the conflicts in Zimbabwe and the civil war in Angola most writers in these countries have based their works on these concatenated wars and conflicts. Similarly, the Ethiopian-Eritrean war of 1998-2000, the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1895-1896 as well as the series of conflicts between Sudan and South Sudan have all variously impacted the East African writings. As such, the survey of literary fictions attempted here is based on regional spread instead of the cumbersome survey based on each country.

The southern African region is made up of ten countries, viz, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Lesotho, Mozambique, Angola, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, and Botswana. Out of these “only Zambia, Botswana, Malawi, and Swaziland can be said to not have been at war at some time from 1960-2000”. (Rogers: 2005). The fictional works which reflect conflicts and civil wars in the other countries include, in South Africa Sousa Jamba’s *Patriots* (1990); Mark Behr’s *The Smell of Apples* (1993); David Medalie’s *The Shadow Follows* (2006); J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (1993); and the Border War novels by Wilbur Smith. In Zimbabwe the fictional works include Alexander Fuller’s *Scribbling the Cat*; Yvonne Vera’s *The Stone Virgin* (1998), *Butterfly Burning* (2002), *Under the Tongue* (1996); Garikai Mutasa’s *The Contact*; Alexander Kanengoni’s *Echoing Silences* (1997), *Effortless Tears* (1993) (Short Stories), *Vicious Circle* (1983), and *When the Rainbird Cries* (1988); Chenjerai Hove’s *Bones* (1985), and *Shadows* (1991); Robert Zaleeza’s *Exile*; and Charles Samupindi’s *Pawns*. In Angola, the only

fictional work that this researcher is able to come across is Pepetela's *Mayombe* (1980) which deals with the lives of a group of MPLA guerrillas involved in the anti-colonial struggle in Cabinda.

In East Africa, there is a dozen of fictional works of conflicts and wars cutting across some of the fifteen countries that constitute that region. In Ethiopia there are works such as *All Our Names* (2014) by Dinaw Mengestu; *Beneath the Lion's Gaze* (2010) by Maaza Mengiste, while in Eritrea there is *Heart of Fire* by Senait Mehare. In Somalia, the works include *Little Mother* (2007) by Cristina Ali Farah; and *The Orchard of Lost Souls* by Nadifa Mohammed. In South Sudan and Sudan there are *War Child* (2009) by Emmanuel Jal and *Tears of the Desert* (2008) by Halima Bashir respectively. China Keitetsi's *Child Soldier* (2002) and *Waiting* (2007) by Goretti Kyomuhendo reflect conflicts and wars in Uganda. And in Rwanda, there are Marie Beatrice Umutesi's *Surviving the Slaughter*, Bazambanzi Rupert's *Smile Through the Tears* (2017), and Leah Chishugi's *A Long Way from Paradise* (2010). According to Tembo (2017) "the nature of the conflicts in the individual countries of the region shapes the literary and stylistic choices" of these authors. While writers from Rwanda, Sudan and South Sudan are preoccupied with the ethnic/racial tensions that precipitate genocidal wars, writers from the Horn of Africa – Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia – focus on the motif of displacement and desperate journeys across land and water as a result of fratricidal conflicts and civil wars in their respective countries.

In West Africa, Nigeria's literary tradition is about the most vibrant. It has a swathe of works on conflicts and wars more than any other country in this region. A handful of writers of fiction on instances of conflicts and wars are Yambo Ouologuem from Mali with his seminal novel *Bound to violence* (1971), and the Liberian writer Wayetu Moore whose *She Would Be King* (2018) explores Liberia's history weaving magical realism

into its plot structure to frame the story of the war in Liberia. Since the focus of this study is Nigeria, the background survey of the corpus of fictional works on its civil war and the insurgency in the Niger Delta will be done in the next section.

1.12 Fictional Works on Nigerian Civil War and Insurgency in the Niger Delta

Since the emergence of the Nigerian Novel in the 1950s, it has wittingly played an active role in reflecting what Oladitan (1979) calls the Nigerian crisis which encompasses gross political disillusionment, corruption, military dictatorship, civil war and insurgency. These socio-political situations feature in Nigerian novels in varying degrees. This reflection follows the phased development of Nigerian literature which is sometimes problematic to delineate because of its protean nature.

A cursory look at the developmental phases of written Nigerian literature shows that sometimes reference is made to three phases which are the pre-colonial, colonial or pre-independence, post-independence and post-war era. At other times reference is made to the generational dichotomy such as the first, the second, and the third generations. Reference is similarly made to periods such as the 1950-60, the 1960-1980, and the 1980-1990s, after which there is what is termed the diasporic literature.

Nonetheless, within the broad precinct of the post-independence writings can be located fictional works on the Civil War and insurgency in the Niger Delta. Within the mainstream of Nigerian literature these fictional works belong to the growing corpus designated as Civil War Literature and Niger Delta Literature respectively. By and large, the terms civil war literature and Niger Delta literature have often been used loosely to describe literary works which focus mainly on the Nigerian civil war and the concerns of the Niger Delta people. As major infractions in the political history of Nigeria, both the civil war and the insurgency in the Niger Delta have attracted a plethora of literary publications and critical commentaries. Nwahunanya in Emenyonu

(2008) states that “in its re-creation and interpretation of history, Nigerian war literature has enriched the existing body of historical writing from Africa, especially historical fiction”. He further enunciates that “the war literature also serves as a compass for social re-direction” (2008).

Novels written immediately after the civil war provide a postmortem of the war situation. These novels include Kole Omotoso’s *The Combat* (1972), Wole Soyinka’s *Season of Anomy* (1973), John Munonye’s *A Wreath for the Maidens* (1973), Elechi Amadi’s *Sunset in Biafra* (1973), Okechukwu Mezu’s *Behind the Rising Sun* (1973), Fola Oyewole’s *Reluctant Rebel* (1975), Chukwuemeka Ike’s *Sunset at Dawn* (1976), Isidore Okpewho’s *The Last Duty* (1976) Cyprian Ekwensi’s *Survive the Peace* (1976), Ossie Enekwe’s *Come, Thunder* (1972); Chinua Achebes’s *Girls at War* (1972) and *The Insider: Stories of War and Peace from Nigeria* (1971). Munonye’s *A Wreath for the Maidens* and Ike’s *Sunset at Dawn* deal with the witnesses and records of the events of the civil war. Oladitan (1979) states that Munonye’s novel “summarises the major political events in Nigeria from the last days of colonial rule to the later part of the civil war soon after the fall of PortHarcourt”. While Ike’s novel is “set in the civil war, opening with the beginning of the Biafra adventure after Aburi and ending with the formal surrender after the secessionist leader’s escape to the Ivory Coast” (Oladitan:1979). Similarly, Amadi’s *Sunset in Biafra* captures the “experiences of a conscientious objector who is subjected to arbitrary arrests and detention under deplorable conditions” (Oladitan: 1979). In *Season of Anomy*, Soyinka examines the “roles of ideology and violence in a revolutionary transformation of the society” (Oladitan: 1979). Other novels written later on the civil war include Eddie Iroh’s *Forty Eight Guns for the General* (1976), Elechi Amadi’s *Estrangement* (1986), Buchi Emecheta’s *Destination Biafra* (1982), and *Wives at War* (1992), Festus Iyayi’s *Heroes* (1986), Ken Saro Wiwa’s *Soza Boy* (1985), Cyprian Ekwensi’s *Divided We Stand*

(1980), I.N. Aniebo's *The Anonymity of Sacrifice*, (1974), Nathan Nkala's *Drum and the Voice of Death* (1996), and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of A Yellow Sun* (2006).

On the other hand, the insurgency in the Niger Delta is represented in literary works now referred to as the Niger Delta literature Okoroegbe (2012) states that Niger Delta Literature is "intrinsically bound within the discursive ethos and matrix of ethnic nationalism and identity formation in postcolonial Nigeria". He further points out that Niger Delta Literature:

Chronicles the pains and sufferings that is now a visible trajectory of the region as a result of oil exploration and exploitation. Aside from dwelling on the rapid despoliation of the regions land, water and aerial spaces, this emergent literature laments the abject oppression, neglect and marginalisation this region and her people contend with in spite of the enormous amount of wealth it generated for the national coffers.

According to Okoroegbe (2012), Niger Delta literature is "any writing that draws consciously from the region's customs, habits, and dialectic, and in which the writer defines and identifies himself primarily with the region's socio-cultural tensions and dynamics, and consciously portray the predicaments and aspirations of its people". In other words, literary works from the Niger Delta explore the region's "history, modernity and changing circumstances and what is presented has become the parameter by which the people imagine the larger Nigerian nation" (Okoroegbe: 2012).

Niger Delta literature is classified into three phases. First, the works whose ideological temperament questions the politics of exclusion and marginalisation of the Niger Delta and expresses the Niger Delta people's scepticism about the legitimacy of a Nigerian nation as well as attempting to deconstruct it. Second, the works which focus on the region's cultural politics as it relates to gender discrimination and female predicament in

the politics of oil. Third, the works which concentrate on the orgy of violence in the region unleashed by subaltern youths, demanding resource control and adequate compensation for the hazards of oil exploration and production in the Niger Delta, (Okoroegbe: 2012). And so, the “dynamics of oil politics articulated in Niger Delta literature accentuate the widely held belief that the modern Nigerian nation is yet a site of agitation, contestation, and contradiction” (Okoroegbe: 2012).

Novels which feature the Niger Delta question and the motif of insurgency include Tanure Ojaide’s *The Activist* (2006), Kaine Agary’s *Yellow Yellow* (2006), Helon Habila’s *Oil On Water* (2011), Bena Illagha’s *Condolences* (2003) and *Crossroads* (2003), Sefi Attah’s *Everything Good Will Come* (2005), Gabriel Okara’s *The Voice* (1964), Joy Chinwokwu’s *After Midnight* (NA) and *Clouds at Sunrise* (NA).

The four novels selected for this study fit into the body of fictional works of the Nigerian civil war and the insurgency in the Niger Delta. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a retrospective account of the effect of the civil war on Igbo families resident in the North and Igboland for whom the war is a matter of precarious living, survival and death. Amadi’s *Sunset in Biafra* is a vicarious account of a retired Nigerian Army Captian, Amadi, from a minority tribe in the Niger Delta who is caught up in tribal politics on the fringes of the civil war. What these two texts have in common is not so much their accounts of the civil war as their representation of the Other. This othering practice is also a feature of Iyayi’s *Heroes* and Habila’s *Oil on Water*. Iyayi’s *Heroes* tells the story of a journalist who goes through the war to weave a discourse intervention as a strategy of making the subaltern soldiers come to term with their categorisation as docile bodies. Habila’s *Oil on Water* is an account of the subaltern youths engaged in the politics and oil wars as a way of confronting the Nigerian State perceived as the threatening Other.

In conclusion, this Chapter encapsulates the paradigm of this study which is the focus on scouring the selected texts to articulate those petit narratives which concern the epistemically disadvantaged groups. As for novels of war and conflict situations, the study also scours through antecedents of war novels in Europe and Africa to properly situate the discourse of Nigerian Civil War and Insurgency in the existing tradition of the interpretive history of war and conflict literature. Also, as an introductory chapter, it sets out the proposition, aim and objectives, methodology as well as the justification of the study and clarification of terms. It also discusses the corpus of fictional works on the Nigerian Civil War and Insurgency in the Niger Delta.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 New Historicism as a Theoretical Framework

This Chapter discusses the critical insights of New Historicism particularly its concepts of narrative fashioning, power and discourse and the notion of historicity as well as treatises on the novel form as a way of situating the discourses of war and insurgency in the selected texts. As a theoretical movement, New Historicism is the term used to refer to the American branch of Cultural Poetics, while its British variant is referred to as Cultural Materialism. This means that New Historicism is a broad term which embraces a constellation of ideas or views of other theories. Bressler (2003) states that scholars of Cultural Poetics “embrace the principles of different schools of criticism to unlock a text’s power and influence, including the ‘close-reading’ principles of New Criticism and a variety of poststructuralist approaches such as Feminism and Marxism”. Similarly, Ukkan (2002) notes that New Historicism establishes a point of contact with “various literary theories as well as cultural and social concepts”. It is therefore not a unified field at all but “diverse historical projects and critical idioms that originate from a variety of sources, some of which lie outside the realm of literary study altogether and intersect one another at strange angles” (Ukkan: 2002). Therefore, the eclectic nature of New Historicism will apply in the way the meaning of the selected texts are negotiated particularly in relation to the focus of this study.

As a critical practice that emerged in the 1980s, New Historicism sets itself up against the assumptions of New Criticism. Hitherto, New Critics have expressed the view that the literary text is an “artifact with an existence of its own, independent of and not necessarily related to its author, its readers, the historical period in which it was written” (Bressler: 2003). In this regard, New Critics are of the view that a “text’s meaning emerges when readers scrutinise the text alone” (Bressler: 2003). In contrast, New

Historicism subscribes to the relationship between the text and its contexts (the author, the critic, and the society) as discursively related. This relationship is described as co-text, that is, a “parallel reading of the literary and non-literary texts of the same historical period” (Ukkan: 2002).

Works which gave impetus to the emergence of New Historicism are, inter alia, Raymond William’s *Marxism and Literature* (1977), Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), Stephen Greenblatt’s *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From Moore to Shakespeare* (1980). Other works by Stephen Greenblatt include *The Form of Power and the Power of Forms in the Renaissance* (1982), *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (1988), *Learning to Curse* (1990), and *Marvelous Possession: The Wonder of the New World* (1991). Louis Montrose’s essay, “Eliza, Queen of Shepherdes and the Pastoral of Power”, and the emergence of the journal *Representation* in 1982, further added tempo to the New Historicist scholarship.

The ardent exponents of New Historicism in addition to the aforementioned are Michel Foucault, Clifford Geertz, Catherine Belsey, Dominic Lacapra, Anton Kaes, F.R. Ankersmit, H. Aram Veerer, Hayden White, Louis Althusser, Frederic Jameson, Mikhail Bakhtin, Terry Eagleton, etc. And among its critics are Karl Popper, Carolyn Porter, Jane Marcus, and Brook Thomas. However, treatises by the proponents of New Historicism variously provide templates for its propositions and also corroborate the claim by it that a nexus exists between a text of any kind and the society from which it is produced. In other words, New Historicists declare that:

An intricate connection exists between an aesthetic object – a text or any work of art – and society and that all texts must be analysed in their cultural context not in isolation. We must know, ---the societal concerns of the author, of the historical times evidenced in the work, and of other cultural elements exhibited in that text before we can devise a valid interpretation (Bressler:2003).

In this manner, the New Historicist's proposition is akin to the Deconstructionists' claim that no single meaning can be attributed to a word in a text. This means that in New Historicist's term, a text is not reducible to a single metanarrative. or as Ukkan (2002) points out a text is not an "autonomous body of fixed meanings, but represents a diversity of dissonant voices and unresolved conflicts in a specific culture. It affirms the importance of the text, though it does so in relation to the context which becomes the co-texts". Of particular interest to this study is the New Historicist's bent towards 'diversity of dissonant voices' by which, as Ryan (1996) underscores it, the voices of the disenfranchised are amplified so "the guilty political unconscious of the text" and "the fault lines in its legitimation of the status quo" can be exposed or highlighted.

Given its general propositions, New Historicism is defined thus as a "general reaction against unhistorical approaches, and a fresh interest in the specific social and political contexts of literary texts" (Ukkan: 2002). Also, Greenblatt in Ukkan (2002) regards New Historicism to be a "shift away from a criticism centred on 'verbal icons' toward a criticism centred on cultural artifacts ". In Vico's view, a text must embody the "present moment of the past" (Hamilton:1996). This is what New Historicists generally term *Zeitgeist* – the spirit of the age embodied in a text. A text is regarded by the New Historicists as encapsulating the language and thought of its own time and those of our time (present time) to project the full lived material experience of the past.

This critical practice is made possible because of Poststructuralist's radical questioning of the supposed difference between literary and non-literary texts. Invariably this creates a continuum between literary texts and everything else that had ever been written. By this means interest in literary criticism is widened beyond mere relations between the literary and society. This is so because New Historicism invests a mixture of Marxist and Poststructuralist orientation in literary studies. For instance, while accepting all

forms of differences and deviations Poster in Ukkan (2002) observes that New Historicism shifts focus away from “the working class to the other social groups which suffered exploitation or alienation – the insane, the prisoners, the homosexuals, the women oppressed by the modern society”. In this regard, there is a “plurality of critiques effected by New Historicism which detects the oppressed and the marginalised voices in the text and makes a political reading of it”. This alludes to the resonating nature of the multi-voiced textuality of New Historicist’s Proposition.

It is in this context that New Historicism as marking a ‘historical turn’ is viewed as a reaction to the “growing dissatisfaction with poststructuralism and deconstruction” (Kaes: 1992) both representing the linguistic turn “whose formal strategies appeared arid and predictable” (Kaes: 1992). As a historical turn, New Historicism is also viewed as forming part of the “ postmodern impetus that reevaluates the relation between the past and the present and calls for a return to the womb of history” (Kaes: 1992). In this sense, therefore, New Historicists concern themselves with the “issues regarding the mechanisms of power, authority, and repression in the production of writing itself” (Kaes: 1992). This aligns with the position taken in this study which focuses on epistemically disadvantaged groups.

New Historicism also contrasts with the old Historicism. Old Historicism is essentially “concerned with the reconstruction of historical contexts” (Kaes: 1992). But, to this extent, “the relationship between literature and history remained at the level of flat contrast between text and background”. (Kaes: 1992). In fact, as Kaes (1992) puts it:

The so-called background functioned as a constant, coherent, and fixed reference point for textual analysis. In fact, it regulated and reduced the excess of meaning that every text carries; the potentially subversive over determination of meaning that is always present in communication (be it verbal or, especially, literary) could thus be arrested and controlled.

So, essentially, old historicism is concerned mainly with the textual contexts – situating texts of all kinds in their contexts. However, New Historicism goes beyond this claim that “historical ‘background’ is only accessible to us textually” (Kaes: 1991) to adopt the view that “the background itself becomes textualised and thus an object of interpretation” (Kaes: 1992). By this approach, New Historicists intend to “circumvent the old text context dichotomy by situating both text and context on the same interpretive level, referring to texts and cultural practices in terms of ‘negotiations,’ ‘exchange,’ and ‘circulation’”. (Kaes: 1992). It is in this regard that Greenblatt urges New Historicists to demand to know:

How collective beliefs and experiences were shaped, moved from one medium to another, concentrated in manageable aesthetic form, offered for consumption. We can examine how the boundaries were marked between cultural practices understood to be art forms and other, contiguous, forms of expression (Kaes: 1992).

It is the investigation of the interrelationship between these diverse forms of cultural practices and how they reinforce the creation of meaning and understanding of the meanings so created that constitutes what Greenblatt terms the ‘Poetics of Culture’. What becomes interesting to New Historicists is the “whole complex of minute transactions that takes place between literature, culture, and society at the level of the text”. (Kaes: 1992).

This study thus makes a political reading of the plural voices or of the cultural entities by drawing attention to the use of language and episteme to define others. Bunch (2015) defines episteme as knowledge and the measure of its validation. Episteme is also a unifying principle that is strewn together by language and thought. In the selected texts for this study, episteme is used as an organising principle in the deployment of epistemic violence through Othering. By Othering, it is meant “the marginalisation of

those who are distinctly different from the majority ‘us’, and uses differences between beliefs and customs to define them as out group” (Bunch: 2015). This invariably sets up an ‘*us-versus-them*’ discourse as is apparent in the selected texts for this study. Bunch (2015) further enunciates that such discourse usually creates a “common bond within the in-group, for example, feeling of patriotism or nationalism”. She goes on to emphasise that in an “asymmetrical conflict in which one group has markedly more symbolic power, the powerful will exercise this power through epistemic violence” (Bunch: 2015).

Given the plurality of the voices or groups portrayed in the selected texts, this study adopts the New Historicist’s view regarding the text as a “battleground of competing ideas among the author, society, customs, institutions and social practices that are all eventually negotiated by the author and the reader and influenced by each contributor’s episteme” (Bressler: 2003). Such episteme is drawn against each period’s perception concerning the nature of reality. It is New Historicist’s belief that each period in history “sets up its own acceptable and unacceptable standards of behaviours, establishes its own criteria for judging what it deems good or bad; and certifies what group of people develop, articulate, protect, and defend the yardstick whereby all established truths, values, and actions will be deemed acceptable” (Bressler: 2003).

By and large, since each period’s episteme serves as social control, Greenblatt is of the view that the various cultural elements expressed through language and thought in a given literary work are means of societal cultural control or constraint. Payne (2005) while citing Greenblatt states that “the ensemble of beliefs and practices that form a given culture functions as a pervasive technology of control, a set of limits within which social behaviour must be contained, a repertoire of models to which individuals must conform”. As such, New Historicists enunciate that:

The standards of behaviour, as reflected in a society's rules of decorum, must be investigated because these behavioural codes simultaneously helped shape and were shaped by the text. The text must also be viewed as an artistic work that reflects these behavioural social codes (Bressler: 2003).

In this regard, social codes include a system of punishment for those who cross the cultural limits such as breaking of taboos, going against norms or values not fulfilling rites, etc, while rewards are given in form of recognition, praises, and honours, for those who conform to the cultural limits. The punishment may include exile, imprisonment, death, or being ostracised from society. When the cultural codes are embedded in a text such as the forbidden marriage between the Igbos and the Hausas in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, they serve as mechanisms that govern the behaviour of characters. The reinforcement of cultural identity as well as the iteration of stereotypes against a social group is carried out through this means. This is so for the reason that Historicists believe that "texts like all forms of discourse, help shape and are shaped by social forces" (Bressler: 2003).

New Historicism proceeds from the belief in culture as a form of power to lean towards the poststructuralist's notion of power, the discourses which serve as vehicles for power, the construction of identity and the cultural materialism of Raymond Williams. Through this, New Historicists acknowledge that "power affects literature as deeply as it does history" (Bressler:2003). They also uncover narrative discourses which are "unjustly stifled, being intentionally repressed, subordinated and forgotten" (Bressler:2003). The unearthing of intentionally subordinated narratives such as the narrative of the other in the selected texts, this study affirms, is purposely to impede "the creation of an overarching historical narrative" (Bressler: 2003) that the metanarrative discourses of the civil war and insurgency have assumed in Nigerian literature. New Historicism advances this form of interpretation mainly because it

believes that “writers like texts, are subjected to social biases, cultural influences and political agenda”, so “no writer can ever be entirely objective” (Bressler: 2003).

Assumption of New Historicism

All that have been discussed so far on New Historicism as a theoretical movement are based on the following five assumptions as put together by H. Aram Veeseer (1994):

1. That every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices;
2. That every act of unmasking, critiquing and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practice it exposes;
3. That literary and non-literary ‘texts’ circulate inseparably;
4. That no discourse, imaginative or archival gives access to unchanging truths or expresses unalterable human nature; and
5. That a critical method and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participate in the economy they describe.

Assessment Criteria

These normative assumptions of New Historicism are reducible to a set of five assessment criteria or poetics which can serve as its apparatus criticus. These are:

1. The meaning of a text can be located in the competing ideas that it embodies which proceed from the author, society, customs, institutions, and social practices based on each contributor’s episteme;
2. Through thick description the process of textual analysis can reveal not only the social world of a text but also the present-day forces working on the reader as he negotiates the meaning of a text;

3. The interpretation of a literary text should focus on peculiar historical circumstances and specific conventions which carry details of the period's mores, customs, traditions, laws, class structure, the status of women, etc,
4. Literary interpretation is an exercise in the reconstruction of the transcendental (or timelessness) and boundaries upon which the existence of the literary text was initially predicated;
5. And any interpretive enterprises must delineate the author's use of language, that is, the subliminal deployment of language that deepens a sense of awe about art's aesthetic quality.

These assessment criteria can be linked to the selected texts in the following ways. The first criterion can be linked to the references made to the social practices of the various groups, their power relations, their perception of each other, and their relationship with the cultural, and national or regional institutions. Also, the position of the authors as epistemic agents contributes to the discourses of the civil war and insurgency. Similarly, thick description allows for the synchronisation of the cultural practices such as the perpetuation of stereotypes, the disdainful acknowledgement or dismissal of the other's cultural values or power structures which are textualised in selected texts. This can be gleaned through the deployment of epistemic violence with which the social world of the text and the biases of the authors are constructed.

In relation to the third criterion, this study focuses on the Nigerian civil war and insurgency in the Niger Delta. It treats these events as peculiar historical circumstances whose specific conventions of violence, power relations, and cultural outlook are evident in the epistemology of the conflict situations. The fourth and fifth criteria relate to the selected texts based on their artistic representation of the conflict situations. As

such, the texts are emblematic of the existential nature of conflicts. Philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre have underscored conflict as a normative aspect of human nature. This, therefore, affirms the timelessness of art as a universal concern that is put across through awe-inspiring language.

2.2 Literature Review

This section reviews related literature and is focused on the views expressed on the concept of historicity, narrative fashioning, cultural constraint and mobility, the powers of discourse, epistemic violence, the novel as a narrative form, the novel form in Nigerian literature as well as the views and writings of the authors whose texts are selected for this study and studies done on their writings. This study acknowledges the fact that there is a plethora of disquisitions on New Historicism as a theoretical movement, on the novel form especially in its use to narrate the concerns of nations, and on the selected novels. However, the challenge is that the materials are far-flung that they are not easily within reach. Multiple searches online yields only a handful of materials which are free for download while others are inaccessible due to privacy or commercial constraints.

2.2a On Historicity

Essentially, the term historicity is discursive of the characteristic actuality of text of any kind. It is used to suggest that a text has characteristically existed in a specific period in history as opposed to myth or legend. Questions of historicity often arise where accounts of events in history like the civil war and insurgency that are the focus of this study are tainted with imaginative reconstruction (or emplotted), or fictionalised, such that they become partisan. Historicity is sometimes understood as historical contexts and is crucial to any understanding of historical accounts which have been fictionalised. This is because contexts allow for authentication of the present textual reconstruction of the past, or of the historical text without laying claim to objectivity or any truth-value.

That is why historicists venture to situate any statement-philosophical, historical, aesthetic or whatever-in its historical contexts. It is also the reason historicists have professed the historicity of text and the textuality of history.

Historicity is also an exercise in the determination of the “extent to which any historical enterprise inevitably reflects the interests and bias of the period in which it was written” (Hamilton: 1996). In other words, it is used to refer to the extents to which the spirit of the age or zeitgeist is captured by the text of any kind. New Historicism continues this supposition by stressing that a “work of art is the product of a negotiation between a creator or class of creators, equipped with a complex communally shared repertoire of conventions, and the institutions and practices of society” (Bertens: 2008). Greenblatt in Bertens (2008) argues that:

The literary text, then, is always part and parcel of a much wider cultural, political, social, and economic dispensation. Far from being untouched by the historical moment of its creation, the literary text is directly involved in history. Instead of transcending its own time and place – the literary text is a time-and-place-bound verbal construction that is always in one way or another political.

This argument justifies the political and cultural reading of the selected texts as essentially time-and-place-bound textualisation of history. As such, the reading is approached with the suspicion that the selected ‘texts contain a political and cultural undertone that is oriented towards Othering.

2.2b On the Concept of Narrative Fashioning

Self-fashioning is a cultural practice often embedded in a narrative structure as the expression or formation of cultural identity. Bertens (2008) puts it succinctly that “self-fashioning ultimately subscribes to the notion that the self is always a construction, that our identity is never given, but always the product of an interaction between the way we

want to represent ourselves – through the stories we tell (or the incidents we suppress) and our actual representation - and the power relations we are part of”. Self-fashioning is a term used by Stephen Greenblatt in his book, *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From Moore to Shakespeare*, to describe a Sixteenth Century process of “constructing one’s identity and public persona according to a set of socially acceptable standards”, (Greenblatt: 1980). In the Sixteenth Century England, there was an increased self-consciousness about the “fashioning of human identity as a manipulable artful process”, (Greenblatt: 1980). Self-fashioning is, therefore, a “conscious effort to strive to imitate a praised model in society” (Greenblatt: 1980).

As a self-conscious practice, it is located within the precinct of culture because, as Geertz points out “there is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture”, (Greenblatt: 1980). Culture, in this case, is not primarily the “complexes of concrete behaviour patterns – customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters – but rather a set of control mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions – for the governing of behaviour”, (Greenblatt: 1980). In effect, therefore, self-fashioning is the “Renaissance version of these control mechanisms, the cultural system of meanings that creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment”, (Greenblatt: 1980). This passage to concrete historical embodiment is attained in narrative fashioning which is inscribed in literary works such as the historical novel.

The inscription of self-fashioning in literary works is an extension of elite tendencies in the classical period during which Christianity and the church was sceptical of “man’s power to shape identity”, (Greenblatt:1980). For instance, St. Augustine had declared that “hands off yourself. Try to build up yourself, and you build a ruin”, (Greenblatt:1980). This exemplifies the marked scepticism of the period. However, in

1589, Spencer, in his *The Faerie Queene*, makes a striking statement by stating that his motive in the book is “to fashion a gentleman”. He makes the character in the poem, Calidore, to say, “in each man’s self- it is to fashion his own lyfes estate”, (Greenblatt:1980). This echoes the Biblical notion that every Christian is “...altered and fashioned like unto Christ,” (Greenblatt: 1980).

And so, from Spencer, the notion of self-fashioning became diffused in literary work as a form of social and cultural practice. In this regard, (Greenblatt: 1980) states that:

The relationship between self-fashioning and the aesthetic medium was a reciprocal one. Just as the art of creating oneself was highly influenced by the art and literature of the time, such as conduct books and religious iconography. Such a concern for one’s outwardly projected image was reflected in the portraiture of the time. (Greenblatt:1980)

This is the tangent at which self-fashioning assumes narrative fashioning. For, in Greenblatt’s word, self-fashioning is a concept that functions “without regard for the sharp distinction between literature and social life”. Narrative fashioning is thus the ability to “fictionalise the other’s beliefs, primarily by treating them as untrue yet expressive of particular values (which can then be manipulated)” (Greenblat: 1980). Essentially, narrative, or self-fashioning “crosses the boundaries between the creation of literary characters, the shaping of one’s own identity, the experience of being moulded by forces outside one’s control, the attempt to fashion other selves” (Greenblatt: 1980). Narrative fashioning then serves as a process for the formation and expression of cultural identity. It is used as an instrument to reinforce cultural identity, perceptions and relations of power. It is therefore constituted within representation by means of language. It thus relies upon “institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed upon codes of understanding” for its effect, (Said: 2008). It is also realised in “relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile which must be discovered or invented in order to be attacked or destroyed” (Greenblatt: 1980).

Narrative fashioning is best conveyed through the novel form, it is best suited to the domain of cultural history. For, according to Greenblatt in Michael Payne (2005), “the novel has been particularly sensitive to the diverse ways in which individuals come to term with the governing patterns of culture”. The novel also embodies discourse in its use of language to categorise social relations.

2.2c On the Concept of Cultural Constraint and Mobility

At the heart of the argument by the proponents of New Historicism are the concepts of culture and how it relates to the production of literary texts, as well as the relationship between literature and history. To New Historicists, ‘history and literature are mutually imbricated’; and, they regard culture essentially as a ‘semiotic system,’ that is, a ‘network of signs’ which points to meaning inherent in a literary text. While proceeding from the 1871 definition of culture by Edward B. Tylor as “that complex whole---“, Greenblatt enunciates that the concept of culture tends toward two opposites: constraint, and mobility. According to him, “the ensemble of beliefs and practices that form a given culture function as a pervasive technology of control, a set of limits within which social behaviour must be contained, a repertoire of models to which individuals must conform” (Payne:2005). He states that cultural constraint prescribes severe consequences in the form of punishment for those who stray beyond its limits.

Similarly, there is a system of reward for conformity to the limits. In this regard, Greenblatt in (Payne:2005) states that “Western literature over a very long period of time has been one of the great institutions for the enforcement of cultural boundaries through praise and blame... kinds of literature that are explicitly engaged in attack and celebration: Satire and Panegyric”. Greenblatt however acknowledges that such works have their prime and low periods; that the power of such works begin to fade when individuals to whom they refer also begin to fade. In this manner, he stresses further

that, “the evaporation of literary power continues when the models and limits that the works articulated and enforced have themselves substantially changed” (Payne: 2005). However, the redemption of this literary decline is in the awareness of culture as a complex whole which can help to recover a sense of awe that once gave power to those works by “leading us to reconstruct the boundaries upon whose existence the works were predicated” (Payne: 2005). Such boundaries can only be reconstructed through a full cultural analysis that will “push beyond the boundaries of the text to establish links between the text and values, institutions, and practices elsewhere in the culture” (Payne: 2005).

Greenblatt is convinced that this approach to formal textual analysis will disallow the strict distinction usually made, at least in principle, between that which is within a text and that which lies outside it. To him, the exercise of textual analysis is one of mutual reinforcement. Hence, according to him, “if an exploration of a particular culture will lead to a heightened understanding of a work of literature produced within that culture, so too a careful reading of a work of literature will lead to a heightened understanding of the culture within which it was produced” (Payne: 2005).

This method of analysis is what Greenblatt says results in cultural mobility, that is, “the exchange of material goods, ideas, and – through institutions like enslavement, adoption, or marriage – people” (Payne: 2005). As such, literary artists, through their ability to construct awesome stories, use of effective imagery, and sensitivity to language, skillfully take “symbolic materials from one zone of culture and move them to another, augmenting their emotional force, altering their significance, linking them with other materials taken from a different zone, changing their place in a larger social design” (Payne: 2005). Greenblatt in Payne (2005) points to the fact that:

A nuanced cultural analysis will be concerned with the various matrices from which Shakespeare derives his materials, and hence will be drawn outside the formal boundary of the play – toward the legal arrangements, for example, that elderly parents in the Renaissance made with their children, or toward child-rearing practices in the period, or toward predictions of the imminent end of the world.

Anyway, this cultural mobility is not absolute, not total, or perfect. For, according to Greenblatt, even “some cultures that dream of absolute mobility, a perfect freedom, ...have also been compelled, in the interest of survival, to accept some limits” (Payne: 2005).

2.2d On Power and Discourse

Foucault, however, sees culture as the power which undergirds discourses and discursive formations. Precisely, a “discourse is a loose structure of interconnected assumption that makes knowledge possible” (Bertens: 2008). Foucault describes discourse as a “large group of statements that belong to a single system of formation” (Bertens: 2008). In this wise, Foucault expresses the view that “discourse transmits and produces power, it reinforces it,…” (Bertens: 2008). Power therefore in Foucauldian terms, “derives its strength from the fact that we deeply believe what it tells us” (Bertens: 2008). In this regard, Foucault in Bertens (2008) states that:

If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes it accepted is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse.

In this case, power does not simply mean physical power or coercion through the use of force. Like ideology, power is thought to work through discourses which give the “impression that to comply with its dictates is the natural thing to do and thus a free,

autonomous decision” (Bertens: 2008). Foucault locates power in language and language is the focus of literary studies. Hence, he opines that “social relations are, intrinsically, relations of power” (Bertens: 2008). This then relates to Greenblatt’s disquisition in *Renaissance Self-fashioning! From Moore to Shakespeare on the way* in which the “workings of power and practices of regulation change with the advent of a new era” (Bertens: 2008). This invariably makes a literary work “the product of particular historical circumstances and specific conventions” (Payne: 2005). New Historicists, therefore, see literature as “actively involved in the making of history through its participation in discursive practices” (Bertens: 2008). Literature in the view of Hegel is a reflective history that takes on “the past as a whole” by emphasising what “is as valid and present now as it was in the past and ever will be” (Hamilton: 1996). This contrasts with the original history which Hegel also says immersed the historian in “the spirit of the events he describes” and so “does not rise above it to reflect upon it” (Hamilton: 1996). As such, the original historian, according to Cicero, must adhere to three principles, which are, “he must speak the truth, cannot omit any information, and must be objective” (Mey: 2011). This marks the difference between literature and history, as the one relates “what may have happened and the other what had happened” (Mey: 2011).

New Historicism essentially takes on the debate in the twentieth century on the nature of historical writings that focus on issues “such as truth claims, subjectivity, and narrative character” (Mey: 2011). In this regard, Gossman (1978) points out that a “narration wholly abstracted from its own point of view is impossible”. Therefore, “there is no such thing as perspective free history” (Little: 2008). History like literature is constructed with language, and so, uses the same narrative techniques.

Essentially, because literature participates in discursive practices, New Historicists regard literary texts as space or a battleground where power relations are made visible through, say, figures of speech, rhetorics, characterisation, and the dimensions of symbolic practices. In this context, New Historicism takes interest in the disempowered, the marginalised, those whose voices are never heard, and on “how power worked to suppress or marginalise rival stories” (Bertens: 2008). Therefore, discourse is a powerful tool for defining and categorising others in the process of Othering.

The term power of discourse relates to the way language is used to categorise social relations and direct thoughts and actions to reckon with such categorisation. This way, Karlberg (2008) describes the power of discourse as the “way we think and talk about a subject influence and reflect the ways we act in relation to that subject”. Thus, the power of discourse manifests in the way it “makes us to believe what it tells us” (Bertens:2008). Foucault, writing on discourse, states that the vocabularies and diagnostic terms of the human sciences serve as ‘social regulation’ because “the power of the human sciences derives from what they claimed to be knowledge; it derives from their claims to expertise” (Bertens: 2008). The term discourse, therefore, refers to a “loose structure of interconnected assumptions that makes knowledge possible” (Bertens: 2008). Foucault then regards discourse as a “series of sentences or propositions and as a large group of statements that belong to a single system of formation” (Bertens: 2008). In this regard, discourses derive their power from their claims to expertise or knowledge.

The power of discourse coheres in language (words, phrases, sentences, used in a specific way), social practices (like military drills, rituals, rites, diagnosis) and power relations (as between teachers and students, rulers and the ruled). The power of discourse can be gleaned, for instance, in a historical narrative which necessarily

involves an organisation of “events, decisions about the inclusion or exclusion of events, and stressing or subordinating events” (Mey: 2011). In this process, some stories get told, while others are suppressed resulting in dispossession or disempowerment of those whose stories are suppressed. The art of suppressing the stories of others, of using discourse to categorise or disempower others is akin to epistemic violence.

The groups in the selected texts on whom epistemic violence is practised are the Hausa/Fulani oligarchy (or the North), the Yoruba of the South West, the minority tribes of the South East in Adichie’s novel; the Igbo in Amadi’s novel; the so-called ‘elephants’ in Iyayi’s novel; and the Nigerian State and the oil firms in Habila’s novel. These groups are presented scathingly as threats to the survival or wellbeing of the in-groups.

2.2 On Epistemic Violence

According to Bunch (2015) episteme is knowledge and the measures of its validation. In her study entitled “Epistemic Violence in the Process of Othering: Real-World Application and Moving forward” (2015) Bunch states that epistemic violence which derives from Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence, “focuses on the discourse involved in the practice of othering”. In this wise, othering is the “marginalisation of those who are distinctly different from the majority ‘us’, and uses differences between beliefs and customs to define them as the out-group” She classifies epistemic violence into three types, which are, discriminatory, testimonial, and distributive. Discriminatory epistemic violence “arises when the in-group perceives the out-group to be inferior, both essentially and morally, thus casting them as subhuman and thus not necessarily included in the majority’s realm of moral considerations” (Bunch: 2015). Testimonial epistemic violence refers to “reduced credibility and silencing” and it “occurs when groups are understood only by their constructed and circulated stereotype” (Bunch:

2015). And distributive epistemic violence refers to “the refusal of resources to the out-group” (Bunch: 2015).

In post-colonial studies, epistemic violence approximates the colonial subject as Other. Spivak (1988) indicates that the example of “such epistemic violence is the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as other”. The crux of this form of epistemic violence is the constitution of the colonial other as subaltern subject and the colonialists as a sovereign subject. In other words “the colonised subaltern subjects” is regarded as “irretrievably heterogeneous” (Spivak: 1988). They, therefore, occupy the lowest strata of the margin. This narrative put out by the Western intellectuals has been established as the normative reality of the colonial Other. For Spivak, those on whom epistemic violence is practised are the ‘general, non-specialists’, ‘the illiterate peasantry’, ‘the tribals’, and ‘the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat’.

This study aligns itself with the view that the practice of othering is used to characterise the relations between the centre and the margin. Therefore, it is argued here that Othering is grafted by the authors of the selected texts as a method of categorisation and stigmatisation. The study, therefore, adopts Bunch’s discriminatory and testimonial types of epistemic violence. However, given her categorisation of the groups on whom epistemic violence is practised in relation to the selected texts, groups like the state, the upper class, the majority tribes (Hausa/Fulani; Yoruba, and Igbo) cannot be classed together with the marginalised groups. Nonetheless, this study registers the peculiar nature of the epistemic violence that shapes the discourses of civil war and insurgency in the selected texts. Acting as epistemic agents, the authors succeed in presenting such entities or groups as objects of epistemic violence, that is, the use of differences of culture to define them as the out-groups. In Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* the episteme

that governs the text is that of discrimination against the Hausa/Fulani (North), Yoruba, and the minority tribes who are presented as the threatening others, the out-groups in an ‘us-versus- them’ paradigm. In Amadi’s *Sunset in Biafra*, the same paradigm plays out but this time the Igbo are the out-group because they are perceived as different from the minority tribes. In Iyayi’s *Heroes* the out-group comprises the generals, the politicians, the clergymen otherwise referred to as the ‘elephants’ because they deploy social practices which threaten the rank and file soldiers. So the ‘grass’, that is, the rank and file soldiers and the masses are the ‘us’, the in-group made so through Osime Iyere’s use of discourse intervention. Habila’s *Oil On Water* entrenches the view that the Nigerian state and the oil firms are the threatening Other in an environment beset by oil politics and wars. In all these, the dominant voices, the informing consciousness, is the all-pervasive episteme of the in-group in their attempt to make subnational concerns, stories of victimisation, the construction of stereotype, acquire entelechy of universal values and palimpsestic nuance. For, according to Galvan – Alvarez in Dotson (2011)

“Violence exerted against or through knowledge is probably one of the key elements in any process of domination. It is not only through the construction of exploitative economic links or the control of the politico-military apparatuses that domination is accomplished, but also and, I would argue, most importantly through the construction of epistemic frameworks that legitimise and enshrine those practices of domination,”

In relation to the selected text for this study, the practices or epistemic frameworks consist of the iteration of stereotypes and stigmatisation through opportunistic use of knowledge of the conflict situations and differences of beliefs, customs, and perception of marginality. This then manifests Othering Practice that characterises one group as the out-group and the other as the in-group, or that entrenches the Us versus Them paradigm.

2.3 The Nigerian Novel as a National Narrative: Narrating the Nigerian Nation

Ian Watts in his book, *The Rise of the Novel*, is of the view that the modern novel form emerged in England in the Eighteenth Century. No sooner had it emerged than it became concerned with the issues such as empiricism, scepticism and probing the immediate environment in which it is produced. Its early exponents are Daniel Defoe, David Richardson, and Henry Fielding. In fact, as Akporobaro (2010) puts it,

Daniel Defoe can be rightly regarded as the ‘father’ and pioneer figure in the rise and development of the modern English novel. He transformed the art of narratives in prose from the modes of fantasy and Elizabethan romances of Thomas Nash and John Lyly into the form of the novel as a historical account of individual life, struggles and psychological processes, actualities of human life, by his close attentiveness to ‘facts’, specificity and narrative suspense.

The expressive form of the novel makes it a veritable means for the interconnectedness of cultural and social practices. This is why there are different kinds of the novel, which are, mysteries, romance, thriller, science fiction, fantasy, and historical fiction. In this study, historical fiction or novel is adopted because it approximates the truth of the situations it depicts. Jadine (2014) states that historical fiction acts as a kind of “bridging between fact and fiction”. She further enunciates that “fiction has the power to fill in the imaginative gaps left by history” (Jadine: 2014)

Mey (2018) defines the historical novel as one which “revolves around the attempt to capture a specific moment or period of the past, make sense of it, and find its meaning or cause.” While this definition emphasises sense-making, the definition in the Encyclopedia Britannica emphasises the quality of its representation by stating that historical fiction “has as its setting a period of history and that attempts to convey the spirit, manners, and social conditions of a past age with realistic detail and fidelity (which is in some cases only apparent fidelity) to historical fact”. Nonetheless, both

notions of sense-making and representation as qualities of the historical fiction are suitable to this study.

Groot (2010) in his book, *Historical Novel*, points out some of the striking characteristics of the historical novel. One of such features is its “intergeneric hybridity,” that is, it can “take the form of a romance, fantasy, gothic, and many others”, Mey (2011). In *Memory and History as fiction*, Brady (1993) states that historiography and historical novel differ in so far as History refers to a “real” past, a belief or set of beliefs about that past, and purports to report the “truth” about that “real” past. The historical novel, on the other hand, like the autobiographical novel, refers to a “real” past but neither aims nor claims to reproduce it with scrupulous accuracy.

Nonetheless, the historical novel Brady (1993) states **is** “distinguished not by its being fiction but by the greater degree of fictionalisation involved and by the consciousness or explicitness of this fictional status”. And so, in writing the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie points out that “this book is based on the Nigeria-Biafra War of 1967-70. While some of the characters are based on actual persons, their portrayals are fictions as are the events surrounding them” (2006). By this admission, Adichie clarifies what de Groot (1993) says about the nature of a historical novel, which is that it is “obsessed with pointing out its own partiality, with introducing other voices and understanding its authority”.

But, while the relationship between the historiography and the historical novel may seem palpably apparent, the relationship between the novel and the nation is not simple. This relationship is the subject of series of debates. While Carlos Fuentes “claims that the rise of European nationalism coincides with the boom of the novel”, Edward Said “considers the novelistic form ideal to incorporate the authority and structure necessary to mark the birth of nationalism”, (Raminder: NA). The concept of nation is itself

problematic because as Ernest Gellner (1987) states, “nations are not inscribed into the nature of things, they do not constitute a political version of the doctrine of natural kinds.” Instead, they are “deliberately constructed by people upon specific fundamentals,” (Raminder: NA). These fundamentals Gellner (1987) states are:

1. Two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communication.
2. Two men are of the same nation if and only if they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation.

This notion of sameness of culture which is taken as the normative principle of the formation of nations has been challenged by some scholars like Arjun Appadurai in “Patriotism and its Futures”, and Donald Pease in *National Narratives, Postnational Narration*. While Appadurai (1993) posits that the notion of the nation stands discredited and deems it necessary to think beyond it, Pease (1997) on the other hand believes that the nation-state is outdated, functioning instead as “a tolerated anachronism in a global economy requiring a borderless world for its effective operation”. Yet, Homi K. Bhabha (2000) in *Art and National Identity: A critic’s Symposium* remarks that the concept of the nation cannot be completely eliminated “as an idea or as a political structure, but you can acknowledge its historical limitations for our time”.

Nevertheless, narratives about nations have tended to construct them in elaborate cultural, ideological, and political terms either to heighten the feeling of interconnectedness or to repudiate such claims. This is because, as Anderson (1983) observes, the novel is a suitable “apparatus to embody national imagination as it has the technical resources to conjure up an imagined community that is the nation”. These technical resources are the space or setting, plot, characters, and the underlying idea or thought. These techniques are used to exhibit the nation’s “land, its people, its culture,

the historical, the geographical, the political, the economic, the religious, the social and the intellectual milieus,” (Raminder: NA).

Fiction writers make use of the plot structure to present events that either celebrate the nation or critical of it, that is, “the worlds depicted in novels are often profoundly pluralistic and multivoiced...” (Raminder: NA). Also, the novel has enough space to “gather together a variety of people into one collective body even when it is extremely unlikely that all the individuals will ever get to meet one another,” (Anderson: 2006). The individuals that feature in this space are characters who often “present significant perspectives on the nation they are projected to be citizen of,” (Raminder: NA). These characters are given names, caste, or creed, sexes; and, they wittingly or unwittingly “negotiate space and identity for themselves,” and “some of them virtually became the nation,” (Raminder: NA). Similarly, these characters speak a certain language which unites them as citizens of an ‘imagined’ nation. This language makes the characters understand their world and gives them the values by which they orient their lives. The novel also underlies thoughts, biases, ideas, prejudices, and creates binaries such as the self and the other, the superior group and the inferior group, the hegemonic and the counter-hegemonic, the coloniser and the colonised. It may evoke a patriotic feeling of national consciousness or dissidence. As Raminder (NA) captures it, the novel may “whip up nostalgia for a past concept of the same nation in order to point to certain lapses in the present; omit vital details, create areas of silence or conspicuous gaps; or betray hope and optimism or pessimism for the future.”

This study does not, however, share Parrinder’s (NA) view that the novel form is an exercise in nation-building because it helps to “mould national sensibility,” and that the novel depends on the “presence of men and women who speak the same language and roughly share the same cultural assumption”. While this may apply to the English novel

on which his study is based, in relation to Nigerian novel it is hardly the case. In the case of the Nigerian novel, the idea of a nation that is often projected is a chaotic notion of ‘nation,’ which are Biafra, Niger Delta, Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba. The nation-state called Nigeria is an abstraction, a contested notion, a heterogeneous entity in most Nigerian novels, especially the ones dealing with the Nigeria-Biafra civil war, the Niger Delta militancy and cultural revivalism. Nigerian novel also sets up binary categories like the state and the common citizens, majority tribes and the minority tribes, the rich class and the poor class, the South and the North. And so, the notion of the nation in the Nigerian novel is subsumed along with these binary categories which marked its evolution since the 1950s. The novels used in this study also repudiate the feeling of interconnectedness and homogeneity.

2.4 Review of Literatures on the Primary Texts

The novels selected for this study fit variously into both the civil war literature and the Niger Delta literature within the wider tradition of Nigerian literature. In varying degrees, the selected texts depict a national psyche that is fractured significantly by the internecine war and oil politics. They are therefore stories of subalternity, of disempowerment and the marginalised.

Review of works on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* is hardly a “national novel” as John C. Hawley (2008) argues in “Biafra as Heritage and Symbol: Adichie, Mbachu and Iweala”. This is because, like all novels on the civil war, it fails to present an “unbiased, total assessment of the whole great tragedy” as Eddie Iroh charges the writers to do, (Hawley: 2008). Instead, Adichie recreates the sufferings and the spirit of mainly the Igbo during moments of the war. This enables her to effect what Greenblatt, after Louis Althusser, calls internal distance, that is, the use of external point of reference by a literary text to

“engage in complex reflection upon the system of values that has generated them” (Johnson: 2010). This external point of reference is reinforced by what she terms *nkali* (to be greater than another). In “The Story Behind the Book”, she states that her reason for writing the novel is:

Because I lost both grandfathers in the Nigeria-Biafra War...because my father has tears in his eyes when he speaks of losing his father; because my mother still cannot speak at length about losing her father in a refuge camp.

This external point of reference includes the feelings of being Igbo, of being Biafran, and of being victims of a Nigerian state. Joke de Mey in her thesis, *The Intersection of History; Literature and Trauma in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun* (2011) notes that the focus in the novel is “the personal life and struggles of the characters” not “the unified Nigerian national identity” or to honour the collective memory of an entire nation” as Adichie claims.

Most of the books and articles written on *Half of a Yellow Sun* accentuates her inclination toward being Igbo and Biafran. Among these works are a book by Allwell Abalogu Onukaogu and Ezechi Onyerionwu entitled *Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: Aesthetics of Commitment and Narrative* (2010), which contains a chapter on “Adichie: The Igboness of Narrative”. To buttress the Igboness of Adichie’s narrative the authors refer to the fact that “language contextualises literature, as it gives an indication to whom literature is talking about, what they are saying, where these people are located and when they are situated” (Onukaogu, *et al*: 2010). Therefore, according to them, “Adichie’s linguistic attitude also appears from all indications an attempt to foreground her Igbo identity... Adichie celebrates not just the Igbo language but everything Igbo...” (Onukaogu, *et al*: 2010).

The closest the book goes to New Historicism is the author’s discussion of Adichie’s sense of History which is anchored on three utilities of history, which are, history as

means of purging emotions; history as a way of teaching Nigerians the bitter lessons of the war, and the use of history to remind, inform and enlighten on the civil war. However, this detracts from the New Historicist's discourse of making literary and cultural knowledge co-equal. The rest chapters of the book are on issues which are unrelated to the thrust of this study.

Joke de Mey's thesis entitled *The Intersection of History, Literature and Trauma in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun* discusses the relationship between history and literature and trauma in *Half of a Yellow Sun* as a historical novel, a view shared by this study. She also reviewed quite extensively literature relating to history as a narrative. Much of the views on this have been referred to and adopted earlier in this study. However, what needs to be emphasised is Mey's adoption of White's assertion that a "narrative about the past will not necessarily show the whole past" (2011) as well as Mey's conclusion that Adichie's novel is a "personal project for Adichie but it also contains a concern for the entire Igbo community" (2011). This study subscribes to these views but will deepen the argument by linking it with the discourse of narrative fashioning as a point of departure from the aforementioned views.

Hugh Hodges' article entitled "*Writing Biafra: Adichie, Emecheta and the Dilemmas of Biafran War Fiction*" (2009) is one with a tinge of New Historicism. The essay mainly focuses on the problematic of reconciling or balancing "the competing demands of historicism and storytelling," (Hodges: 2009). In this regard, he dwells more on how the "negotiation between historicism and imaginative creation" (2009) intersect, how some Biafran war fictions fall short of achieving a wholistic or convincing negotiation. He cites an example with Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* whose tone he says is documentary with the desire to impress on the reader its neutral factuality, but which "desire to connect the text straightforwardly to its historical referents- to say 'this

actually happened' – is deeply at odds with its allegorical nature," (Hodges: 2009). He also states that Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Ekwensi's *Divided We Stand* "Suffer from the same problems to a greater or less extent" in making "the same kind of factual claims as *Destination Biafra*" (Hodges: 2009). This conclusion is germane to an understanding of the different interpretations that will result from a reading of *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Besides affirming apologetically Adichie as the most significant "among young Nigerian novelists who have taken on the subject of the Nigerian Civil War," Chinyere Egbuta's article "*Half of a Yellow Sun: The Carnage in Post Colonial Parlance*" published in *Nigerian Literature Today*, No 1, 2010 is quite unrelated to the thrust of this study. The article itself does not contain any striking information that will recommend it for any serious study.

Be that as it may, it may be said that in writing *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie's fixation to the external point of reference such as her parents' touchy experiences of the war and her sentimental attachment to the ideals of Biafra, can be linked to the principle of *Nkali* which denotes "the desire to be greater than another". For, according to her, "stories too are defined by the principle of nkali: how they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told are really dependent on power" (2009). And to her power is basically "the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person" (2009). The Biafran war story – both what is included in it and what is excluded from it, is the definitive story of the Igbo and what it chooses to say about non-Igbo.

Review of Works on Elechi Amadi and *Sunset in Biafra*

Elechi Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra*, while serving as a counterpoise to the Igbo desire to be greater than others, Richard M. Shain in his article, "Two Niger Delta Texts on the "Biafran" War" (1993) states that the text in its "representation of a turbulent past contributes to the formation and transformation of a regional identity in the present." He further states that the text has "more to do with the ongoing politics of cultural identity in the Rivers region than the "Biafran conflict," (Shain: 1993). Shain is right in claiming that the text has more to do with the politics of cultural identity than the Biafran conflict. However, it is in the context of the Biafran conflict that this politics of cultural identity assumes greater meaning. And in this regard, Amadi presents the minority groups within the Eastern region as victims of Igbos' cultural and political domination. As Shain (1993) puts it, "minorities" are the smaller groups struggling for their share of national and regional cakes." As such, Shain (1993) concludes that a quest by Amadi for "authenticity and a need for external recognition organise his text and delineate his cultural identity."

Review of Works on Festus Iyayi and *Heroes*

Festus Iyayi's *Heroes*, most commentaries on the text link it with the Marxist proposition. Some of these commentaries are contained in Chiji Okoma's "Artistic Truth or Narrative Fallacy: Iyayi and Saro-Wiwa on Civil War" in *The Guardian* of Saturday, May 15, 1993; Kunle Ajibade's "On the Formalistic Essentials of Iyayi's Novels" in *The Guardian* of Wednesday, October 19, 1988; Kunle Ajibade's "Nigeria Is More Fictional than fiction" in *Weekend Concord* of Saturday, February 9, 1991; Chucks Iloegbunam's "flawed Heroes" in *Newswatch* of February 13, 1989; and Olu Obafemi's "From Anguish to Regeneration: Okpewho's *The Last Duty* and Iyayi's *Heroes*" in his book entitled *Nigerian Writers on the Nigerian Civil War* (1992).

Okoma (1993) establishes the central character in Iyayi's *Heroes*, Osime Iyere, as a positive hero who is "a tireless mobiliser and organiser of the working class and the peasants." As such, for him, the text fits into Frantz Fanon's notion of the fighting phase which became "noticeable in Nigerian Literature during this period of neo-colonialism, dependence and re-colonialism". Ajibade (1988) is of the view that the novel probes "into the deeper question of the war – a literary indictment on the ruling-military class and civilians." Similarly, Iloegbunam (1989) while describing the novel as a "novel of *ideas*", also avers that "*there is no disagreement between the poor and the working class. But the bad blood was let in by the generals on both sides and their cohorts.*" Isi Omoifo in his article "*Of Heroes and Non-Heroes*" in *The African Guardian* of February 13, 1989, also states that the novel shows that the higher officers are "cowards, incompetent in the prosecution of the war, but never losing an opportunity to present their sadistic sides." Olu Obafemi's (1992) submission is that "the central concern and pre-occupation of Iyayi's *Heroes* is with the urgency for mass ideological preparation which he finds as inevitable for the attainment of cultural and social transformation."

All these treatises are couched in the discursive propositions "advocated by such radical revolutionary practitioners and theoreticians like Fanon, Paulo-Freire, Augusto Boal, **Marxim** Gorky, etc" (Obafemi: 1992). Although power discourse can be deduced from these treatises, none of them is close to the discourse intervention that this study subscribes to in relation to Festus Iyayi's *Heroes*. According to Michael Karlberg (2005), discourse intervention is "an effort to change our social reality by altering the discourses that help constitute that reality". This can be likened to Foucault's conception of power within the framework of New Historicism as a "relational force that permeates the entire social body, connecting all social groups in a web of mutual influence". Similarly, power in this regard "constructs social organisation and hierarchy

by producing discourses and truths, by imposing discipline and order, and by shaping human desires and subjectivities”.

The discourse of militarism is emblematic of this Foucauldian notion of power. As a system of rules and regulations, William Hetherington, in his essay, “*Militarism*” (1990) states that militarism commands blind obedience to leaders by the led, maintains a hierarchy of class, and turns soldiers to the machine for killing, maiming and destroying.

Review of Works on Helon Habila and *Oil on Water*

Helon Habila’s *Oil on Water* (2010) falls into the category of Nigerian literature that is termed Niger Delta literature. As part of the Niger Delta literature, Habila’s novel “draws consciously from the region’s customs, habits, and dialectic, and defines and identifies – primarily with the region’s socio-cultural tensions and dynamics, and consciously portrays the predicaments and aspiration of its people” (Okoroegbe: 2012). In his article, “Postcolonial Oil Politics and the Niger Delta Question in Tanure Ojaide’s *The Activist*” (2012), Okoroegbe, citing E. Ojaruege, states that Niger Delta literature:

Chronicles the pains and sufferings that is now a visible trajectory of the region as a result of oil exploration and exploitation. Aside from dwelling on the rapid despoliation of the region’s land, water and aerial spaces, this emergent literature laments the object oppression, neglect and marginalization this region and her people contend with in spite of the enormous amount of wealth it generated for the national coffers.

The Niger Delta referred to as the “predator’s paradise” by Maduka in Ohagwam (2018) is also regarded as “one of the most polluted places on the face of the earth”, according to Watts in Ohagwam (2018). And so, as Ohagwam (2018) notes the key preoccupation of the Niger Delta literature is “the issue of environmental degradation”. This literature aims to bring to global attention the “massive environmental devastation on human lives

and the physical environment by multinational oil corporations through oil spills, gas flares and other ecologically-destructive practices” (Ohagwam: 2018).

Habila’s *Oil on Water* reflects this concern with the environmental despoliation and associated crises of militancy/insurgency, kidnapping and oil wars. Studies of the text have accentuated this concern. One of such studies is a paper by the duo of Simon, E.D, Akung J.E, and Bassey, B.U, entitled “*Environmental Degradation, Militancy/kidnapping and Oil Theft in Helon Habila’s Oil On Water*” (2014). The paper professes to “explore the issues of environmental degradation and its attendant consequences like the rise of militancy, kidnapping, bunkering, oil theft in the region”. It, therefore, blames these activities on the “destruction of flora and Fauna without clean-ups or compensation paid to host communities” as well as the violation of the ecosystem by the “multinationals and the insensitivity of the Federal Government of Nigeria to the plight of the Niger Delta people”.

The paper did not consider the complicity of the Niger Delta elites, warlords, and Chiefs in bringing about what Onyema in Ohagwam (2018) calls “ecotrauma” on the masses through their pecuniary private concerns. This is a point of departure from this study. Another paper is the study done by Uchenna Ohagwam entitled “*The Niger Delta Crises in the Niger Delta Novel: Reflection on Kaine Agary’s Yellow Yellow*” (2018). This paper also uses an eco-critical perspective to decry the level of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta which detracts from this study.

Thus, this study argues that this seamy situation of the Niger Delta region and its people as depicted by Habila in his novel, *Oil on Water*, forms the historicity of the oil politics and insurgency in this region. And Tekeena N. Tarmuno’s book, *Oil Wars in the Niger Delta (1849-2009)* (2011) is an important source material on the instantiation of the rapid despoliation of the region’s land, as well as the oppression, neglect and

marginalisation of its people. Also, the essay by Ufiem Maurice Ogbonnaya and Uyi Kizito Ehigiamusoe entitled *Niger Delta Militancy and Boko Haram Insurgency: National Security in Nigeria* (2013) published in the *Global Security Studies*, Vol. 4 Issue 3, provides statistical details of the havoc carried out by the various militant groups in the Niger Delta on oil installations and the killing and kidnapping of oil workers and government security personnel. These two source materials provide a record of lived material experiences that confirm that the insurgency in the Niger Delta and its environmental degradation are not wholly fictional, they are actual experiences that happened in time and space. In his book, Tamuno (2011) notes that the violence in the Niger Delta is between the 3 Cs (Communities, Companies/Corporations and Country) He stresses that:

Their disagreements, at first, small and manageable, began with exploration of crude oil, in the Niger Delta, in 1937. Their troubles became graver and more vexatious after the discovery of oil in commercial quantities and its first exports in 1958. Thereafter, resultant crises, conflicts and confrontations continued to spoil relations between these stakeholders (p.7).

He further enunciates the fact that:

As multi-national companies and corporation became more actively involved, in the exploration and exploitation of crude oil and gas, clashes between them and the various Ijo and other Niger Delta communities increased. Issues of pollution, erosion as well as ecological degradation called for adequate compensation, calls often made by militant youths in the various communities (p.22).

By and large, these assertions provide a window for the authentication of the issues Habila raises in *Oil on Water* as a representation of the lived material experiences of the people of the Niger Delta. Ogbonnaya and Ehigiamusoe's (2013) paper, though a political research essay, reveals that "the crises in the Niger Delta manifests (sic) in various ways namely, militancy, hostage taking and kidnapping of oil workers and

frequent disruption of oil production activities through the destruction of oil and gas installations and facilities”. Basically, Habila’s *Oil on Water* is the story of hostage-taking and kidnapping, of violent and distraught people whose condition is exacerbated by oil exploration activities of the multi-national corporations and the Federal Government of Nigeria as well as the pecuniary private concerns of the elite, the warlords and chiefs.

In sum, the various literatures reviewed, especially the ones on the selected texts are patterned on the perfunctory concerns of the authors. For instance, Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* is read mostly as the story of the suffering and brutalisation of the Igbo as victims of political persecution during the Nigeria-Biafra war. Amadi’s *Sunset in Biafra* is also read basically as Amadi’s personal travails during the Nigeria – Biafra war; while, Iyayi’s *Heroes* is read perfunctorily as a Marxist text which advocates revolution. And Habila’s *Oil on Water* is examined from the ecocritical perspective as a chronicle of environmental despoliation and the attendant kidnapping and militancy. And so, the literature reveals that the narrative discourse of the Nigerian civil war and insurgency is tied to the whimsical histrionics of micro-nationalism in the formation and reformation of cultural identities.

The accentuation of these hermeneutics over time has entrenched such perspective as the grand norm or the grand narrative in the overall construct of Nigerian literature. Therefore, the little narratives of the disempowered, the stigmatised, and the stereotyped which are mostly ignored, suppressed and undermined form the nucleus of this study. The novelty of this study consists not only in the deployment of the **criticus** apparatuses of New Historicism but also in the mode of critical interpretation that deviates from the perfunctory study of the selected texts. In other words, this study, in the Cultural Materialist view, reads the texts against the grain by amplifying the voices of the

discursively disempowered, of the 'guilty political unconscious of the texts', by exposing the fault lines which is Othering by means of epistemic violence.

The position taken in this study is justified by the New Historicist's claim that a text is not reducible to any single metanarrative. Essentially, the two-prong approach adopted here consists of the examination of the texts not only as the story about the travails of the people who fall within the immediate concerns of the authors but also as the story of the Other perceived as the threatening Other. In other words, the authors variously appropriate the novel form to fashion narratives which are not only about the people or masses perceived as victims of political persecution or manipulation but also as a definitive narrative fashioning of others as the threatening others using epistemic violence.

Apparent from the texts is the impression that the interaction between the cultural selves and the threatening other is not constitutive of harmonious living but that it tends towards severance and secession. It is manipulative and rapturous in the case of Iyayi's *Heroes*; severance and secessionist in the cases of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra*, and Habila's *Oil on Water*. This, therefore, put paid to the notion of national cohesion or national unity or of nationalism. This means that the Nigerian nation is presented as being contested, chaotic, contradictory and tentative. Although postmodernism permits fragmentation and the notion of the self as subjective, a notion underscored by the novel form, however, this study argues that the observed interconnectedness in the relation between national entities is proof that the self (or the subnational groups) is merely a hoax, a ruse for homogeneity. This is even a test case for the subjective (individuality) nature of the novel form. Because the novel form can be exploited by the subnational groups to serve their motives, it means that its subjective nature is as unstable as the subnational groups are themselves subject to

domination or containment by the dominant groups. Thus, this study argues that this method of textual interpretation of the selected texts has hardly been done which makes it a major contribution to the body of knowledge on Nigerian literature.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 NARRATIVE FASHIONING AS A PROCESS OF OTHERING IN ADICHIE'S *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN* AND AMADI'S *SUNSET IN BIAFRA*

Narrative fashioning or self-fashioning is a term used by Greenblatt to describe the Sixteenth Century “process of constructing one’s identity and public persona according to a set of socially acceptable standards” (1980). Greenblatt (1980) states that as a result of the increased self-consciousness in Sixteenth Century England the process of “fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process” became fashionable. In the Renaissance era, for example, a noble man was instructed to “dress in the finest clothing he could afford, to be well versed and educated in art, literature, sports, and other culturally determined noble exercises, and to generally compose himself in a carefully intended manner” (Greenblatt: 1980). This self-conscious effort to imitate a praised model is itself a product of, and an extension of, elite tendencies in the classical period which drew scepticism from the church because Christianity doubts “man’s power to shape identity” (Greenblatt:1980). Self-fashioning as a concept has evolved to acquire different shades of meanings and usages. Greenblatt (1980) states that self-fashioning:

Describes the practice of parents and teachers; it is linked to manners or demeanor, particularly that of the elite: it may suggest hypocrisy or deception, an adherence to mere outward ceremony: it suggests representation of one’s nature or intention in speech or actions.

Thus, self-fashioning is as much about social and cultural practices as it is also inscribed in literary practice as narrative fashioning which Greenblatt likens to improvisation of power or narrative absorption. Greenblatt (1980) states that:

The relationship between self-fashioning and the aesthetic medium was a reciprocal one. Just as the art of creating oneself was highly influenced by the art and literature of the time, such a concern for one’s outwardly projected image was reflected in the portraiture of the time.

The operative phrase here is the ‘concern with one’s outwardly projected image’ which is linked to the attempt to reinforce one’s cultural identity. That is why Greenblatt (1980) states that self-fashioning functions “without regard for the sharp distinction between literature and social life”. In relation to literature, self-fashioning becomes narrative fashioning as the ability to “fictionalise the other’s beliefs primarily by treating them as untrue yet expressive of particular values” (which can then be manipulated). Essentially, narrative fashioning “crosses the boundaries between the creations of literary characters, the shaping of one’s own identity, the experience of being moulded by forces outside one’s control, the attempt to fashion other selves” (Greenblatt: 1980). The ability to “fictionalise the Other’s beliefs primarily by treating them as untrue yet expressive of particular values” and to shape ‘one’s identity’ as well as ‘to fashion other selves’ establishes narrative fashioning as a process of Othering. In this regard, narrative fashioning functions as a deliberate shaping of one’s own identity and the fashioning of other selves by representing them as threatening Others.

Since narrative fashioning entails not only the deliberate reinforcement of one’s cultural identity but also the shaping of other selves, it is thus realised in “relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile which must be discovered or invented in order to be attacked or destroyed” (Greenblatt:1980). It is in this way that narrative fashioning as an othering practice is used wittingly to reinforce cultural identity and perceptions, and relations of power. This is because as Weedon (2004) states, identity, like the self, is viewed as a “production, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within not outside, representation”. And so, Greenblatt (1980) holds that “identity is fed via the narrative in which they are placed”. Identity, therefore, is constantly fashioned and refashioned, always the “product of an interaction between the way we want to represent ourselves through the stories we tell (or the incidents we

suppress) and our actual presentation – and the power relations we are part of” (Bertens: 2008).

In mobile societies, cultural identity is rendered more flexible essentially because as sociologist Daniel Lerner puts it, mobile society is one that is: “characterised not only by certain enlightened and rational public practices but also by the inculcation in its people of a mobile sensibility so adaptive to change that rearrangement of the self-system is its distinctive mode”, (quoted by Greenblatt in Veerer 1994). Lerner in Veerer (1994) also states that traditional society functions on the basis of a highly constrictive personality, one that resists change and is incapable of grasping the situation of another.

Greenblatt (1980) views these mobile sensibility and constrictive personality within the purview of cultural mobility and constraint. According to him, cultural mobility is not just about “the expression of random motion but of exchange”. This is because culture “functions as the regulator and guarantor of movement” (Greenblatt: 2005) and that it is only through “improvisation, experiment, and exchange that cultural boundaries can be established” (Greenblatt: 2005). He likens cultural constraint to the limitation placed by culture on individuals, such as can be gleaned in traditional societies. According to him, the total “ensemble of beliefs and practices that form a given culture function as a limit within which social behaviour must be contained, a repertoire of models to which individuals must conform” (Greenblatt: 2005). The enforcement of cultural constraint is usually through praise and blame or punishment and reward. In other words, those who violate the limits set upon them by their culture are punished sometimes not in a spectacular way but mostly by “seemingly innocuous responses, a condescending smile, laughter poised between the genial and the sarcastic, a small dose of indulgent pity laced with contempt, cool silence” (Greenblatt: 2005). And in terms of reward, the limits are enforced by a “system of rewards that range again from the spectacular (grand

public honours, glittering prizes) to the apparently modest (a gaze of admiration, a respectful nod, a few words of gratitude” (Greenblatt: 2005).

Cultural identity, mobility and constraint are all engendered by language as means of representation or improvisation. Like Orientalism, narrative fashioning relies “upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding” for its effect, (Said: 2008). This improvisational power is a form of mobility which serves the author and the story he writes. Greenblatt refers to this improvisational power as the “ability both to capitalise on the unforeseen and to transform given materials into one’s own scenario.” (2005)

For our purpose, it will be argued that the materials of the Nigeria – Biafra war story are putatively used by both Adichie and Amadi as the scenario of not only their own people’s victimisation, political persecution, and suffering for the purpose of reinforcing their victimhood identity but also of fashioning other selves as the threatening others. It will be further argued that these writers use the civil war story to iterate biases, prejudices, and stereotypes in the process of reinforcing their people’s victimhood identity as well as undermine, vilify, and stigmatise others as threatening others.

To be sure, the story of the Nigerian – Biafra war of 1967-1970 has been told repeatedly in many forms mostly from the perspectives of the Igbos and their minority neighbours. However, the retelling and reconstruction of the story is usually unidimensional, apologetic, and partisan by pandering to the tribal and regional proclivity of the writers. Hardly is the story told empathetically to engender a “unified Nigerian national identity” or to “honour the collective memory of an entire nation” as Adichie claims in “The Story Behind the Book”.

Narrative Fashioning as a Process of Othering in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

The assessment of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* will be done in a two-prong perspective, that is, as a scenario of the collective victimhood experiences of the characters in the text and as an iteration of the story of others perceived as the threatening Other. In Adichie's novel, the threatening others are Nigerians like the Hausa/Fulanis, the Yoruba, and their minority neighbours.

To be sure, Adichie's story is reinforced by some external points of reference and her deep-seated attachment to Igbo symbolism: the notion of being Biafran which is signified by such insignias as the Biafran flag, half of a yellow sun, condiments and social practices. In writing the novel, Adichie acknowledges "more than thirty books that "helped in (her) research." (Hodges: 2009). But apart from these books she also notes "the telling effect of her parents" stories about the war on her writing. On this, she states, as her reason for writing the novel, that it is

Because I lost both grandfathers in the Nigeria – Biafra war...because my father has tears in his eyes when he speaks of losing his father, because my mother still cannot speak at length about losing her father in a refugee camp...
(Accompanying note to the novel)

These contexts enable Adichie to engage in a complex reflection upon the historical turn of events that pitted her people in an internecine war with the Nigerian State. Her story, however, depicts her Igbo characters as victims of a supposedly nihilistic Nigerian State egged on by the Hausa/Fulani Oligarchy. A substantial part of her narrative draws upon existing cultural stereotypes about other Nigerians and the political perception that Northerners are put "in government to dominate everybody" (p.125). She thus colonises these existing models in order to construct, reinforce and affirm her own cultural identity. In other words, she uses her narrative strategy to make common sense of the

existing models of cultural stereotypes and political perceptions about other Nigerians, that is, the hegemonic power structure of the Nigerian state and cultural institutions of other Nigerians, in order to establish, affirm or impose another commonsense, the Biafran nationalism. This strategy is termed counter-hegemonic by Antonio Gramsci.

Half of a Yellow Sun is the story of mostly Igbo families caught up in far-reaching political imbroglio, families that try hard to survive on the fringes of the war zone; the socially interlinked families trying to pull together as a tribal entity in the face of bombings and fierce gunfights which threaten their cohesion and peace. At the centre of these families is the family of Chief Ozobia whose siblings are scattered around the country – North, West, and East. Chief Ozobia has a set of twins both girls – Olanna and Kainene. Olanna eventually moves from the family base in Lagos, Western Nigeria, to the East – Nsukka –where she starts her own family by hooking up with her intellectual boyfriend, Odenigbo, against the wish of her parents who wanted her to marry their business partner, Chief Okonji. From Nsukka, Olanna connects her other siblings in Kano, Northern Nigeria, from where the unsettling political imbroglio begins and eventually pitches with the declaration of secession and the outbreak of the civil war. The imbroglio first takes the lives of the Kano siblings of the Ozobias, then causes a horrendous exodus of the Igbo characters from the North to the East. The grievous effects of the thirty month-long war that follow eventually leave everyone traumatised as a number of families are displaced, hunger-stricken, crammed into refugee camps and diseased.

The novel is loosely divided into four parts. While parts One and Three are marked the Early Sixties, parts Two and Four are marked Late Sixties. This indicates that the plot structure is fragmentary and episodic. And so, the narrative keeps shifting back and forth both in time and space as the author tries to capture the peace and wartime

situations of the sixties; situations which shape events and sentiments that precipitated the civil war and its eventual effects supposedly on only the Igbo nation.

While the physical journeys to Kano by Olanna is meant to connect the two regions – North and East – that are parties to the dispute and so trace the genesis of the pogrom, they also reveal the deep-seated sentiments and stereotypes the Igbo characters in the text express about the North, its people and the Hausa-Fulani oligarchs. Olanna's journey to Lagos, at some point, also reveals the Igbo characters' sniggering perception of Yoruba characters of Western Nigeria. This then underscores Adichie's fashioning of others as the threatening Other.

In cultural contexts, the novel portrays the Igbo characters as standoffish and condescending, and as superior to the characters from other tribal groups. In other words, they are portrayed as a group governed by the principle of *Nkali* – to be greater than another. Yet, seen against the backdrop of New Historicist's terms of cultural mobility and constraint, their mannerism and cosmology can be circumscribed within the norms of a traditional society that negates change and is incapable of grasping the situation of others. In the novel, Igbo characters apparently wear their cultural identity upon their sleeves especially when they encounter or discuss characters from other tribes. And by so doing they show themselves incapable of adapting or absorbing the cultural values of their host communities. And so, as will be discussed subsequently, Adichie deploys protocols of narrativity such as sarcasm, derision, sniggers, lampoonry, grotesquerie and the images of obduracy to depict the situations of others. But where it concerns the Igbo characters, she imbues her narrative with the eerie spectacle of the apocalypse, grandeur, hyperbole, and tragedy.

In the novel, Igbo characters are portrayed as highly mobile by their travels and the way they interact with characters from diverse backgrounds. Expectedly, this should make

them develop a mobile sensibility to make them adaptive to change so that “rearrangement of the self-system” (Veese: 1994) should be their distinctive characteristic. But this is not the case. The kind of mobility as demonstrated in the novel is merely an “expression of random motion without exchange” (Greenblatt: 2005).

The social interaction of the Igbo characters with characters from other tribes is cautious and guarded because of their constrictive mannerism and their perception of others as the threatening Other. This is exemplified by Olanna’s relationship with Mohammed, the utter disdain and snobbery of the self-styled revolutionary Odenigbo, and the residency of the Igbo in Kano. It can be gleaned in the portraiture of the North and the caricature of its people as savages, evil, vandals, the enemy, beggars, Kolanut eating ignoramuses, unlettered, naïve and jiggers – infested. Therefore, the North and characters from the region are profiled as the threatening Other, as the hostile other in the narrative fashioning of the civil strife.

This is stoked and accentuated further by the deep-seated sentiments and stereotypes the Igbo characters express about the North and its people. This is presented through the focalisation of Olanna in her visits to Kano, discussions between Odenigbo and his friends in his house, as well as their analysis of the war situations. Through Olanna’s focalisation, during her first visit to Kano, Adichie depicts her reminiscing over the commonly held view among the Igbo characters about “Northern schools not admitting Igbo children” (p.38). Although the Igbo community in Kano through its Union eventually established Igbo Union Grammar School, the perception that Northerners are antagonistic to the Igbo coupled with the founding of an exclusively Igbo school draws a parallel along which ethnocultural hostilities subsequently thrive.

Adichie’s spatial description of the Northern landscape and environment is similarly laced with bilious denigration which reveals her subdued intent to undermine the

region's cultural space and identity of its people. She describes the Northern landscape as a land where "the thick woods (that) slide past, of grassy plain unfurling, where cattle swing their tails as they are herded by bare-chested nomads (p.37). In the same manner, the Northern characters like Abdulmalik have teeth which are "stained with Kolanut and tobacco and whatever else Olanna did not know, stains of varying shades of yellow and brown" (p.40). Also, they wear the "expression of people who marvelled at education with the calm certainty that it would never be theirs" (p.40). And they are beggars who mostly sit on "the ground, leaning against the mud compound walls. Flies perched on them in dense clusters, so that for a moment it seemed as if their frayed white kaftans had been splashed with dark-coloured paint" (p.43).

This kind of portraiture that aims at denigrating and undermining Northern cultural space finds correlation in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988). In chapter seventeen entitled The Great North Road, he notes that, as the "impenetrable rain forests of the South ...began to yield ground most grudgingly... to less prodigious growths'..." (p.205), "a couple of hundred kilometers further north... open parklands of grass and stunted trees" (p.205). This then provides a view of "burning desolation" (p.209), of "ragged peasants attracted from the arid lives of a few scattered hamlets of round huts dotting the landscapes" (p.211) and of security forces posted to "prevent the hungry desert from taking its begging bowl inside the secure borders of the South" (p.209). It also gives a view of a "man on a donkey (was) overtaken by the bus, his face a perfect picture of a corpse that died in the harmattan" (p.209).

The tone in these portrayals is unmistakably sarcastic and derisive and the picture painted is grotesque. All this is because the Northern people are perceived as hostile and domineering. This portrayal however underpins the constrictive cultural outlook of the Igbo characters in Adichie's novel who are creepily attached to symbols, labels,

attitudes as a demonstration of their cultural identity. Such creepish attachment to primordial cultural symbols and attitudes is expressed in social relationships or suggestions to form social relationship across cultural boundaries. For instance, the mere suggestion by Olanna to Arize that “should I find you one of Mohammed brothers?” to marry her is vehemently rebuffed by Arize, as she replies, “No, no!” and in the process waves “her hands in the air in mock horror” (p.42). Her reason is that “Papa would kill me first of all if he knew I was even looking at a Hausa man like that” (p.42). And Aunty Ifeka’s response to that is even more acerbic, as she says, “unless your father will kill a corpse, because I will start with you first” (p.42). This implies that cross-cultural marriage especially between the Hausa and the Igbo characters is seriously frowned at and even unthinkable, especially in Early Sixties Nigeria.

Although Olanna’s bold-face relationship with Mohammed may be seen as an exceptional move, it is also mired in cultural constriction. At first, Mohammed’s mother’s reception of Olanna is disapproving and lukewarm on religious ground. She, however, overcomes this religious scepticism later as to warm up to Olanna. This makes Olanna to remark that “I am no longer the Igbo woman you wanted to marry who would taint the lineage with infidel blood” (p.46). In any case, even if Mohammed’s mother’s or his relations’ preference did not matter (p.46) in his decision to marry Olanna “anyhow” (p.46), deep in Olanna’s heart, “she did not wish to marry him” (p.46). This is mainly because “Mohammed was not an Igbo man” (p.42) which would have made Arize eat her “hair” were he an Igbo man and Olanna would not marry him.

All that Olanna, Arize and Aunty Ifeka demonstrate in the foregoing is the constrictive personality of the Igbo characters who apparently demonstrate insular cultural identity. Adichie thus proceeds to deploy her improvisational skill to undermine the Northern power structure. During Olanna’s second visit to Kano, Olanna is told how Rex

Lawson's music mimics the way the Sardauna, Sir Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, cries on the point of being killed in the first coup by Major Nzeogwu Kaduna, an Igbo officer in the Nigerian Army who was trusted by Sardauna. Aunty Ifeka narrates the incident thus:

Our people say that the chorus sounds like mmee-mmee-mmee, the bleating of a goat; Aunty Ifeka chuckled. They say the Sardauna sounded like that when he was begging them not to kill him. When the soldiers fired a mortar into his house, he crouched behind his wives and bleated, 'mmee, mmee, mmee, please don't kill me, mmee, mmee, mmee! (p.130)

The mimicry contained in this quotation is intended to portray Sarduana as lily-livered, cowardly, and animalistic. Equally, Aunty Ifeka's denigrating and sniggering narrative did not stop there. She continues:

The Sardauna was an evil man, ajommadu, Aunty Ifeka Said. He hated us, He hated everybody who did not remove their shoes and bow to him. Is he not the one who did not allow our children to go to school? (p.130).

This sniggering improvisation is really outlandish. It manifests the deep-seated stereotype about Northern political leaders as haters and bigots which easily provides a justifiable reason for secession. However, the point to note here is not the spur-of-the-moment quality of improvisation such as a literary work of this kind is made out to be, but as Greenblatt in (Veesser: 1994) notes, "the opportunistic grasp of that which seems fixed and established". In this regard, as he further enunciates "the impromptu character of an improvisation is itself often a calculated mask, the product of careful preparation" Veesser (1994). As such, "all plots, literary and behavioral, inevitably have their origin in a moment prior to formal coherence, a moment of experimental, aleatory impulse in which the available, received materials are curved toward a novel shape" (Veesser: 1994). It can therefore be justified that improvisation on the Sardauna's killing and about his dislike for people who do not share the same value with him is directed at unsuspecting readers or audience to induce their opinion or views about the Sardauna

and the region he comes from. This is a deliberate Othering Practice intended to deepen the stigmatisation and undermining of the Northern political power structure.

And so throughout the novel, the North and characters from the region are cast in an intemperate language, in an environment of fictional violence and cultural hostility. They are portrayed as cowards, naïve, ignoramuses, and incompetent. That is why the tone of Auntie Ifeka's account of the Sardauna's killing is both sardonic and celebratory. Even the portrayal of the taxi driver is part of the attempt to make out Northern characters as naïve and simpletons. Driving Olanna and Baby from the airport to Arize's compound, the taxi driver is led to say quite sheepishly that, "but the Sardauna was not killed Madam," he whispered. "He escaped with Allah's help and is now in Mecca" (p.128). This, as Olanna observes, is because "Sardauna, after all, had not only been Premier of the North, he had also been the spiritual leader of this man and so many Muslims like him" (p.128). There is a veiled attempt at subversion of another's truth by the power of improvisation. In the same way, there is subversion in the narration of the Kano Airport incident where Nigerian soldiers are reported to be commanding characters like Nnaemeka to say "Allahu Akbar!" (p.152). What is implied here by the action of the soldiers is that only the northern elements in the Nigerian Army at that time were partisan when the Igbo officers, as Igbos, were the first to be partisan. Similarly, the Sardauna is represented falsely as the spiritual leader of so many Muslims when indeed he was a political leader of Northern Nigeria. But because stories matter to Adichie, such improvisation, as Greenblatt (2005) notes about literature, becomes a 'powerful medium for challenging, sustaining and undermining culture'! That is why Adichie could say;

Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign...stories can break the dignity of a people (2009).

Chinua Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988) also underpins the potency of the story. He calls it *Nkolika* – recalling is greatest. This, to him, is:

Because it is only the story that can continue beyond the war and the warrior. It is the story that outlives the sound of war-drums and the exploits of brave fighters. It is the story, not the others, that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence. The story is our escort; without it, we are blind (1988).

Thus, there is a deliberateness in the narrative fashioning of civil strife in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*. It is an improvisation that makes the Igbo “different from cattle” (Achebe: 1988). Such improvisation is used to create and sustain stereotypes about other groups of people, because, according to Adichie, if a story is used to “show a people as one thing, as only one thing over and over again, (and) that is what they become” (2009). And so, how stories are told is dependent on power, and power to her is “the ability not just to tell the story of another person but to make it the definitive story of that person” (2009). It can then be taken as given that the mode of representation of the North and characters from the region in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is Adichie’s way of crafting a definitive story of the region’s characters in order to discursively dispossess and malign or break their dignity as if it is a continuation of the civil war by other means. The same treatment is given to the Yoruba characters of South West Nigeria who are described in the novel as “rather jolly, even if they were first-rate lickspittles” (p.55). They are similarly depicted as the threatening Others. When Olanna and Arize travel to Lagos to shop for Arize’s unborn baby, they encounter a scene where Igbo characters are being harassed and molested. This is captured thus:

...Olanna saw the crowd ahead. A man in a yellowed singlet stood at the centre while two men slapped him, one after the other, methodical, leathery-sounding slaps. Why now? Why are you denying? (p.32).

Then immediately, as if responding to a question or giving an explanation to why the man in the yellowed singlet is being beaten, “somebody from the crowd called out, ‘we are counting the Igbo people, Oya, come and identify yourself. You are Igbo?’” (p.132). In another instance, “another man in a safari suit was being slapped on the back of the head. You are Igbo man! Don’t deny it! Simply identify yourself!” (p.132). Even Ibekie, the driver that drives Olanna and Arize to the market, has a testimony. He reveals that his uncle in Ebutte Meta “does not sleep in his house anymore since the coup” because all his “neighbours are Yoruba,” and that “some men have been looking for him.” He, therefore, sleeps in “different houses every night, while he takes care of his business. He “has sent his children back home” (p.133). And in this heated situation Olanna denies her identity as an Igbo woman, and for once feels remorseful about it, “she could not believe how easy it had been to deny who they were, to shrug off being Igbo” (p.133). But Olanna is not alone in this self-denial. Chief Ajuah, an Igbo businessman who owns a bottling company is described as “Western Igbo” (p.135). Mrs Ozobia says the Ajuahs “are the ones who deny being Igbo”, and who given any opportunity “they will sell other Igbo people for a tarnished penny. A tarnished penny” (1.135).

This crisis of identity is akin to a loss of selfhood which is itself a loss of freedom. Here Adichie seems to imply that in their culture, to “abandon self-fashioning is to abandon the craving for freedom, and to let go of one’s stubborn hold upon selfhood...is to die” (Greenblatt: 1980). That is why Olanna feels remorseful about having to deny her identity. Adichie herself reports these incidences probably to demonstrate how characters are hounded and made to feel insecure in post-independent Nigeria; as well as the grouse the Igbo still nurse against the Yoruba for the loss of their property during the war, or their connivance with the North to wage atrocious war against them.

The other characters not spared by the Igbo characters are the minority tribes of the Southeast who are portrayed as collaborators or saboteurs. On account of that,

characters from minority tribes are maltreated and singled out for persecution. This is because the Igbo characters attribute the loss of their towns to the Federal troops to the “saboteurs in our midst” (p.290). The man with the plaited beard who says he used to be a Civil Defender states that “I know how many infiltrators we discovered, and all of them were Rivers people. What I am telling you is that we can no longer trust these minorities who don’t speak Igbo” (p.290). Consequently, the Igbos characters devise a method which is called ‘combing’ “to root out the infiltrators” (p.300). Major Madu then reports that in Port Harcourt “some saboteurs have been arrested and all of them are non-Igbo minorities” (p.314). Also, Richard remembers the “Ijaw and Efik men he had spoken to at a bank in Owerri, who said the Igbo would dominate them when Biafra was established” (p.314). This mutual suspicion among the two tribal groups leads to the ‘combing’ and subsequent persecution of characters from the minority tribes. First, a pregnant woman in Kainene’s refugee camp spits on Dr. Inyang who is accused of being a saboteur, “it is you non-Igbo who are showing the enemy the way. ‘Hapu m! It is you people that showed them the way to my hometown! (p.320). Not even the slap she receives from Kainene could erase the import of her point. In the exercise of the ‘combing’, a group of militia members holding machetes pushes:

Two women along. They cried as they staggered down the road; their wrappers were ripped and their eyes reddened. ‘What did we do? We are not saboteur! We are refugees from Ndoni! We have done nothing! (p.377)

But their plea falls on deaf ears as “some of the neighbours hurried out to spit and aim stones and jeer at the backs of the women.” Curses are rained on them too: “Sabo! God punish you! Sabo!” (p.377). Mama Oji even wants “tyres round their necks” (p.377) to be burned. “They should burn every single saboteur” (p.377) she intones. Mama Oji even suspects that Alice, who speaks Igbo with an Asaba accent, is a saboteur “it is on her face. She is working for the vandals” (p.333).

Obvious from these accounts is the fact that the narrative of civil strife in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is fashioned or skewed as not only the story of the Igbo characters portrayed as victims of political and military persecution but also as the story of characters from other tribes perceived as evil, hostile, and beneath the social and cultural standard of the Igbo. To be sure, narrative fashioning is said to be normatively effective if done in “relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile” (Greenblatt: 1980). This something is seen as the threatening Other “must be discovered or invented to be attacked and destroyed” (Greenblatt: 1980). This is exactly what Adichie aims to do in the preceding accounts, that is, undermine the culture of other people.

In contrast, as a strategy to reinforce the cultural identity of the Igbo, the situations of Igbo characters are fashioned or modelled on the form and manner of all persecuted people and victims of war situations across the world. This is purposely to attract sympathy, respect, recognition and attention. That is why the Igbo characters and their situations are empathetically emplotted. They are presented as anything from the apocalypse and ethereal to being “the most anti-hegemonistic people on God’s earth” (Ojukwu: 2005). Described as the “republican tribe for thousands of years” (p.71), they also “once had kings” that they later deposed” (p.77). Afterall, the Igbo are, as Richard notes, “a people who deposed gods that had outlived their usefulness” (p.72). Their land is the “land of Igbo-Ukwu art, the land of the magnificent roped pot” (p.56). Such artistic excellence amazes Richard so well that he wonders at the lives of these people “who were capable of such beauty, such complexity in the time of Alfred the Great” (p.72).

This ethereal portrayal invariably aims to reinforce the cultural identity of the Igbo characters as a people with the intellectual capacity to achieve not only aesthetic beauty but also to be anti-hegemonic as republicans. Before the war unsettles them, the Igbo

Intelligentsia in the novel lives in comfort and sobriety. Odenigbo eats “meat every day” (p.3) a possibility that is beyond Ugwu’s comprehension; he also lives in a serene university environment with “streets so smooth and tarred” (p.3), with bungalows “painted the colour of the sky and sat side by side like polite, well-dressed men, ---the hedges separating them were trimmed so flat on top that they looked like tables wrapped with leaves” (p.3).

Unlike the Northern characters who “marveled at education with the calm certainty that it would never be theirs” (p.40), Odenigbo, (a.k.a Master) “had spent too many years reading books overseas” (p.3). This is why Odenigbo always has in his company a group of chattering scholars who having been “mellowed by alcohol and languorous with ideas” (p.91) display intellectual sagacity in their analyses of national and international issues and politics and arts. In their trenchant pontification, they dismiss the 1963 Census as dubious, “a mess, everybody forged figures” (p.89); they aired their pan-African views by making references to the description of Africa by Hegel, Hume, Voltaire and Locke as a “land of childhood”, they also discussed Eichmann’s trial, the Jewish Holocaust, and the World War, and many other issues that project them as savants. They also express a critical view of national politics especially nationalism which Odenigbo sees as undesirable. To him, “this nationalism that means we should aspire to indifference about our own individual cultures is stupid” (p.109).

Not being indifferent to their own culture implies a stubborn attachment to everything that stands for Biafra – symbols, labels, attitudes, music. In fact, the notion of Biafra is itself a sentiment that excites their minds as to make them indifferent and unfeeling towards the situation of others. Note the cold and sniggering reception given to the killing of the leaders of other regions like the Sardauna and Premier of Northern Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa, and the Premier of Western

Region. When it is mentioned to them that “it was mostly Northerners who were killed” (p.125) in the first coup, Professor Ezeka responds quite tepidly that “it was mostly Northerners who were in government” (p.125); while Odenigbo says non-committally that, “the BBC should be asking their people who put the Northerners in government to dominate everybody” (p.125).

Apparently, it is this feeling against Northern domination of Nigeria’s political space that matters to the Igbo intelligentsia in the novel not the precious lives of those wasted in the coup. It does not also matter to them that those killed irreverently by the coupists belong to the circle of significant others who matter to their people. It doesn’t matter too that by wasting the lives of those very important persons their people will feel the hurt too. That is why instead of being remorseful and rueful, they are excited that the coup “had changed the order of things and throbbed with possibility, with newness” (p.126). This makes common sense of the perceived Northern domination as it throbs with the possibility or newness of Igbo domination. This is apparent in the anxiety in the North over “how Igbo people were going to take over the civil service...” (p.136).

And so like the Igbo characters, the Northern characters also feel insecure in the possibility of Igbo domination. This inadvertently leads to reprisal attacks on the Igbo characters resident in the North. Report of these killings indicates that “...up to five hundred Igbo people have been killed in Maiduguri” (p.143); and that “many Igbo officers were dead” (p.138). Igbos in Kaduna and Zaria are harassed since the coup because “they said the coup was an Igbo coup” (p.132). But while this improvisation bemoans the situation of the Igbo characters, there is no mention of the number of Northerners or other Nigerians killed in attacks against them in the first coup. Yet historical accounts indicate that along with the Sardauna, Tafawa Balewa many Northern officers like Brigadier Zakari Maimalari; Colonel Yakubu Pam and civilians

were killed in the first coup and in the wake of the declaration of secession by Dim Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu.

Nonetheless, it is in the wake of the counter-coup by the Northern officers that Adichie gives a sombre account of the persecution of the Igbo characters. The killings that ensue are referred to as “massacres”; and, that it seems as if “all our people who were killed don’t matter” (p.158) because no government official “has come out to condemn the massacres” (p.158). Professor Ezeka even states that “Eastern Nigeria seethes, seethes, and will continue to seethe until the Federal Government addresses the massacres” (p.159). These protestations inevitably lead to the conclusion that “secession is the only answer” (p.158).

Thus, the Igbo intellectuals like Odenigbo, Prof. Ezeka, and Okeoma play the role of articulating the distraught condition of their people in order to accentuate and legitimise the secession. They describe the pledge by the “ignoramus Gowon as a “miserable measly amount for more than two million refugees” (p.173). Ojukwu is hailed as a “great man” (p.177). There is a general air about the Igbo characters especially the elite, that gives them away as “clannish and uppity. Very Jewish, really” (p.154).

The sensation that the notion of Biafra represents to them is given free rein in the wake of the declaration of secession by Colonel Ojukwu who is “now seen as the leader of the Igbo...” (p.158). They suddenly become jubilant and excited because, as Odenigbo puts it “Biafra is born! We will lead Black Africa! We will live in security! Nobody will ever again attack us! Never again!” (p.163). The irony here is that those who do not want to be led suddenly want to lead the whole of Black Africa; those who put others in insecurity now realise what it means to live in security.

But Biafra is a symbol of Igbo cultural identity; it fills them with the rapturous possibility of being who they are, of aspiring to be what they want to be. That is why a rally is held in the University at the “Freedom Square, in the centre of the campus, lecturers and students shouting and singing, an endless sheet of heads and placards held high” (p.162). As an evocation of cultural identity, the frenzy which the declaration of Biafra generates is subsequently stoked with trenchant attachment to the Biafran flag. Everything is now cast in the image of the flag, especially half of a Yellow Sun.

The Biafran flag has “swaths of red, black, and green and, at the centre, a luminous half of a yellow sun” (p.163). The flag is interpreted to mean thus: “Red was the blood of the siblings massacred in the North, black was for mourning them, green was for the prosperity Biafra would have, and, finally, the half of a yellow sun stood for the glorious future” (p.281). And so, the Republic of Biafra is now the land of a rising sun, and its flag the symbol of freedom. The sun image is used to bedeck every object. For example, the plastic keepsack attached to the rearview mirror of Odenigbo’s car has a “painting of half of a yellow sun on a black background” (p.174); Also the Renaissance newspaper “was renamed the Biafran Sun” (p.174). The Biafran soldiers also “looked distinguished in their uniforms, boot shining, half of a yellow sun sewn on their sleeves” (p.179). Even Mrs Muokelu goes around with “the plastic half of a yellow sun around her neck” (p.379). There is also the Rising Sun Bar where Odenigbo sometimes goes to drink beer; and the T-shirt of the supervisor at one of the relief centres carries the inscription, “land of the rising sun” (p.268). Okeoma composes a poem in which he states that “if the sun refuses to rise, we will make it rise” (p.174). The Biafran anthem also begins with a praise-worthy line “land of the rising sun, we love and cherish, beloved homeland of our brave heroes” (p.277). The title of Adichie’s novel also contains this image of the Sun – *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

The uppity of the Igbo intellectual and business classes is most exemplified in the constrictive personalities of Odenigbo, Ugwu, Odenigbo's mother; and the ostentatious lifestyle of the Chief Ozobias. Odenigbo is portrayed as a "hopeless tribalist" (p.21). That is why he rejects vehemently any discourse that subsumes his identity as a product of colonialism or nationalism. When Professor Ezeka insinuates that he is Igbo "because of the white man," and that "the pan – Igbo idea itself came only in the face of white domination," as such he must see that the tribe is "as colonial a product as nation and race" (p.20). Odenigbo retorts that "the pan-Igbo idea existed long before the white man!... Go and ask the elders in your village about your history" (p.21). In fact, according to him.

I am Nigerian because a white man created Nigeria and gave me that identity. I am black because the white man constructed black to be as different as possible from his white. But I was Igbo before the white man came.

To him, therefore, "the only authentic identity for the African is the tribe" (p.20). Odenigbo's position is attributable to what Michael Foucault terms author-function, which is about "locating authorship in someone held responsible for writing or speech" (1970). Author-function is "the idea of ownership of works" Foucault (1970). In this regard, Odenigbo in the text as a proper name does not "represent a statement of identity" but like proper names "serve to fix meaning" and, therefore, takes on "the status of 'author-function'", (Johnson: 2010). Therefore, Odenigbo's views are those of Adichie, the author, as they also represent Igbo ideology altogether. To corroborate this, Greenblatt (1980) states that narrative fashioning is realised in a "distinctive personality, a characteristic address to the world, a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving."

Consequently, Greenblatt (1980) states that narrative or self-fashioning “occurs at the point of encounter between an authority and an alien, that what is produced in this encounter partakes of both the authority and the alien that is marked for attack.” In our own case, the authority is the secessionist Biafra and all that it stands for – Igbo intelligentsia, the business class, and the tribe, while the alien is the Nigerian state and all that it stands for – the Northern oligarchs, the lickspittle Yorubas, the Federal troop and their minority collaborators. What is produced by the encounter between these two antagonising groups is a scepticism about the viability of the Nigerian nation-state especially for the Igbo. This scepticism is heightened in the minds of Igbo intellectuals who regard the Nigerian state as a “personal Muslim Fiefdom” run by Sir Abubakar Tafawwa Balewa and his “black – as – he-goats” Hausa soldiers.

The Igbo mindset is represented in the fashioning of Ugwu’s personality as a prototype of an average or typical Igbo young man – smart, self-indulgent, and circumspective. A glimpse of this is given by Susan when she describes “their being so clannish and uppity and controlling the market ---And to think they are relatively uncivilised” (p.154). She also recalls being cautioned by somebody “when I first came to be careful about hiring an Igbo houseboy because, before I knew it, he would own my house and the land it was built on” (p.154). Although this tendency to outsmart another is not immediately discernible from Ugwu, he is nonetheless smart and extra-ordinary. Curiously Ugwu is described as not a “normal houseboy” (p.17) as he sleeps “on a bed in a room”, he decides “what would be cooked,” his master or madam gives him books to read. He listens also to the intellectually engaging conversations between his master and his cohorts and could even discern a few points. And by attending an elementary school later, Ugwu eventually grows rapidly in self-awareness and physique from being a child of twelve or thirteen years and a houseboy with an “innate intelligence” (p.84) to being Target Destroyer in Biafran Army. This is coupled with his ability to read books and

newspapers like *The Mayor of Casterbridge* by Thomas Hardy, *Daily Times* and Renaissance newspapers. This portrayal of Ugwu is quite mesmerising as a showcase of the industry, mental agility, and inventiveness of an average Igbo person which contrasts sharply with the Northerners who are “a dignified lot” (p.55), ignoramuses, cowards and naïve.

Chief Ozobia is fashioned as a prototype of the Igbo business class, mostly debonair even if uneducated. As it were, Chief Ozobia “doesn’t have much of a formal education-- and neither has his wife” (p.59). Yet he “owns half of Lagos,” he “looked expansive,” and adorns “intricately embroidered agbada, whose folds and folds of blue cloth made him even wider than he was” (p.59). This makes him a “nouveau riche” which is why he is “so obvious” (p.59). His wife is described as “regal, her beauty more intimidating close up” (p.65). She wears “rows and rows of gold around her neck” (p.135) which also makes her obvious. They live in a storey building with railing, tall lamps, swimming pool, hibiscus and bougainvillea flowers, wall-to-wall carpet, and reams of space “that made Kainene call their rooms flat” (p.34). Chief Ozobia moves in the circle of socialites and politicians like Chief Okonji, his kinsmen and the finance minister in Prime Minister Balewa’s Cabinet. Chief Okonji represents a splinter of New Nigeria’s upper class described as a “collection of illiterates who read nothing and eat food they dislike at overpriced Lebanese restaurants and have conversation around one subject: How is the new car behaving?” (p.64). Chief Okonji is no less ostentatious and flamboyant, “he never wears any outfit twice. He gives them to his houseboys once he has worn them” (p.34).

And so, all the Igbo characters and their situations are fashioned in a matter-of-fact way as a strategy to reinforce a positive perception of the Igbo cultural identity. This applies to the overbearing and brusque mannerism of Mama, Odenigbo’s mother. The same

thing can be said about the voluptuous and suave Igbo ladies like Olanna and Kainene who are “meat” waiting upon suitable bachelors “to make the kill,” Or in the case of Olanna used by her parents as sex baits in the line of business. Surely, the Igbo are “surly and money-loving” (p.55) and debauch. That is why Olanna having been hurt by her husband throws herself into the arms of Richard fully aware that he is her sister’s boyfriend. And Kainene on realising what transpires between them eventually takes it in her strides without much qualms. Such portrayal is bereft of stereotyping or equivocation. It is performative of Igbo cultural identity.

Judith Butler in Weedon (2004) terms performativity as the “repeated assumption of identities in the course of daily life”. In other words, all the Igbo characters are made to perform their cultural identity in the way they express themselves, the views they express about others, their attachment to cultural signs, symbols and practices. And so, “identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (Weedon: 2004). This means that the various characters in the text and their expressions and practices can be made intelligible and visible by being inserted within specific discourses which they are made to perform.

This study adopts a two-prong approach in the examination of Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In the text, Adichie presents the human scale of the war as a dastardly consequence of the actions or inactions of the threatening Other, the Nigerian State, which consists of the Hausa/Fulani Oligarchs, Yoruba and the minority tribes of the Southeast. In the process, she reinforces the cultural identity of the Igbos as sophisticated and austere as a people and victims of political persecution while undermining the cultures of the others. That is why her narrative is laced with “some experience of threat, some effacement or undermining” which Greenblatt says make up narrative or self –fashioning (Greenblatt: 1980).

In other words, Adichie's concern in the text can be said to be the projection and hyping of Igbo cultural identity over and above any question of nationalism or ethical issues bordering on the safeguard of the common humanity of all concerned in the dispute. This is why the Igbo characters do not condemn the killing of Nigerian politicians and soldiers in the first coup and the reprisal attack against the others by the Igbos that followed the second coup. The narrative also fails to account for the war as a direct consequence of the first coup or the desire of the Igbo to dominate others.

Thus, Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* is just a record of the war "so that it can not just be ignored or forgotten" (Gellhorn: 1997). It is a response to Chinua Achebe's call to use the story as an escort to differentiate them from cattle. As Nkolika, Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* is rather a narrative fashioning that makes use of Igbo cultural signs, symbols, practices, and expressions as "elements of deliberate shaping in the formation and expression" of their identity, (Greenblatt: 1980).

The Process of Othering in Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra*

Elechi Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* is, however, a counterpoise to the posturing of the Igbo characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In the text, the threatening other is easily the formative Biafran state and the Igbo as a tribe and not the Nigerian state. Here, the Igbo and the apparatuses of the Biafran state are presented as hostile to the survival and cultural identity of the minority tribes of Eastern Nigeria. Thus, the text is a narrative fashioning of the minority people as victims of persecution by Igbo people, and so a deliberate shaping in the formation and expression of their cultural identity as well as the casting of the Biafran nation as the threatening other. In the process, Amadi's narrative, cast in the distorted image of Biafran authority, abhors the tools of cultural effacement, suppression, domination, and persecution which Adichie's *Half of a Yellow*

Sun attacks or condemns. In the process, he also attacks and exposes the inadvertent power relation that exists between the Igbo and their minority neighbours.

Amadi's concern in the novel, which is partly a memoir and partly fiction, is not so much with the effect of the war as it is with what becomes of the fate of the identity of minority people in a sovereign state of Biafra. To be sure, these minority tribes are Efik, Ibibio, Annang, Ogoja, Ekoi, Ijaw, Kalabari, Okrika, Ogoni, Etche, Ekpeye, Engenni, Ogba, Egbema, Ikwere, Urhobo, and Etsekiri, most of which Amadi says, are "smaller and weaker politically" (p.21). In the novel, Chief Dappa-Biriye expresses the fear of these minority tribes matter-of-factly by pointing to a possible "remote control of the affairs of the riverine areas from Enugu" (p.17). This fear is couched in what Amadi calls the "herd instinct," which he says is "powerful and was, and probably still is, vital to the survival of any race or tribe" (p.22). For Amadi, this is the fulcrum of tribalism. And that, "tribal loyalties are strong enough to generate civil wars" (p.23).

Tribal loyalty expressed as a rigid attachment to primordial symbols, attitudes and sentiments apparently provide the launchpad for the Nigeria – Biafra War of 1967 – 1970. This is because these cultural ensembles act as a constraint in the development of mobile sensibility by loyalist members of the different tribes that make up Nigeria. Amadi's narrative thus exposes the myth of the Biafran state as a distinct homogenous political and tribal category. He, therefore, delineates the various ways and methods the Igbo use to enforce their authority over minority people and the difference between them. He shows how the Igbo deploy discriminating discourse by tagging the minority people as "saboteurs" or "Sabo". This is enforced by the method of 'combing' in order to keep the minority people in line with the secessionists' agenda.

Amadi reveals in the text that soon after the declaration of secession by Lt. Col. Ojukwu, the Igbo become frenzy with the primordial feeling of land ownership.

According to Amadi, “the proclamation of independence meant the communal ownership of land – a highly prized thing in Iboland” (p.52). Interestingly, this discourse about land appropriation by the Igbos is ignored in Adichie’s account in *Half of a Yellow Sun* (and most likely in all accounts by the Igbo). Instead, the minority people are projected as traitors for which they are persecuted. Similarly, Amadi points out that “having proclaimed their Biafra, they ignored or underestimated the fears of the minorities” (p.52)

Amadi provides ample illustrations of the imperviousness of the Igbo and their witch-hunt of the minority people. This is mostly done by the combing method described in the text as a “crude intelligence work on a massive scale” (p.39). As a deterrent method, combing involves “hundreds of people, armed with machetes and cudgels” (p.39) who invade an area in search of suspicious objects like “ordinary transistor radios,” “Nigerian currency; and persons” (p.39). Usually, “arrested suspects are sent straight into detention or executed ‘sometimes in fanciful ways’” (p.39). The most popular of such executions, Amadi states, “was that in which the victim measured out his length on the ground, dug his grave, lay in it and was shot” (pp.39-40). Another example is the one in Aluu where “over twenty people were executed in this way in a makeshift cemetery near the central school” (p.40). Combing is thus used to discourage “people loyal to the federal cause from erecting hide-away huts in bush where they could await federal troops” (p.39).

When Adichie recounts this combing incident she did not go beyond mentioning that the accused are stoned, spat and jeered at. And although both Olanna and Kainene show their resentment to such treatment of the minority people, Adichie treats the issue as an isolated case and as part of her profiling of the minority people. This goes to confirm the disparaging way the minority people are regarded by the Igbo.

This is further demonstrated in Amadi's text by a forceful organisation of demonstrations to create the "impression that the East was moving as a solid united angry block" (p.39). Essentially, the Igbo want the world to see "these demonstrations as the spontaneous expressions of an angry and grievously injured people" (p.38). There is therefore a deliberate attempt by the Igbos to create a monolithic culture or block by subjugating the minority people to their authority. To achieve this, in various communities a chain of 'enlightenment' committees are formed, in the villages tom-toms are used to alert people so that it becomes possible to "arrange a region-wide demonstration within forty eight hours" (p.38). These demonstrations can turn violent or unpleasant. In such a situation, if one does not as much as "clear off the road" while driving or "grab a leafy branch or club...wave it ostentatiously and join the demonstrators" one faces the "grim possibility of being branded a 'sabo'" (p.38) or severely beaten up. In fact, "the worst mistake one could make was to try to pass on indifferently" (p.39). Amadi narrates that one or two unfortunate passersby are killed for refusing to join in demonstrations through the town of Port Harcourt.

As the threatening other, the Biafran authority outlaws meetings of any kind by members of tribal unions especially by the minority tribes. Although, General Aguiyi Ironsi had previously banned "all political parties and politically oriented tribal unions" (p.24), the Ibo State Union and the Ogbako Ikwere Cultural Organisation had managed to survive. But as the only surviving organisation among the minority people that opts to join River State, the Ogbako Ikwere comes under intense persecution as spies sent to its meeting make damning reports on its activities. Captain Amadi belongs to this cultural organisation. As a character in the text, this becomes his undoing. Along with other characters he is clamped into detention.

All of them as minority people begin to live a curtailed life, a life of persecution. Those put in detention by the Biafran authority are, Mr N Nwanodi: an Ikwere Lawyer; Captain Amadi; Mr Obasiolu, a journalist; James Ntiu, a Midwestern Ibo; and many others. Captain Amadi is put in detention twice and continues to be hunted by the Biafran authority. And as the persecution and suppression continue with daily warnings against 'careless talk' and 'rumour-mongering', minority people suffer in silence (p.50). They "moved about with ghostly smiles on their faces" and "deep nagging apprehension in their hearts" (p.50). They gradually acquire siege mentality as the "Ibos who had been living among us peacefully for years suddenly became aggressive and tyrannical" (p.52); the Igbo zealously declare that minority land is "Biafra land". Amadi narrates how the Igbo "would walk into private property and harvest plantains, oranges and pawpaws in spite of protests from the owners" (p.52) The image of the Biafran authority that emerges from Amadi's narrative is that of an alien, a threatening Other like ruthless and monstrous mother earth. Amadi succinctly puts it this way:

The very ground I trod on assumed a fearful image. It was no longer mother earth that had nursed me from infancy...The earth had become a monster, a ubiquitous monster, licking her fangs yet in no hurry to swallow me up. She laughed at me as I ate, knowing she was fattening me for the kill (p.63).

By the very fact of the ruthlessness of this Biafran monster, the minority people are then made to "acquire the mentality of a beleaguered people" (p.49). And like his kinsmen, Captain Amadi begins to "feel like a hunted animal" (p.62). Amadi's narrative is thus imbued with "some experience of threat...some loss of self" because of effacement and undermining by the Igbo. As it makes obvious, the life of minority people in Eastern Nigeria during the civil war "was a bitter, cruel dream, arranged by a sadistic god!" (p.63).

This forces Amadi to engage in a complex reflection upon the system of values that defines the relationship between the minority people and the Biafrans. To him, the system is flawed because it “never took into consideration the will of the minorities who wanted the creation of states for the same reason that the Ibos wanted secession” (p.41). He becomes even more frightened by the fact that “the pervasive blindness to the aspirations of others” (p.41) by the Igbo implies a tendency for cultural domination. And according to him, in Nigeria, cultural domination also implies “political and economic domination” (p.21). This is exactly what Biafra is primed for.

Having reached some kind of metaphorical and philosophical reckoning, Captain Amadi resigns himself to fate. For at this point in his beleaguered mentality and threats to his life “the trees, the houses, the people around me, all looked like pictures on a Cinema screen, pictures that would vanish forever at the flicker of an eyelid, at the touch of a trigger” (p.63). This is a queasy feeling by one who is faced with the threat of effacement and undermining of the cultural identity of his people, even of his own self, and has no means of doing anything about it.

On the whole, Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* in telling the story of the political victimisation and persecution of the Igbo in the course of the civil war also effaces and undermines the system of values and cultural standards of others. By so doing, the novel eventuates as a narrative fashioning of not only the civil strife but also of the cultural identity of the Igbo, as well as the stigmatisation and vilification of the others perceived as the threatening Other. The human scale of the war only invites readers to empathise with the Igbo and to regard the Nigerian state and all that it represents as hostile, evil, alien, and threatening others. But, Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* counterpoises this solipsistic posturing of the Igbo by exposing them as possessing a narcissistic tendency for cultural domination. His narrative presents the Biafran state in the image of a

monstrous and ruthless mother earth that causes minority people to acquire a beleaguered mentality. It is laced with some experiences of threats, some effacement and undermining.

In conclusion, it is argued that the two authors indubitably fashion their narrative on exposing threat to their cultural identities thereby reinforcing the belief that tribal loyalty is the *raison d'être* of their stories. And that stories can be used to malign and break the dignity of a people, same way Adichie does to Northern Oligarchs and Yoruba and the minority people, same way Amadi did to the Igbo. In this sense, the novel is used to present a chaotic picture of the Nigerian nation, a nation of the unwilling citizenry. What thus impinges on the narratives is the dominant sense of being Igbo and a minority tribe. There is a sense of disconnectedness by the Igbos from “other national subjects and the idea of a national interest that transcends the supposedly petty divisions of class, region, dialect or caste” (Raminder: NA). While Amadi’s narrative similarly gives a sense of disconnectedness from the Igbo soon after the declaration of “their Biafra”. Such narratives are therefore intended to bolster anti-nationalist feeling and cultural differences instead of any claim of projecting a unified Nigerian national identity.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 OTHERING PRACTICE AND DISCOURSE INTERVENTION IN IYAYI'S *HEROES*

This chapter explores the dimension of othering practice and discourse intervention in Iyayi's *Heroes*. It is argued here that this narrative strategy pits the manipulated rank and file soldiers against the military high command and their civilian cohorts who are perceived as the threatening Other. Here military discourse is delineated as that which categorises the relationship between the rank and file soldiers and the officers on one hand, and between the military and the civilians on the other hand. This social categorisation is made manifest through the power of discourse.

Othering Practice, Military Discourse and Discourse Intervention

The power inherent in discourse is wrought through the use of language to invariably direct thoughts and actions to reckon with the categorisation of social relations or relations of power. Karlberg (2005) succinctly captures the operation of the power of discourse when he says that “the ways we think and talk about a subject influence and reflect the ways we act in relation to that subject”. Bertens (2008) also states that discourse “functions like ideology and hegemony because it makes us believe what it tells us”. Foucault, one of the notable exponents of the theory of discourse, has also written extensively on the inherent power of discourse. His interest in this area spans his writings on the history of psychology, clinical medicine, biology, economics, and the modern prison system all of which manifest in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Foucault in Bertens (2008) states that “the vocabularies and diagnostic terms of these human sciences serve as social regulations” which have led to a self-imposed submission to social control. Thus, this social regulation is likened to the panopticon by Foucault – a type of prison designed by the English philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, in the late Eighteenth Century.

The term discourse, therefore, refers to a “loose structure of interconnected assumption that makes knowledge possible” (Bertens: 2008). Foucault in Bertens (2008) describes discourse as a “series of sentences or propositions and as a large group of statements that belong to a single system of formation” (Bertens: 2008). Foucault further enunciates that discourse “transmits and produces power” (Bertens: 2008). Therefore, the knowledge that is formed through discourse is used in the process of categorising or defining others or for social control and regulation. In other words, the governing rules and propositions such as the distinctive vocabularies, diagnostic terms, professional jargons of any particular discipline serve as a discursive formation. For example, military ethics, rules and regulations, practices all constitute the military discursive formation. It is on the basis of this discourse that the hierarchical structure of the military is established.

By and large, the power inherent in discourse manifests in different ways. It manifests in the language (words, phrases, sentences, used in a specific way); in social practices (like military drills, rituals, rites, diagnosis); and in power relations (as between military officers and rank and file soldiers, teachers and students). Specifically, Foucault locates language as the epicentre of discourse because it organises the way we view the world and helps us to understand the way society is shaped; and, also reflects power relations. In other words, language is used by those in positions of authority to manifest how they express their dominance and command respect or obedience from their subordinates. This is exemplified in military discourse through instructions and practices.

Military discourse is immanent in the term militarism as an organised system or a discursive formation, that is governed by a set of rules and regulations aimed at the “exaltation of military force” (Hetherington: 1990). Militarism, therefore, refers to a philosophy or system that places great importance on military power. Or as Alfred

Vogts, a German historian puts it “the domination of the military man over the civilian is an undue preponderance of military consideration” (Hetherington:1990). Hetherington (1990) further states that militarism represents the “totalitarian state in microcosm; absolute authority in a rigid hierarchy with no ultimate respect for human life or feeling”.

On the other hand, discourse intervention, according to Karlberg (2005) is an “effort to change our social reality by altering the discourses that help constitute that reality”. It is a discursive formation of the peace and conflict resolution which Karlberg (2005) says is aimed at deconstructing “dominant Western-liberal discourses of power”, and clarifying “elements of an alternative discourse of power”, and also presenting a “case study of an alternative discourse community and the alternative models of social practice that it is constructing”.

In the light of this both military discourse and discourse, intervention is delineated as the basis for Othering Practice in Iyayi’s *Heroes*. In other words, the military discourse is reflective of the hierarchical system of the military, how the officers exert their authority on and command blind obedience from the rank and file soldiers through the use of military instructions and normative practices. This way, the officers wittingly prevent the rank and file soldiers from “identifying or recognising their own interests” (Karlberg: 2005). And so, the rank and file soldiers are reduced to the level of docile bodies who merely carry out the orders of their officers. And discourse intervention serves to delineate the military high command and its civilian cohorts as the threatening other that is marked for vilification and epistemic violence.

Othering Practice and Discourse Intervention in Iyayi's *Heroes*

As a historical novel of war, Iyayi's novel, *Heroes*, manifests the three basic features of militarism as enunciated by Hetherington (1990). These are authoritarianism, elitism, and dehumanising or brutalising feeling. The authoritarian feature relates to the "blind obedience to leaders by the led", for it is only by "this means that people can be induced to kill strangers with whom they have no personal quarrel and to expose themselves to slaughter: theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die". The elitism feature refers to the "maintenance of hierarchy of class which is more rigid in the armed forces." While the feature of dehumanising or brutalising feeling has to do with the fact that essentially soldiers are "machine for killing, maiming and destroying: Ordinary human emotions must not be allowed to interfere" (Hetherington: 1990).

In the text, there is palpable subjection of both soldiers and civilians to rigid military authorities on Nigerian and Biafran sides. There is also "devaluation of human life" (Iloegbunam:1989) through maiming, raping, torturing, killing and persecuting both civilians and soldiers by armies of the two warring sides. This is exemplified by Osime Iyere's ratiocinations, first on the activities of the Biafran soldiers:

The Biafrans call themselves liberators! Ha! Liberators my foot! How can they be liberators when they treat the people like prisoners. The young man that they took away this afternoon and then shot afterwards. Was that liberation or murder? (p.2)

Osime's use of rhetorical question and imperative tone here shows his disgust for the humanistic posturing of the Biafran army. The Biafran army is treated as the referential other in the text whose activities are reported through the focalisation of Osime Iyere. When they retreat from Asaba they are reported to have committed atrocities such as the ones shown Osime Iyere in the pictures by a Captain of the Nigerian army. The graphic details are captured thus:

They took the women, raped them in front of their children and husbands and then, as if that was not enough, drove those long sticks through their vaginas into their wombs. Then they cut the throats of the men and the children. Cut their throats and severed their heads from their bodies (p.61)

This graphic detail shows how wicked and unfeeling the Biafra army is in the course of the civil war. However, the Federal troops are also implicated in such gory treatment of the civilian population. This is indicated in the description of the gruesome killing of Ade's landlord. In a chilling account, Ade narrates that after interrogating his landlord:

The Soldiers cock their rifles and all of a sudden, there is firing. They shoot the ceiling to pieces and as the blood starts dripping down, the men laugh and say to my landlord, 'so you were hiding Biafran soldiers. You know they were here and yet you lied to us! Then they took him outside and shot him (p.16)

Accounts such as these bring Osime Iyere to terms with the fact that the soldiers are trained to be impervious to "ordinary human emotions" in their operations and to act as a machine for killing, maiming and destroying. As docile bodies, they are subject to the regulatory power of discourse which warrants them to embark on a ruthless show of force. As Osime Iyere inches closer to the soldiers and the battlefield, this fact becomes even more palpably underpinned in his personal intimate experiences. The first of these experiences is the beating he receives at the stadium where the soldiers pull, push and kick him on his face and testicles. He is also a witness to the gruesome killing of Mr Ohiali, his landlord and the father of his heartthrob, Ndudi. The killing instinct of the military is expressed in this graphic detail:

There was a shot and then another and then three more and Osime could see two bodies lying on the ground away from the wall --- then there were four more shots and another body lay on the ground and even as he looked, Osime saw his landlord break away from the rest of the group of men and make a run for the river...the soldiers let him run for some time... Then just as he reached the bank of the river, there was a sudden outburst of gunfire... Then he seemed to bend over backwards and

crumble as the bullets hitting him first propelled him forward and then broke his back and he fell not forward but on his back, his face twisted, unconsciously trying to push his intestines back into his stomach as they came out of the large gaping hole in his belly (p.56).

The disgorging imagery of the cold-blooded killing of innocent civilians in this quotation is an indication of the imperviousness of the military. Similarly, both the Federal troops and the Biafran soldiers engage in a killing spree at the Onitsha bridge in an obvious expression of their killing instinct. This is captured thus:

The sound of gunfire and voices alternated and the voices were mainly screams while the gunfire came in bursts, steady continuous bursts and all the time there was the movement of the vehicles and then of feet as the soldiers scrambled from the jeeps to the road, firing automatically as they alighted from the jeeps. And all the time screams, shouts. Everywhere, they could see the bright flames of the rifles and machine guns. The slaughter was going on, both sides of the bridge (p.188).

This orgy of slaughter is tinctured with a sordid melee of deaths:

On the floor of the bridge there were many soldiers, hundreds of them, lying face down or sideways and they were either dead, unconscious or in too much pain to take any other position (p.191).

Thus, by exposing themselves to slaughter and death in this way, the soldiers give expression to blind obedience to authoritarian military leadership. They also demonstrate the fact that theirs is not to reason but to do and die. In this regard, as a machine for killing, maiming and destroying, ordinary human emotions do not matter to them. What matters to them is the instinctual loyalty to the state and the military high command.

This is a clear indication that militarist discourse takes the form of indoctrination. The rank and file soldiers are able to carry out these heinous acts because they have been made subservient to the military high command that feeds them on such shibboleths as

“to keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done”; “this country Nigeria”; “our country Nigeria” “Biafra must stay as the sun”. In an elaborate address to the soldiers, Brigadier Otunshi emphasises the importance of loyalty and the need to remain steadfast to the goal of winning the war:

To win the war, he said, was a task that must be accomplished and every soldier had a duty to fight for his country when it was threatened either by external or internal enemies. The internal enemies were the rebels, they caused the war. They were greedy and inhuman and atrocious in their treatment of people. Soldiers who did not have a stomach for the war could go home, although as everybody knew deserters were liable to be executed when caught. There must be discipline in the army, he told them. Complete discipline and dedication and loyalty (p.123-4).

This address is made to “at least two thousand soldiers in the field in front of the assembly hall” (p.123). As an outline of the totalitarian nature of the military establishment, the content of the address represents a brain-washing of the soldiers to procure their loyalty and continued subjection to the military high command which Brigadier Otunshi symbolises. His address is laced with a stern warning, propaganda and cautionary note that is reflective of the totalitarian nature of the military establishment. In other words, the soldiers are subjected to blind obedience to their officers who induce them to kill “strangers with whom they have no personal quarrel” (Hetherington: 1990).

And so, along with the dictates of the militarist discourse, the soldiers are “indoctrinated never to think of the enemy as real people” (Hetherington: 1990). This implies that militarist discourse operates like ideology by masking or distorting the reality for the soldiers. It also serves to prevent the soldiers from “identifying or recognising their own interests” (Hetherington: 1990). This is despite the soldiers knowing that Brigadier Otunshi pushes them to the war front when payment of their salaries is due so that he

will siphon the money of the dead soldiers; or that he sells ammunitions to the rebels (p.122).

To enforce this false consciousness, scapegoats are made of some soldiers and officers and the Biafran Prisoners of War (POW) after Federal troops suffer heavy casualties at the Onitsha bridge. This is also in keeping with the proviso in militarist discourse that provides that an “occasional scapegoat may be sacrificed to public concern” (Hetherington: 1990), that is, if the process (or outcome in this case) “breeds brutality (or embarrassment) to one’s comrades” (Hetherington: 1990). Since the military high command feels embarrassed by the defeat, ‘deserters’ and Biafran Prisoners of War are then executed. The Biafran POW numbering “one hundred and eighty-seven” (p.227) are released into the field and killed, while General Otunshi executes “thirty-seven soldiers and five officers” (p.233) who are tagged ‘deserters’.

This action is taken ostensibly to restore morale and discipline to the service and step up the tempo of the war. But it is also a way of maintaining the “hierarchy of class which is more rigid in the armed forces” (Hetherington: 1990). Osime Iyere, having internalised these *mélange* of events begins to rationalise them and seeks subsequently to challenge the dominant militarist discourse using discourse intervention to effect Othering of the military high command and their civilian cohorts.

Osime Iyere having interacted with the rank and file soldiers and garnered some personal intimate experiences becomes more attuned to the reality of the war and the threat officers represent to the rank and file soldiers. He begins to articulate an alternative model of discourse which he calls the Third Force, and whose elements consist of ‘altering the social reality that helps constitute’ the militarist discourse, raising the social awareness of the rank and file soldiers, and turning the rank and file soldiers to a discursive community.

As a strategy to break the blinkers off the eyes of the soldiers and to deconstruct the normative power discourse of the military, Osime Iyere says to Patani that as Federal soldiers “some people give you orders. You are told to move and you move. You are told to stop and you stop” (p.129). This, in a way, is letting the soldiers know that they are being treated like docile bodies who only carry out orders not to reason why. And in such a state, Osime Iyere nudges the soldiers further by telling them that the real tragedy of the war is that:

The Federal troops do not know that the Biafran soldiers are not their real enemies and the Biafran soldiers are ignorant of this fact as well. So you kill each other. You rape each other’s women. You kill each other’s children and destroy each other’s home and farm (p.132).

Osime uses syllogistic reasoning here as a method of counterpoising the social reality of the soldiers. He then proceeds to establish the fact that the war is an orchestration of the powerful members of the upper class constituted by the army generals, the top-notch politicians, the clergymen, the businessmen and their imperialist cohorts. These are the real enemies of the soldiers and their civilian counterparts. Through discourse intervention, he categorises these real enemies as the elephants and those they are against as the grass. As Ade puts it “two elephants involved in this war and all-round them is the grass (p.15). The two elephants here refer to the high commands of the Nigerian and Biafran armies and their civilian cohorts, while the grass is the rank and file soldiers and their civilian counterparts. And so, Osime Iyere draws the conclusion that “it doesn’t matter whether you are talking about the Federal troops or the Biafran soldiers... The grass is the one that is taking the beating” (p.15). And that “all the civilian population was part of that grass” (p.17).

He thus resolves to educate and enlighten the soldiers about the precarity of their situation; and, about the need for them to recognise their rights and the lies they are fed by their superiors through propaganda. He then gathers together the soldiers- Patrick, Ituah, Musa, Patani, and Olu, and tells them that:

You were all friends and brothers and sisters until this war came. You ate together and played together. And then you wake up one morning and you are told that the Ibo man is now your enemy and a rebel. The Ibo man also wakes up and he is told that the Hausa man the Yoruba man, the Midwesterner is his enemy. The Ibo man is told that you are his enemy. You are told to take up arms to kill each other. But who is the Ibo man? The truth is that the Ibo rebel soldier was a trader before the war. Or perhaps he was a student or a farmer or a worker. Perhaps he had no job before this war, perhaps he was unemployed before this war (p.1290).

This long-drawn sermonisation forms the bedrock of Osime Iyere's discourse intervention. It serves as an eye-opener to Patrick, Olu, and Kokobi who all agree that they had no job before the war. Even Musa intones that "yes, we had many Ibos in Kafanchan--- we were very friendly" (p.129). In response, Osime Iyere enthuses:

So you see, the Federal Soldiers who the Ibo soldiers see as their enemies are people like themselves. The Federal soldiers were workers before this war came, workers or farmers or students or traders or simply unemployed. And so were the Ibo soldiers. Now can't you see something wrong there? (p.130).

This way Osime Iyere makes the soldiers realise the bond of brotherhood and friendship that connects them across tribal and regional boundaries. That is why Obilu is moved to ask quite intriguingly that, "but if the rebel soldiers are not our enemies, then who are our enemies?--- Surely we have to fight somebody? Surely we have to fight the real enemy?" (p.130) Osime Iyere then seizes this moment of awakening in the soldiers to bring home the point to them:

The head of state is a general and when he makes an announcement he sits in council with other generals and brigadiers and colonels and majors in the army. These are the real enemies and it does not matter whether they are in the Nigerian or in the Biafran army. The real enemy are the top army officers, they caused this war; they caused the war out of their greed for power and money (p.130).

He explains further that the pogrom was directly engineered by those who ruled us (p.131); and that it is a swindle, an orchestration by those who have a monopoly over the means of indoctrination and information. He tells them that what happens is that those at the helm of affairs:

...misinform the people, they trick the people into war. The people are manipulated into a war only to have their children killed, their houses destroyed by bombs and grenades. And all the time, the generals and the politicians stand aside, away from the death and the destruction of the war and shout that it is indeed a great war (p.63).

This is not only part of Osime Iyere's strategy of deconstructing the normative power of the military over the soldiers; it is also his method of recruiting the soldiers to form part of his alternative discursive community. To further accentuate this strategy, he exposes the tactics of the propagandists by stating that:

Our people were swindled into the war by propaganda. I will tell you what happens. You tell the Ibo man that the Hausa man is after his life, then you tell the Hausa man the same thing. You tell the Yoruba man that if only the Ibos left they would have jobs, the trade would be theirs. You tell the Hausa man that the Ibos have been holding secret meetings to get them wiped out. Then one morning you arrange to have a Hausa man killed and you spread the news that he was murdered by the Ibos. That starts the pogrom (p.167-8).

This disclosure does not only point to the genesis of the pogrom, it also represents the method by which reality is masked for the "working class from which the rank and file come" (p.143). This method also involves whipping of nationalist sentiment such as telling the soldiers that "To keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done" or that "Biafra must stay as the sun". this keeps the soldiers from asking or realising who their real

enemies are. However, Osime Iyere proposes the social practices to adopt by the soldiers and the working class in order to actualise his model of power shift, the establishment of the people's army—the Third Army. These social practices consist of the following schema:

Ask questions about the purpose of this war, about the reasons behind this war. The third army will sit among the soldiers, Biafrans and Nigerians alike and tell them that this is not their war, that they are shooting at the wrong enemies... The third army will turn their guns on the generals, line them up and shoot them one by one, the generals of both armies, and then the soldiers will lay down their arms and go home. (p.90).

After these sessions with the soldiers, Osime Iyere's attempt to alter the social reality of the soldiers appears to have a hold on them, particularly Sergeant Kesh Kesh. This manifests in the address he gives to his colleagues as they prepare for the final onslaught against Oganza and other rebel-held areas:

Our task is to take the village of Oganza, consolidate it and then move on to take Nkesio. We shall take both villages with little or no casualty because the Biafran soldiers are not our match. Remember too, and he looked sideways at Osime, remember from now on that the Biafran soldiers are not our enemies really. We go to these villages not to kill them but to persuade them. We go there to persuade them to lay down their arms. What happened in the camp after the attack on the bridge must not happen here. The madness that seized some of you then I understand but it must not happen here or hereafter. You must avoid unnecessary violence. We want prisoners of war from now on, not dead Biafrans. Am I clear? Am I understood? (p.243).

The pared tone of this address shows that like his colleagues Sergeant Kesh Kesh is properly tutored on the discourse intervention of Osime Iyere. By now the picture of the war as a plague that kills people, "...a bitter and spiteful war that turns ordinary decent men into rapists, into animals, into something even hateful to themselves" (p.245) is dissipated from the minds of the soldiers. They no longer want violence or dead Biafrans or any of the situations that make the Nigeria – Biafra war "something dirtier than a war" (p.63). Osime Iyere describes this war as "a woman, deadly" (p.49).

In Iyayi's novel, *Heroes*, it is apparent that the historicity of the Nigeria – Biafra war of 1967-1970 is “the fight between elephants fighting for more space, more power, more money” (p.180). And that the militarist discourse is used to subject soldiers of both sides to a total indoctrination as to turn them into a machine for killing, maiming, and destroying. They, therefore, kill the people who were their friends and brothers and sisters before the war came. This is therefore an authentication of the actuality of the war. To further buttress the fact about the actuality of the war Major Nzeogwu's coup speech of 1966 serves as context. In the speech, he states that:

Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in the high and low places that seek bribes and demand ten percent: those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers and VIPs of waste; the tribalists, the nepotists; those that make the country look-big-for-nothing before the international circles, those that have corrupted our society and put the Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds (1989, African Guardian, 13th February)

This is the same sentiment Osime Iyere uses in his sensitisation of the soldiers. Iloegbunam (1989) also states that Iyayi locates the *raison de'etre* of the war in the fact that no disagreement exists “between the poor and the working class” but that the “bad blood was let in by the generals on both sides and their cohorts” (Iloegbunam: 1989). He further enunciates that as a novel of ideas, it derives its worth from the “powerful evocation of the wantonness, futility and brutality of the Nigerian civil war for the simple reason that the wealthy class may continue to prosper” (Iloegbunam: 1989). This, in effect, is what makes the war a plague, something dirtier than a war. It is what turns Osime Iyere into a “tireless mobiliser and organiser” (Okoma: 1993) of the rank and file soldiers as he grows through “a painful, complex journey of social cognition and awareness” (Okoma: 1993).

And so, because of the putative connection that historicists say exists between a text and society, it can be said about the text's actuality that its historical setting is the Benin –

Onitsha axis which gives the novel its physical realism. The text is also time and place-bound as it undoubtedly reflects the period and zeitgeist of the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War.

On the whole, as a novel of ideas, *Heroes* provides the view that the rank and file soldiers, the farmers, workers, peasants and all ordinary men in the society, are treated as docile bodies – as the grass – and so subject to the regulatory power of propaganda and the killing machine of the military. This demonstrates that the military high command and their cohorts are the threatening Others. Iyayi affirms the notion that the dominant view in any society is that of the ruling, powerful class. This is because it has a monopoly over the means of indoctrination and information. That is why the ordinary people and the rank and file soldiers on both sides of the divide are manipulated into the war. They are fed with such shibboleths as “to keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done” or that “Biafra must stay as the sun”.

Thus, ‘the grass’ is made to believe these shibboleths by the power of discourse. These catchphrases are so potent on the rank and file soldiers that it is only when they are told to move that they move and when they are told to stop, they stop. It is against this backdrop that Osime Iyere weaves his discourse intervention to change their social reality by altering the discourse that helps constitute that reality. This comes in the form of the people’s army – the Third Army to challenge the normative totalitarian power of the military high command.

In conclusion, as can be seen, Iyayi’s *Heroes* is analysed using militarist discourse and discourse intervention. The militarist discourse shows the hierarchical system of the military and how officers exert authority on, and command obedience from, the rank and file soldiers through the use of language and military routine practices. In this way, the officers wittingly prevent the rank and file soldiers from recognising their own

interests. The soldiers are thus made subservient to their superior officers. The discourse intervention counterpoises this posturing of the officers by redirecting perception of social relationships as constitutive of unequal power relations. Osime Iyere using this position argues that such a relationship is metaphorically expressed in terms of the relationship between the elephant and the grass, the oppressor and the oppressed, the officers and the soldiers. Thus, discourse intervention is expressed in the text as the Third Army which hereby seeks to subvert the militarist discourse that characterises the soldiers as the subaltern group and so, the out-group.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 OTHERING PRACTICE AND HISTORICITY OF OIL WARS AND INSURGENCY IN HABILA'S *OIL ON WATER*

This chapter uses Habila's novel, *Oil on Water*, to examine othering practice and historicity of oil wars and insurgency in the Niger Delta. It is argued that through othering practice, Habila's narrative strategy in the novel designates the Nigerian State and oil firms as the threatening other while portraying the subaltern youths and oil-bearing communities of the Niger Delta as victims of political persecution. Standing as the threatening Others, the Nigerian State and oil firms are cast in a pariah image as the aggressors and persecutors who are held responsible for the ecotrauma that afflicts the Niger Delta people. It is further argued that this portrayal is done in utter disregard of the complicity of the Niger Delta elite, the chiefs, and the insurgents.

Othering Practice and Historicity

This argument is placed in the context of the actuality of the oil wars and insurgency in the Niger Delta. The determination of the actuality of these oil wars and insurgency in the Niger Delta is made possible by documented reports and studies. This study appropriates some of these available sources to strengthen the arguments raised. This is because historicists have urged that the extant coeval of texts – both literary and non-literary- is essential in the determination of the historicity or actuality of any given phenomenon.

By historicity it is meant the characteristic actuality of any occurrence or phenomenon, that is, that such a thing actually existed or happened. In other words, historicity is a demonstration that the account of a given phenomenon that is reconstructed in a literary text characteristically existed in a specific period in history as opposed to myth or legend. This is moreso where such accounts of events in history are tintured with imaginative reconstruction or fictionalised. Hamilton (1996) states that historicity is the

determination of the “extent to which any historical enterprise inevitably reflects the interests and bias of the period in which it was written”. Greenblatt in Bertens (2008) states that:

The literary text, then, is always part and parcel of a much wider cultural, political, social, and economic dispensation. For, from being untouched by the historical moment of its creation, the literary text is directly involved in history. Instead of transcending its own time and place...the literary text is a time – and – place-bound verbal construction that is always in one way or another political.

Habila’s *Oil on Water* is involved in the politics of the iteration of the subnational biases, concerns, and ideals which mostly mark out a perceived threatening other for vilification, opprobrium, and opposition. It thus uses the othering narrative strategy of categorising the Nigerian state and oil firms as the other, and of projecting the victimhood of the subaltern youths and the oil-bearing communities through their opposition, attacks, and vilification of the Other.

As a reflection of the oil wars and insurgency in the Niger Delta, Habila’s *Oil on Water* is thus time-and-place-bound. It relates to the temporal time of a kidnapping incident which leads to the revelation of other issues and the unfolding of more histrionics. And the place of the occurrences is the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. However, to begin with, it is important to clarify the terms insurgency and militancy in relation to their use to describe the situation of insecurity in the Niger Delta region.

The Term Insurgency in Relation to this Study

Whenever reference is made to the situations of crises and insecurity in the Niger Delta, the term militancy not insurgency is always used, while Boko Haram is referred to as an insurgent group. This distinction is more obvious in the media and academic circles. Both the print and the electronic media are often awash with headlines that proclaim this distinction. A clear case of this distinction in the academic circle is a study conducted

by Ufiem Maurice Ogbonnaya and Uyi Kizito Ehigiamusoe in 2013 with the title ‘Niger Delta Militancy and Boko Haram Insurgency: National Security in Nigeria’, published in the Journal of Global Security Studies, Volume 4, Issue 3. The study describes the two groups as “terrorist groups” which “have not only challenged the security of the Nigerian state but also threatened its unity, territoriality and sovereignty”, (Ogbonnaya and Ehigiamusoe: 2013). In the paper, terrorism is “interpreted as a response to external stimuli, particularly government actions” and that “terrorism is a means to a political end” (Ogbonnaya and Ehigiamusoe: 2013). And while quoting Schelling (1966) the researchers suggest that “terrorism is one form of violent coercion; a bargaining process based on the power to hurt and intimidate as a substitute for the use of overt military force” Ogbonnaya and Ehigiamusoe (2013).

As such, whatever difference the terms militancy and insurgency may have is only a matter of semantics. Merriam Webster dictionary defines insurgency as ‘an active revolt or uprising; a rebellion against a government that is less than an organised revolution and that is not recognised as belligerency’. On the other hand, militancy is equally defined in Merriam Webster dictionary as ‘the use of confrontational or violent methods in support of a political or social cause; or vigorously active, combative and aggressive, especially in support of a cause.’ As can be seen, politically, the two terms mean the same thing insofar as they relate to a revolt or combative actions against the state or constituted authority in order to advance or support a cause. Technically, therefore, the two terms relate to terrorist activities aimed at making the government to change its political position.

Given the political meaning of the two terms, this study will adopt the term insurgency to refer to the rebellious actions of the Niger Delta groups against the Nigerian State in analysing the situations depicted in Habila’s novel, *Oil on Water*. Ogbonnaya and

Ehiagimusoe (2013) point out that “the crises in the Niger Delta manifest in various ways, namely, militancy, hostage-taking and kidnapping of oil workers and frequent disruption of oil production activities through the destruction of oil and gas installations and facilities”. The issues at stake, Ogbonnaya and Ehigiamusoe (2013) are “the demand by the armed militant groups for greater autonomy and control of the oil resources in the Niger Delta region, equitable distribution of the benefits of oil mineral exploitation, justice and the development of the region.” However, the two researchers acknowledge, as do some analysts, that “militancy in the region has assumed some criminal dimension rather than the legitimate struggle for the emancipation of the region” (Ogbonnaya and Ehigiamusoe: 2013). On the basis of the demand for the control of the oil resources in the region the militant groups adopt combative actions or engage in the uprising against the Federal Government that is regarded as the threatening Other by way of attacks on oil installations, killing of security personnel, and hostage-taking of oil workers and government officials. To be sure, the region referred to as the Niger Delta, according to Emmanuel Akpabio and Nseabasi Akpan as quoted in Okoroegbe (2012), is:

The geo-political zone occupied mainly by the minorities of Southern Nigeria, which currently comprises the six states of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers. In recent years, the region was politically redefined and enlarged to include all the nine contiguous oil-producing states, which incorporates new states such as Abia, Imo and Ondo.

Given the precarious social conditions and the simmering political situation in the Niger Delta, the region has produced a body of literary works now referred to as the Niger Delta literature. According to Okoroegbe (2012), Niger Delta literature is “intrinsically bound within the discursive ethos and matrix of ethnic nationalism and identity formation in post-colonial Nigeria.” Similarly, Niger Delta literature refers to works which chronicle “the pains and sufferings that are now the visible trajectory of the

region as a result of oil exploration and exploitation” (Ojaruega quoted in Okoroegbe: 2012). Also, Okoroegbe (2012) further states that Niger Delta literature refers to “any writing that draws consciously from the region’s customs, habits, and dialectic, and in which the writer defines and identifies himself primarily with the region’s socio-cultural tensions and dynamics, and consciously portray the predicaments and aspirations of its people.” Okoroegbe (2012) similarly enunciates that in the oeuvre of Niger Delta literature, “one encounters a literature of resistance, of struggle, of protest, of challenge and confrontation”.

Othering Practice and Historicity of Oil War in Habila’s *Oil on Water*

The choice of Habila’s novel, *Oil on Water*, is justified by these assertions, in that as a non-Niger Deltan he consciously portrays the predicaments and aspirations of the people of the region. His novel can thus be termed as ‘petrofiction’ as it deals with the oil politics and environmental effects of oil exploration in the Niger Delta. It also fits into the category of works Okoroegbe (2012) identifies as dealing with “the orgy of violence in the region unleashed by subaltern youths, demanding for resource control and adequate compensation for the hazards of oil exploration and production in the Niger Delta”.

Oil on Water thus reflects how personal grievances of a handful of individuals and some armed groups snowball into criminal intents like hostage-taking and violence to press for greater autonomy and control of the oil resources in the region. The text presents a convergence of both private and subnational concerns as it scours through the ruined landscape and polluted waters of the Niger Delta as the basis for the vilification of the threatening Other, the Nigerian State and oil firms. *Oil on Water* tells the story of oil politics and wars using the incident of the kidnapping of an expatriate as a launchpad. The story is told through the focalisation of a journalist called Rufus, the son of a precarete, who, along with six other reporters is given the task of locating and

interviewing, or, if possible, rescuing Isabel Floode, a thirty – nine – year old British woman, kidnapped by a broken-hearted Solomon, her driver, from Port – Harcourt and taken to the crevices of the creek. Isabel had come to visit her husband who works for an oil company. The kidnap occurs in the midst of a domestic squabble involving the Floodes. Initially, Solomon intends to use the kidnap as revenge and a means of extorting money from her husband, James Floode, who has impregnated Koko, the maid and the girl he is to marry. Solomon confesses this intention to Rufus towards the end of the story when he reveals how his partner in crime, Jamabo, the police officer, convinces him to carry out the kidnap:

He said technically it wasn't even kidnapping; I'd just be collecting payment for all the pain these people caused me, a refund for all my investment in Koko. And that was what convinced me. The Oga had insulted me badly, he'd taken away my pride, my dignity, my manhood, and all the time I was serving him honestly, diligently. I trusted him (p.220-21)

This statement is cast in a euphemistic tone to convey the personal cravings that always dovetail into the bigger picture of bitter struggle, violence, and hostage-taking of foreign oil workers by armed groups in the Niger Delta. These groups often demand ransom from the oil companies. For, as Solomon puts it:

The oil company always pays the ransom...and if you thought about it carefully, you'd realize that the money came from our oil, so we would be getting back what was ours in the first place (p.221)

This personal aggrandisement masked as clientele ownership of oil resources forms the *raison de'être* of the oil wars and insurgency in the Niger Delta which is usually downplayed to give room for the vilification of the other. Nonetheless, personal cravings play out in the novel in the form of oil bunkering, pipeline vandalism, black market racketeering, oil theft, and sellout to foreign oil-prospecting firms by community leaders across the region. All this, according to Rufus' father is "*not a bad business*"

(p.69). In fact, Rufus' father along with Emmanuel, John's father, engages in the black marketing of petroleum products. He buys cheap from little children and sells cheap to *"the cars that come here at night"* (p.69). The Police are also implicated in the business as they are given a *"little something to look the other way"* (p.69) and either arrest the dealers or *"take over the whole business themselves"* (p.69). Similarly, most communities and villages accept compensation and allow oil exploration on their land. This is in addition to the extortion of money from the spouses and relations of oil workers kidnapped by the insurgents.

In the ensuing search for Isabel, and as the story shifts from one location to another, the social, political and environmental consequences of the militants' actions become manifest in the novel. The picture of the environment the novel presents is a collage of images of desolation, of defoliation, of the atmosphere that *"grow heavy with the suspended stench of dead matter"* (p.9). This desolate environment is punctuated from time to time with gunfights between a dozen armed groups and government security forces. Some of these armed groups include: the Black Belts of Justice; the Free Delta Army; and the AK 47 Freedom Fighters. These are prototypes and instantiation of the real insurgent groups operating in the Niger Delta like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), led by Henry Okah; the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Alhaji Asari Dokubo; the Niger Delta Vigilante Force (NDVF) led by Ateke Tom; the Bush Boys, the Martyrs Brigade, among others. These are subnational groups participating in the picketing of the Nigerian State for its alleged crime of inflicting ecotrauma on the people of the Niger Delta.

The vilification of the Nigerian state is a reaction to the environmental desolation as seen from the perspective of Rufus and Zaq who take up the difficult task of finding Isabel as they pass through villages that have *"the same empty squat dwellings, the*

same ripe and flagrant stench, the barrenness, the oil slick and the same indefinable sadness in the air as if a community of ghosts were suspended above the punctured zinc roofs, unwilling to depart, yet powerless to return” (p.10). This corrosive environment occasioned by the oil exploration activities creates in its wake unpleasant social, economic and political conditions as it reeks of total ruination, abject poverty, the hopelessness of the inhabitants who are forced to live a life of precarity. The characters in the villages live in houses or shanties that “seemed to belong more to the trees and forests behind them than they did to a domestic human settlement” (p.11). This is because the houses are made from “weeping willow bamboos and raffia palms and bits of Zinc and plywood and cloth and it seemed anything else the builders were able to lay their hands on” (p.16). In fact, the “whole scarecrow settlement looked as if the next strong wind or wave would blow it away” (p.16).

And as the environment gets desolated, defoliated, and the water gets polluted, the precarious life of the characters is heightened as they try all the time to eke out a living in a barren and dangerous terrain of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Sometimes the environment or the arm – twisting by the governments and oil companies forces the character to wander about without a definite home. Chief Ibiram captures this disconcerting situation thus:

We’ve lived in five different places now, but always we’ve had to move. We are looking for a place where we can live in peace. But it is hard. So your question, are we happy here? I say how can we be happy when we are mere wanderers without a home? (P.45)

This wanderlust situation is brought about after the arrest and subsequent death of Chief Malabo in detention for refusing to sell out to the foreign oil companies like some of the neighbouring villages did. Chief Malabo’s refusal is to avoid the kind of dire consequences that those villages eventually have to live with. As depicted in the novel,

the inhabitants of such communities or villages, after buying cars and Television sets with the compensation money, and even bragging that the “oil companies had offered to send their kids to Europe and America to become engineers” (p.42), eventually end up being despondent and disappointed. This is because, in the long run:

The cars had broken down, and the cheap televisions and DVD players were all gone, and where was the rest of the money? Thrown away in Port Harcourt bar-rooms, or on second wives and funeral parties, and now they were worse off than before. Their rivers were already polluted and useless for fishing and the land grow only gas flares and pipelines (p.43).

Such over-riding personal interests or cravings bring about the gas flares, which the characters call the “fire of Pentecost,” that turn to a source of terminal illnesses and death. The same personal craving leads to the catastrophe that befalls Rufus’ family when an explosion occurs in “the barn with the oil drums” (p.3). As a result of this:

The fire flew on the wind from house to house, and in a few minutes half the town was ablaze. Many people died, including John’s father ---My father was imprisoned ---my mother returned to her parents’ village--- and my family disintegrated. (p.3).

And in most villages where the undying glow of the gas flares “became the village square”, (p.152) villagers who use it at night for all kinds of activities like selling of akara and fish, village meetings, night tutoring, church services, soon become disillusioned when their “livestock began to die and the plants began to wither on their stalks ...” (p.153). And as the gas flares wax, “more people fell sick, a lot died...” and the “church also folded” (p.153). Similarly, “these damned flares” usually make a man to suddenly come “down with a mild headache, becomes feverish, then develops rashes, and suddenly a vital organ shuts down. And those whom the disease doesn’t kill, the violence does” (p.154). And so the picture is painted of how devastation is brought upon the people by the supposed threatening other, the federal government and the oil firms.

Like the orchestration of the gas flares, the violence is as much the result of the disconcerting condition of “the ruined, decomposing landscape” (p.60) as it is about the personal interest or cravings of the subaltern youth who engage in it. The youth inadvertently use violence to demand resource control and adequate compensation for the hazards of oil exploration and production in the Niger Delta. Thus, this demand is reflective of the tension between private and public interests that characterise the oil wars and insurgency in the Niger Delta which results in the scapegoating of the Nigerian State. As it were, the desire to control or protect the oil resources is what pits both the insurgents and the Federal security forces in atrocious conflict.

On one hand, the insurgent groups engage in sabotage and subversive activities like the bombing of oil and gas installations, kidnapping of oil workers and their spouses or relations, and combating the Federal security forces. They often use these activities to convey the idea of liberating their people from the scorching scourge of the gas flares and the polluted waters and the resultant abject poverty. This contentious issue is captured by Rufus when he wonders thus:

These oil polluted water? The forsaken villages, the gas flares, the stumps of pipes from exhausted wells with their heads capped and left jutting out of the oil-scorched earth, and the ever-present pipelines crisscrossing the landscape, sometimes like tree roofs surfacing far away from the parent tree, sometimes like diseased veins on the back of an old shrivels hand, and sometimes in squiggles like ominous writing on the wall (p.192-3).

Nonetheless, the graphic picture of wasteland painted here is purposely to put the Nigerian State in the spotlight for vilification and opprobrium. This decrepit environment turns many of the subaltern youth, whose hopes and aspirations are constantly being created and destroyed, into “freedom fighters” as exemplified by the character called Professor who “grew disgusted with the environmental abuse and (he) became a militant to fight for change” (p.156). The youth see themselves as the

guardian of their land for which they are sworn to protect and preserve against the onslaught of the out-class, the threatening other, even with their blood. Henshaw captures this resolve when he says, “we are the people, we are the Delta, we represent the very earth on which we stand” (p.163). However, this audacity belies their personal or private cravings for the control or petite holding of the oil resources, which easily manifests in their criminal intents.

This see-through criminal intent of the insurgents is often downplayed in place of the vilification of the Nigerian state represented by the Federal Security/Forces, who are on oath to defend the *raison d'état* of the Nigerian State. The mandates of these federal forces include securing the oil resources and installations which are part of Nigeria's national interests. They are therefore bound by law to regard the activities of the youth as sabotage, subversive, and detrimental to the national interest, which must be crushed by any means necessary. That is why the Major, in a livid tone, says that “they call themselves freedom fighters, but they are rebels, terrorists, kidnappers” (p.156). This claim is instantiated by Ogbonnaya and Ehigiamusoe (2013) who describe the insurgents as “terrorists”. For this reason, Major further states that the insurgents “understand only one language; force. That's all” (p.157).

The spates of violence that result from the clash of interests of the federal security forces and that of the insurgents inadvertently turn the region into “a war zone”(P.166) and makes it look like the Nigerian state is the threatening Other. According to the major:

There's a war going on! People are being shot. In Port-Harcourt oil companies are being bombed, Police stations are being over-run, the world oil price is shooting through the roof (p.64).

As the threatening Other the Nigerian state and oil firms are made to suffer losses as a result of their own perceived insensitivity. The debilitating economic consequences of

the carnage wrought in by the insurgents are further corroborated by Mr. James Floode to the effect that:

Our pipelines are vandalized daily, losing us millions --- and millions for the country as well. The people don't understand what they do to themselves (p.103).

And so, for this lack of understanding, the people of the Niger Delta bear much of “the brunt of oil wars” (p.37) as they are caught in the crossfire between the insurgents and the Federal security forces. As it were, the Federal forces have a duty to “fight to keep the country safe and united” (p.165) and in the process serve the interest of the multi-national corporations whose interest is mainly profit-making and the entrenchment of international capitalism. This task of the Federal Forces is ostensibly at cross-purposes with the populist claim of the insurgents, which is that “everything we do is for the people” (p.232).

On the basis of this divergent position, the two parties engage in fierce oil wars that leave the communities further desolate. Irekefe village represents the symbol of the extent of the clash between the two warring parties. For instance, after an attack by the soldiers, the Major remarks that “Irekefe is now mostly ashes and rubble-Not a hut is left standing---“ (p.166). This follows an incident earlier where five soldiers on routine patrol not knowing that the insurgents are there “ran into an ambush – it was a massacre. They were all killed instantly” (p.169). In another ambush incident by the soldiers at an Island where the journalists are billed to meet with the kidnappers, the soldiers hit a wooden boat which set the whole Island on fire. As a result, many people are killed and the journalists find:

A body in a torn blue shirt. It was half covered by bamboo leaves so that the torn stomach was only partially visible, but even that was too much. Undigested food mixed with blood covered the grass around the corpse,

flies hovered and descended, oblivious to the clicking cameras and the sound of retching going on all around (p.77).

Also, not far from this corpse “two more bodies lay in a bush, bloody, broken and twisted” (p.77). In addition to these gory details of the gunfight between the Federal security forces and the insurgents, there is also the brutality meted out on the insurgents by the soldiers at the detention centre, which is aimed at breaking their spirit and resolve to fight for resource control. They are imprisoned, detained and drenched with corrosive petrol in the hope that, as Major puts it:

By the time I’m through with you, you’ll hate the smell of it, you won’t take money that comes from oil, you won’t get in a car because it runs on petrol. You’ll hate the very name petrol (p.61).

And so, the various incidents of violence, mortality, precarity, environmental degradation reconstructed by Habila in his novel, *Oil on Water*, are meant to suggest in the final analysis that:

These people endure the worst conditions of any oil producing community on earth, the government knows it but doesn’t have the will to stop it, the oil companies know it, but because the government doesn’t care, they also don’t care (p.103-4).

The indifference by both the government and the multinational oil corporations, as it were, is equally blamable on the people of Niger Delta because they too “don’t understand what they do to themselves” (p.103) by their subversive activities. By engaging in illegal oil bunkering, pipeline vandalism, the bombing of oil and gas installations, and oil theft they unwittingly contribute to the degradation of their environment and depletion of their population through diseases and violence.

By and large, all the instances of hostage-taking, violence and the demands for ransom reconstructed in Habila’s novel, *Oil on Water* can be substantiated by the statistics provided by Ogbonnaya and Ehigiamusoe (2013) in their study. Their study finds that

between 2003 and 2010 (Habiba's novel was published in 2010), armed groups in Niger Delta carried out many attacks which led to the death of many oil workers and security forces. It states that on March 16, 2003, the armed groups carried out an attack "on the Nigeria Navy on the Escravos River that left seven people dead, several soldiers wounded and significantly disrupted riverine travel" (2013). Similarly, on July 12, 2006, "the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) combatants killed four naval personnel and injured three soldiers who were escorting a Chevron oil tanker along Chomoni creeks in Warri South West Local Government Area of Delta State" (2013).

The study also states that between 1999 and 2007, the armed groups took 308 hostages. In fact, the largest incident occurred in June 2007 when 60 hostages were taken including 26 soldiers, one woman and a three – year – old child. In their study also, Ogbonnaya and Ehigiamusoe indicate that ever since, the situation in the region has deteriorated and the spate of militancy, hostage-taking and kidnapping incidents have increased in scope and tempo covering virtually all the oil-producing states of Nigeria. Tekena N. Tamuno's book, *Oil Wars in the Niger Delta (1840-2009)* also provides an instantiation of the demand for the control of oil resources and adequate compensation for the exploration and production of oil and gas in the Niger Delta. On this score, Tamuno (2011) makes reference to Section 4 of the Kaiama Declaration which states that:

We, therefore, demand that oil companies stop all exploration and exploitation activities in the Ijaw areas. We are tired of gas flaring, oil spillages, blow outs and being labeled saboteurs and terrorists. It is a case of preparing the noose for our hanging. We reject this labeling. Hence, we advice (sic) all oil companies staff and contractors to withdraw from Ijaw territories by the 30th December, 1998 pending the resolution of the issue of resource ownership and control in the Ijaw area of Niger Delta

By reckoning, both the studies referred to in the foregoing analysis serve as coeval to the novel, *Oil on Water*, even if remotely, as clarification of an understanding of the imaginative reconstruction of the oil wars and insurgency in the Niger Delta. This is more so since Ukkan (2002) states that New Historicism “involves a parallel reading or juxtaposition of the literary and the non-literary texts of the same historical period”. This way, he further emphasises, both texts serving as co-texts are “given equal importance and allowed to work as sources of information or interrogation with each other.” As such, the non-literary co-texts cited in this study serve to authenticate Habila’s fictional narrative by affirming the actuality or historicity of the “ruined, decomposing landscape” and the oil wars of the Niger Delta. The fictional text makes obvious the evil of the pipeline that flies “in all directions, sprouting from the evil-smelling, oil-fecund earth” (p.38) of the region.

In terms of New Historicism, Habila’s novel, *Oil on Water*, is treated as a historical novel which documents what Homi K. Bhabha terms as “the discourse of minorities” as the historicity of oil wars and insurgency in the Niger Delta. In this wise, as Ukkan (2002) states “previous writings about the text are ignored and the text is subjected to fresh scrutiny mainly from the historical point of view”. Thus, the configuration of history in this novel is the portrayal of the environmental degradation, hostage-taking, violence, depravity, poverty, precarity and mortality, all of which can be summed up as ‘the tremors of history’ (Gomba: 2012), or what historicists call *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the age). Historical novels like this one by Habila are, according to New Historicist’s view “reconstruction of the past from a present perspective, and highlight(s) the role of the present in remaking the past and making it more useable to the present” (Ukkan: 2002). Thus, the historicity of Habila’s novel is its embeddedness in the social and cultural contexts of the Niger Delta region particularly the spate of insurgency, hostage-taking, kidnapping, oil bunkering, black racketeering; and total ruination of the environment.

Habila's narrative, therefore, demonstrates the fact that "fiction is an appropriate medium, sometimes the only available medium for doing the difficult work of telling the (hi) stories of the subaltern..." (Gaeddart quoted in Okoroegbe: 2012). And in narrating the Nigerian nation, it affirms the fact that "modern Nigerian nation is yet a site of agitation, contestation and contradiction." (Okoregbe: 2012). Habila's narrative is imbued with the normative tension that exists between the dominant group and the dominated group. In this case, the subaltern or the dominated group sees the hegemonic or the dominant group as the threatening Other whose message to it always is to "live quietly, work quietly, think quietly. The messages sent to these others by the dominant culture has been clear and consistent – conform and be quiet: deny yourself and all will be well" (Bressler: 2003). In relation to the Niger Delta people, the Nigerian state uses its security forces to smoulder the voice of the people even as the people are sometimes complicit in their own damnation.

In conclusion, the oil wars and insurgency that Habila depicts in his novel, *Oil on Water*, are means of resistance to the dominant Nigerian state by the non-state actors – the armed groups. This resistance grows out of their deep-seated frustrations, "their direct and personal cultural clashes (or interests) with the conquering culture and their fears, hopes, and dreams about the future and their own identities" (Bressler:2003). As a result of this frustration, Chief Ibiram reflects pensively that they are "mere wanderers without a home" (p.45). This way literature is made to function as a veritable tool for a collective search for identity, liberation and self-worth in the face of dominant conquering authority.

CHAPTER SIX

6.1 CONCLUSION

This study deploys New Historicist's concepts of narrative fashioning, power and discourse, historicity as well as the treatises of the novel form to explore the discourse of war and insurgency in Adichie's *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra*, Iyayi's *Heroes*, and Habila's *Oil on Water*. This is with a view to examining specific instances of othering practice through epistemic violence in the texts. The core assumption of the study is that over time the grand narrative in mainstream Nigerian literature is the entrenched view that the discourse of the Nigeria – Biafra war and the insurgency in the Niger Delta is mainly about political persecution and victimisation of the Igbo and the Niger Delta people. Such narrative discourse is hardly interpreted as a strategy of Othering through epistemic violence. This study thus adopts a two-prong approach in the examination of the texts, that is, while keeping the grand narrative in view, it also focuses on the little narratives that make up the othering practices in the texts in order to demonstrate that the stories in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra*, Iyayi's *Heroes*, and Habila's *Oil on Water* present specific instances of the experiences of the Nigerian civil war and insurgency in the Niger Delta. In addition, they illustrate the narrative strategies in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra*, Iyayi's *Heroes*, and Habila's *Oil on Water* as instances of othering practices. The study also demonstrates that in narrating the Nigerian nation Adichie's *Half of A Yellow Sun*, Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra*, Iyayi's *Heroes* and Habila's *Oil on Water* fall short of underwriting a nationalist discourse towards nation-building.

To achieve these objectives the study adopts Greenblatt's narrative fashioning in the analysis of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* to underscore the specific instances of othering practice through the use of epistemic violence. In the analysis of Iyayi's *Heroes*, the study uses Karlberg's discourse intervention as a strategy

of examining the Othering Practice used to pit the manipulated rank and file soldiers against the generals and their cohorts. This study views the generals and their cohorts as the threatening Other who are the object of epistemic violence. In Habila's *Oil on Water* in which the conflictual private, social and political interests to own and protect oil resources form the historicity of the insurgency, the study isolates the Nigerian State and oil firms as the threatening other, and hence, the object of epistemic violence.

In this study, the notion of the threatening other is generalised in the analyses of the selected texts both as an aspect of narrative fashioning in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra*, and as a fulcrum of the othering practice in the analyses of Iyayi's *Heroes* and Habila's *Oil on Water*. It is therefore argued that the notion of the threatening other inaugurates the use of epistemic violence in the othering process. Therefore the groups perceived as the threatening others become objects of vilification, undermining, stigmatisation, stereotyping in the process of establishing, reinforcing, and underscoring the cultural identity and the victimhood status of the in-groups.

In this regard, in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, there is a pervading sense of being Biafran Igbo and victims of political persecution. As a result of the intense preoccupation with the Igbo cultural identity and the reinforcement of their victimhood status in the events before and during the civil war, the other groups are cast as the threatening Other. These threatening Others are the Nigerian state symbolised by the Hausa/Fulani oligarchy, the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria, and the minority people of the riverine areas of the Southeast.

Half of A Yellow Sun is primed basically to accentuate the victimhood status of the Igbo people who regard themselves as being marginalised in the overall political power construct of the Nigerian nation. On the surface, it tells the story of Igbo families caught

up in a far-reaching political imbroglio that precipitated the civil war. It is the story of the families that struggle hard to survive on the fringes of a war zone, these socially interlinked families try to pull together as an indivisible and homogenous cultural entity in the face of bombings and fierce gunfights that threaten their cohesion and peace. However, the attachment of the Igbo characters to the idea of Biafra and the sense of being Igbo makes them excitedly indifferent and impervious to the situations of others. And so the Igbo characters are presented as being disdainful towards the cultural values of their host communities which further underscores their constrictive personality. And so, in the context of the text, the Nigerian State is regarded as an enemy of the Igbo simply because it is perceived by them as being dominated or driven by the Hausa/Fulani oligarchy that is symbolised by Sardauna and Balewa.

Adichie thus deploys such protocols of narrativity as derision, sniggers, lampoonry, grotesquerie, and images of obduracy and ugliness to portray the situations of others. She contrasts this portrayal with the eerie spectacle that conjures the apocalypse, grandeur, splendidity, hyperbole and tragedy where the situations of Igbo characters are concerned. Therefore, the Hausa/Fulani characters are portrayed as evil, animalistic, ignoramuses, beggarly, illiterates, and a people with kolanut – stained teeth. This stock image of the Hausa/Fulani is a deeply entrenched stereotype of an average person from Northern Nigeria which has been iterated over time in mainstream Nigerian literature. The Yoruba are equally profiled as rather jolly and lickspittles (a people who behave obsequiously to those in power), while the minority people are hunted down and treated scornfully as saboteurs and collaborators.

In contrast, the Igbo characters are presented in glowing terms as the most hegemonic people on God's earth; they are a people who possess the temerity to depose gods that had outlived their usefulness. As a people, Igbo characters are portrayed as business-

like, enterprising, and intellectually savvy. This is exemplified by characters like Chief Ozobia, Olanna, Kainene, Odenigbo, Ugwu, and Professor Ezeka.

Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* however counterpoises this posturing of the Igbos by presenting them as the threatening other. It exposes the Igbo as equally evil, hostile and inconsiderate or even incontinent. In it, the minority people are fashioned as victims of Igbo persecution. It thus attacks the method of suppression, domination, and persecution adopted by the Igbo against the minority people thereby demonstrating the inadvertent power relation that exists among the two divides.

Amadi's concern in the text, therefore, is not so much with the effect of the war on the minority people as it is with what becomes the fate of the cultural identity of the minority people in a sovereign state of Biafra. To Amadi, the minority people are smaller and weaker politically as such they fear a possible remote control of their affairs by the dominant Igbo. It is on this basis that Amadi engages in unsparing vilification of the Igbo who he compares to ruthless and monstrous mother earth. His narrative is thus imbued with some gory experiences of threat and some loss of self. He reasons that the pervasive blindness to the aspirations of others by the Igbo implies, for the minority people, a tendency for cultural domination which in Nigeria equates to political and economic domination.

In Iyayi's *Heroes*, the othering practice manifests in the categorisation of the generals and their civilian cohorts as the other – the threatening Other through the use of discourse intervention. Apparently, the text manifests two distinct groups, which are 'the grass' and 'the elephants,' which echos the aphorism 'when elephants fight it is the grass that suffers'. This means that the rank and file soldiers and the masses are the grass, while the generals and their civilian cohorts are the elephants. Obvious from this categorisation is the existence of unequal power relations among the two groups. Using

Osime Iyere, Iyayi presents the rank and file soldiers as living under the domination and ideological smokescreen of the military high command which makes it difficult for them to identify or recognise their own interests. Instead, the rank and file soldiers are primed as a machine for killing, maiming and destroying people with whom they have no personal quarrel and by which they expose themselves to slaughter.

It is on account of this that Osime Iyere conceives of the generals and their civilian cohorts as the threatening Other. They use militarist discourse to make the rank and file soldiers subservient, docile and passive. The military high command is presented as unfeeling, irrational, voluptuous. And so, Osime Iyere commences to use discourse intervention to alter the reality that constitutes their social situation.

In Habila's *Oil on Water*, the Nigerian State and the oil firms are viewed as threatening others in the process of casting the people of Niger Delta in the position of victimhood. The dominant informing consciousness in this text is the castigation of the Nigerian State and the oil firms as the aggressors and the cause of the environmental degradation of the Niger Delta region and the affliction of ecotrauma on its people. And so, the Nigerian State and the oil firms are cast in the position of the Other, while the indigenous people of the region as characters engage in accentuating and underscoring their identity and ownership of the oil resources. That is why the perceived threatening Other is marked for epistemic violence – vilification, attacking, kidnapping and opprobrium. This is couched in the projection of the victimhood of the people of Niger Delta through the exploration of the wasteland and the massive environmental despoliation.

On the whole, this study finds that the authors whose works are examined here utilised the realism and technical resources of the novel form to reconstruct the story of Nigerian Civil war and insurgency in the Niger Delta from divergent perspectives. Each

of the novels engages the Nigerian space, uses characters who are mostly Nigerians, and projects Nigerian situations and events. In varying degrees, each of them deals with grotesque enemy figures, cultural situations that indicate tribal loyalty, and resistance to dominant forces. Each of the text is treated as a historical novel that makes sense of past events from present perspectives.

And so the novel form is useful here as a means of highlighting the role of the present in the reconstruction of the past for the purpose of presenting the sociocultural and political tensions inherent in Nigeria nation. Therefore, through the novels, it is obvious that Nigeria's sovereignty is subsumed along ethnic and regional cleavages, and class stratification in form of civil war and insurgency. Thus, the notion of a unified nation-state is absent in the narratives. In other words, the novels are used to narrate the Nigerian nation as chaotic, contradictory, and tentative. In Adichie's *Half of a Yellow* there is a pervading sense of being Biafra and a disconnect from other tribal categories, which the Igbo defined as the out-groups to be debased, denigrated, and maligned; and by standing superciliously aloof, the Igbo nation regards others as threatening and hostile to its cultural identity; and so, they are marked for opprobrium, attack and sarcasm.

Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* challenges the notion of Biafra's homogeneity which relegates the minorities of the Southeast. Amadi's narrative, therefore, uses the tools which Adichie condemns to expose the Biafra authority as the threatening other, and, by so doing he reinforces cultural identity and perception of the minorities. In the case of Iyayi's *Heroes*, the masses are discursively categorised as "the grass". By that, they are rendered subservient, docile, and passive by the power discourse of "the elephants," the military high command of the two armies. This power discourse is conveyed through propaganda, military orders, and shibboleths that express nationalist sentiments.

However, through discourse intervention, this power discourse is vitiated. In Habila's *Oil on Water*, conflictual personal and national interests are presented as the historicity of oil wars and insurgency in the Niger Delta. However, the overriding interest of the state is portrayed as the threatening Other, the means of environmental degradation and debasement of the quality of life of the people of Niger Delta. This accounts for the subversive activities of the subaltern youth.

Nonetheless, this study has opened a vista of enquiry into the problematic of the constitutive elements of the Nigerian novel in terms of the tension between the little narrative and the grand narrative. Of particular interest to this study is the indulgence of the Nigerian novel in the sleight iteration of stereotypes, undermining and stigmatisation of the other using epistemic violence. This underscores the use of novel form in the service of subnational and self-serving tribal interests while masking its narrative as decidedly nationalistic. Further studies may bring out the incongruencies in the narration of the Nigerian nation.

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