E-ISSN: 2676-1750 Journal of Studies in Language, Culture and Society 1 (2), June 2019 (pp. 199-218)
Received: 27-02-2019 Accepted: 22-04-2019 Published: 30-06-2019

Amina Saker[1]
Faculty of Arts and Foreign Languages
Uuniversity Ali Lounici, Blida 2, Algeria

CHASING TRAUMATIC SHADOWS: THE ROLE OF MEMORY IN THE REINCARNATION OF THE SELF IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE*'S HALF OF A YELLOW SUN*

Abstract

This paper endeavors to have a postcolonial reading of a third generation Nigerian trauma novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*; It aims at demonstrating how Chimamanda Nguzie Adichie's work could be read as a sophisticated postcolonial traumatic chronicle whereby the writer weaves national and personal traumatic historical memories with fiction. Basically, Adichie documents the 1967 to 1970 violent war inflicted upon the Igbo people in post-independent Nigeria. Using the doctrines of postcolonial and trauma theory and with emphasis on the role of traumatic memory in the reincarnation of the self, this paper argues that apparently because of the impact of the inherited Biafran crudest realities and memories on the writer, Adichie's traumatic experiences as a child are assumed to commensurate with the portraits of her characters to some extent. In the same vein, this paper also sheds light on the trauma of the major characters like Olanna "the educated lady", Ugwu " the subordinate identified boy with his master",and Richard "the writer of the book" taking into account the linguistic processes through which they could successfully struggle their traumatic memories. In the main, the practice of writing and narrating trauma is to be very significant to all of them as to adapt and work through these shadows and later reformalize their lost selfhood. Adichie's traumatic retrospect and self reincarnation prospect is the main issue of this paper as an important process of unburdening, healing and reviving.

Key words: Biafran War, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Memory, Trauma, the Self

1. Introduction

Although several attempts depicting the human jungle-like complexities and predicaments have traditionally dominated literary epochs, several contemporary fictional writers become more associated with deeper compelling psychological enigmas and identity chaos. Indeed, a harmonic intersection between the several psychological attentions namely "the trauma quandary" and the literary discourses and criticisms seem to be extensively enhanced and plausibly portrayed in the contemporary age literature particularly in the postcolonial African literature. Roger Luckhurst in this vein states that "trauma has become a paradigm because it has been turned into a repertoire of compelling stories about the enigmas of identity, memory and selfhood that have globally saturated modern life" (Luckhurst, 2012, p. 9). Indeed, though its Eurocentric emergence in the field of psychology and psychoanalysis, crucial existentialist concepts like identity, memory and selfhood, as Luckhurst states, could emerge in the contemporary postcolonial literary repertoire for most people were post-war traumatized.

The trauma quandary thus, though dominated by Eurocentric views and experiences, should be recognized by the limits of its applicability. As a matter of fact, any postcolonial reader who comes at Freud's psychoanalysis theory of trauma looking for insights is faced with the difficulty to apply his theories on non-Western contexts and civilizations namely the African

[1] **Email: Amina. saker4@gmail. com**

one. Several critics do argue the complex and the contested relationship between trauma studies and postcolonial criticism, and the limitations the conventional trauma theory poses. They tend to shift the attention from the Eurocentric authority to the potential prospect to create a decolonized trauma theory that, though its Eurocentric belonging attends to and accounts the suffering of the non-western nations, broadly defined as cultures beyond the West. In his book *"Postcolonial witnessing*", Stef Craps interrogated the move beyond a Eurocentric trauma paradigm. He tends to challenge the canonical theorization and bias by representing the postcolonial case against trauma theory and construct a thoroughly decolonized trauma thesis.

Craps advocates that though its laudable ethical origins that tended to create a cross-cultural solidarity, trauma theory has failed to accomplish that aim and to exhibit the suffering of the non-Western others namely the African history. Accordingly, he sees that founding trauma theory publications have failed on at least four counts : "they marginalize or ignore traumatic experiences of non-Western or minority cultures, they tend to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of Western modernity, they often favor or even prescribe a modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and aporia as uniquely suited to the task of bearing witness to trauma, and they generally disregard the connections between metropolitan and non-Western or minority traumas". ([1], p. 2)

Particularly, and following the decolonizing project, the postcolonial traumatic enigma and its complexity becomes an African literary fascination that interweaves the unconscious and pathological sides of the psyche with the postcolonial quandaries of identity search and selfhood reincarnation. Because of this concern, the theme of war becomes a recurrence in several postcolonial African works aiming at giving historical traumatic accounts of the possibly inherited colonial legacies such as ethnic division and postcolonial civil wars. In doing so, writers went beyond the conventional literary norms by creating traumatic chronicles full of traumatizing, deforming, picturing grotesque and painful images in the eye of the innocent which leave unforgotten prints in the very core of the identities. In such novels, enduring war memories and echoed screams seems to break the interpersonal and the intrapersonal connections of the self in such a way that, as Beldwin argues "to speak about it, you would need the tongue of a God". (Beldwin, 2001,p. 1). However, after the blood is shed, after the screams are echoed, after the tears are restrained unto forgiveness, most traumatic accounts are hope-ended showing that the traumatized humankind can overcome this quandary, restore lost identities and move from surviving to healing and living. Thus, the open wound of trauma is still in blood and the risk of remembering is permanent, but the broken self must be reconstructed.

Accordingly, the third wave of African writers' thought seems to share similar pertinence. An author like Chimamanda Nguzie Adichie exposes how the postcolonial secession in Nigeria could yield an inner ethnic civil war whereby domestic national trauma took place. In the main, and because of the harshness of the civil war, African identities are gloomed and lost and yet African selfhood is eventually disappearing. Indeed, Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* exhibits a deep psychological traumatic interest in expressing how the fictitious life-stories of Nigerian characters like Olanna, Ugwu and Richard are suffering from post- Biafra mental disorders and identity turmoil. In doing so, Adichie's personal traumatic involvement is paramount in portraying postcolonial Biafra trauma. Extracts like "I was born seven years after the Nigeria-Biafra war ended, and yet the war is not mere history to me, it is also memory, for I grew up in the shadow of Biafra. I knew vaguely about the war as a child that my grandfathers had died, that my parents had lost everything they owned… I was aware of how this war haunted my family, how it colored the paths our lives had taken" (Adichie, 2006, p. 3) do prove her deep involvement in depicting trauma.

Adichie then writes about traumatic experiences which have been transformed in African creative archives through significant, striking, terrific symbols and images in which the body and the lack of voicing become symptoms of an incomprehensible experience of trauma. Therefore, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a contemporary trauma fiction perhaps for two reasons. The former obvious reason is its focus on the experience of a historical landmark in the Nigerian history: the Biafran war or the Nigerian Civil War. The latter is mainly through the inclusion of characters that are psychologically traumatized and their self-assertion collapsed due to the atrocities of the belligerent darkness. Adichie weaves her novel with traumatic scenes harshly delineated from which the horror is allowed to penetrate the selves and smash the identities. Flashbacks, nightmares, screams, fragmentations and violence diction are used with abundance. With a so profound voice of grief, those traumatic shadows become perpetuated nightmares, and in order to reincarnate their peace of mind, the writer makes an important reference to the power of pen and utterance in healing the inner wounds.

2. Theoretical Framework

Trauma as a field of study is an entirely Eurocentric scholarship. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud (1920) describes trauma as a mental state of disturbance of those who survived devastating events which involve a risk such as railway disasters, accidents, or the '*terrible war which has just ended'* (Ibid. p. 12). Trauma and related mental conditions were first established with shell-shocked Great War veterans. Contemporary trauma theory has flourished in discourse since the publication of Cathy Caruth in 1996. In the main, the analyzed model proposed in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* lays the focus on trauma as "inherent contradictions of experience and language" (Balaev, 2013, P. 1).

Indeed, over the last two decades, trauma theory, though its roots in Eurocentric psychoanalysis, gained popularity among literary scholars; this was first established by the works of Kali Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* in 1996 and Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* in the same year. Tal and Caruth view trauma as a theme belonging to the field of pathology and psychology; Basically, Tal seems to rely on structuralism; Caruth relies on the theory of psychoanalysis to provide a base for literary analysis. As a reference, Freud's fundamental psychoanalytic study on trauma led to an increase of other texts in trauma theories namely Caruth's approach on trauma studies, because her approach is referred to as the classic model by the trauma theory critics. The classic model, limited to the Eurocentric context, is an approach that treats trauma as a psychological paradox in which people experience the trauma in a daze and get the symptoms later. As a result, they are unable to discuss the cause of the trauma and its effects. The classic model derives from the concept of trauma as an "unrepresentable" event or as Caruth named it in *"Unclaimed Experience"* which she defines as "an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of experience and language" (Caruth, 1966, p. 18).

The conventional trauma approach is based on Jacques Lacan's concept of lacking and Freud's psychoanalytic concept of experience as something that predates language. In short, this model describes trauma as "*intense personal suffering*" (Caruth, 1966, p. 19); Indeed, this suffering cripples the self because the trauma disables the sufferer to discuss it. Trauma as a mental wound disables the authentic self to function as it normally would; the person becomes "possessed by an image or event" (Caruth, 1966, P. 4-5), meaning that the person suffering from the trauma does not experience the event at the time, but the effects of the trauma are manifested belatedly. This manifestation of possession means that the person relives or avoids the trauma, and the same event might not affect everyone similarly. A trauma creates a gap, wherein "a force of the event" lies, which means that there is a gap between the person and the trauma that is caused by the traumatic incident. This gap is followed by impairments or ailments, both physical and mostly mental. Yet, these symptoms of the trauma are not immediate and the person traumatized seems to be unable to linguistically discuss the

traumatic incident, because during and right after the traumatic event, nothing seems to be wrong with the Self. This is known as, amongst others, the unspeakable void, inexpressible event, and other synonyms that try to describe this paradox that try to define or constitute trauma.

The focus on psychoanalysis and language enabled linguists and literary critics to use the concept of trauma in literature, despite its contradictory nature. As a reaction to this model, multiple models based on different values concerning trauma theory were established; the trauma theory has thus developed along with developments in psychology and the definition of trauma. Basically, these alternative models provide different answers for the influence of trauma on language; In other words, these models depend on social psychology and postcolonial theories for the sake of fruitfully portray and exhaustively analyze the trauma quandary regardless to the contexts. Contemporary trauma critics now see trauma theory as more than the "unspeakable" model and combine trauma theory with postcolonial setting. Trauma theory can thus be combined with the postcolonial framework in order to create a meaning with social and cultural others' contexts. This new theoretical approach invokes different questions compared to the classic model as the new model allows for broader cultural discussions with regards to trauma and trauma theory; thus contemporary trauma theory intersects with multiple other fields namely post-colonialism and this legitimizes the fact that contemporary trauma theory contextualizes the trauma to the event and to the person.

Growing responses to cultural trauma theory in postcolonial criticism manifest the ongoing appeal of trauma theory despite the fact that trauma theory seems inadequate to the research agenda of postcolonial studies because some inherit fundamental issues: its Eurocentric orientation and its inherent canonical binary oppositions. In the dialogue between trauma theory and postcolonial literary studies, the central question remains whether trauma theory can effectively be "postcolonialized" in the sense of being usefully conjoined with postcolonial theory. Indeed, core concepts and tenets of cultural trauma theory may contribute to a clearer understanding of the issues currently at stake in this developing relationship between trauma theory and postcolonial literary studies. It engages a comprehensive, conceptualization of the colonial presence and oppression and the postcolonial legacy of trauma and formulates possible directions in which to expand trauma's conceptual framework, in order to respond more adequately to postcolonial ways of understanding history, memory and trauma and the loss of identity. Postcolonial trauma literature thus serves the quest for africanness in the purely postcolonial African literature that should be the urgent preoccupation of African writers. Moreover, trauma lately has witnessed a reshaping of the field as many contemporary critics challenge to rethink trauma studies from a postcolonial and globalized perspective. The complex and the contested relationship between trauma studies and postcolonial criticism characterized the contemporary scholarships. Critics and scholars tend to focus on the potential prospect of creating a *Decolonized Trauma Theory* that, though its Eurocentric belonging attends to and accounts the suffering of *Rest* "the non-western nations", broadly defined as cultures beyond the *West*. In his book *"Postcolonial witnessing*", Stef Craps interrogated the move beyond a Eurocentric trauma paradigm. He tends to challenge the canonical theorization and bias by representing the postcolonial case against trauma theory and construct a thoroughly decolonized trauma thesis. Craps advocates that though its laudable ethical origins that tended to create a cross-cultural solidarity, trauma theory has failed to accomplish that aim and to exhibit the suffering of the non-Western others. Accordingly, he sees that founding trauma theory publications have failed on at least four counts "they marginalize or ignore traumatic experiences of non-Western or minority cultures, they tend to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of Western modernity, they often favor or even prescribe a modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and aporia as uniquely suited to the task

of bearing witness to trauma, and they generally disregard the connections between metropolitan and non-Western or minority traumas". (Craps, 2013, p. 2)

Trauma studies as a dependant discipline to psychology and psychoanalysis emerged in the early 1990 as an attempt to construct an ethical interpretation to the various forms of the human mental suffering and injuries and their cultural and artistic representation. Born out of the confluence between deconstructive and psychoanalytic criticisms and following the footsteps of Holocaust literature, trauma's theory broadens its scope to bear witness to traumatic histories in such a way as to epitomize the suffering of the Other and this what Caruth, the prominent trauma pioneer, has suggested when stating that "trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures" (Caruth, 1996, P. 11). However, although trauma theory has fruitfully adopted various insights concerning the relationship between psychic quandaries and cultural representation, several postcolonial critics still are arguing that trauma theory cannot fulfill its promise of cross-cultural ethical engagement simply because the western canon of trauma literature has narrowly privileged the *Self* and underestimated the *Other*. Basically, Jill Bennet and Roseanne Kennedy have traced lines for a potential shift in focus of trauma studies "from a Eurocentric discipline to one capable of engaging with a multicultural and diasporic nature of contemporary culture" (Bennet and Kennedy, 2003, p. 5). Eventually and in 2008, various critiques including Gert Beulens, Stef Craps, Michael Rothberg and Roger Luckhust have joined the call for a path-breaking and a re-direction of the field arguing that stumbling blocks in the conventional trauma theory "continues to adhere to the traditional event-based model of trauma, according to which trauma results from a single, extraordinary, catastrophic event" (Craps, 2013,p. 31). They also maintain in numerous accounts that the pragmatic model of trauma as being "a frightening event outside ordinary experience" (Kolk and Hart, 1995, p. 172) does not necessarily work for the non-Western minorities or cultures, it may serve more the western context. Particularly, such critics relied on a racially-based layer of trauma "the experience of racism" that does not fit the classical form of trauma arguing that "Unlike structural trauma, racism is historically specific; yet, unlike historical trauma, it is not related to a particular event, with a before and an after. Understanding racism as a historical trauma, which can be worked through, would be to obscure the fact that it continues to cause damage in the present" (Craps, 2013, p. 32). Thus, such a racially-oriented form of trauma that is deeply rooted in the history of slavery and colonialism would not only overwhelm the present but also pose a challenge for the conventional model of trauma.

Accordingly, taking into account the pioneering works of Frantz Fanon namely *"The Wretched of the Earth"* and *"Black Skins, White Masks"* along with his theories of "insidious trauma" and "postcolonial syndrome", Craps tends to, out of these theories, develop a special model of trauma that tend to voice the hidden non-Western nations and minorities and "address the normative, quotidian and persistent nature of racialized trauma" (Craps, 2013, p. 30). Basically, in order to decolonize trauma, an ethical consideration of the field is to be realized by recognizing the globalized contexts of the various forms of the traumatic events and the forms they take and the myriad literary works where they are represented. Moreover, this " *Decolonizing Trauma Model*" does not totally bracket off the conventional model, it rather broaden the scope to "take account of the specific social and historical contexts in which trauma narratives are produced and received, and be open and attentive to the diverse strategies of representation and resistance that these contexts invite or necessitate" (Craps, 2013, p. 5). Thus, the basic tenets of the *"Decolonized Trauma Theory"* would voice the hidden marginalized voices and consider the non-Western cultures and minorities; it would also challenge the conventional validity of the Western trauma model, provide alternatives to dominant trauma aesthetics and may further regenerate the relationship between the *West* and the *Rest*.

The quest for decolonizing trauma theory has received a significant response through works in memory studies. The work of Michael Rothberg is the best example to be taken in this vein; His *"Multidirectional Memory"* provides "cross-cultural analysis on histories of extreme violence that confront each other in public spheres" (Rothberg, 2011, p. 523). His work challenges the conventional view that sees collective memory as a competitive memory. He suggested substituting that nomenclature with a "multidirectional feature" as to be "subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; productive and not private. (…). ; This interaction of different historical memories illustrates the productive, intercultural dynamic that I call multidirectional memory (Rothberg, 2011, p. 3). In his essay *"From Gaza to Warsaw"*, Rothberg is more concerned with deconstructing the hierarchical approach of collective trauma pointing out that "Collective memories of seemingly distinct histories, such as those of slavery, the Holocaust, and colonialism are not so easily separable" (Rothberg, 2011, p. 524). Rothberg thus puts light on the usefulness of the multidirectional memory in preserving collective histories of minority subjects. In recent years furthermore, following the same path, a number of publications such as *The Future of Trauma Theory* and *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* seek to go beyond the authoritative Eurocentric model of trauma theory and traces links between trauma and post-colonialism and suggest new avenues of research.

As discussed above, trauma has witnessed a reshaping of the field as many contemporary critics challenge to rethink trauma studies from a postcolonial and globalized perspective. Irene Visser's essay "*Decolonizing Trauma Theory: Retrospect and Prospect"* tends to establish a dialogic relationship between trauma theory and post-colonialism. For her, in order to accomplish the decolonizing project, a great openness towards the non-Western cultures and beliefs and indigenous healing rituals is required. In addition, several round-table discussions concerning the contemporary analysis of the trauma thesis took place namely the *"Decolonizing Trauma Studies"* Symposium that was held at the University of Northampton on May 15th, 2015, which featured contributions from the Symposium's three Keynote scholars Stef Craps, Bryan Cheyette and Alan Gibbs. The speakers addressed five key questions facing contemporary trauma studies and for them any critic who is willing to dig for the decolonization of trauma should answer the following questions:

1. Does the trauma studies suffer from psychological universalism?

2. Are there signs that trauma studies are becoming less Eurocentric?

3. What are the implications and challenges of a decolonized trauma theory for our understanding of our own disciplines and their relations to others?

4. How do you see the field of trauma studies developing in the future?

In addressing the issue of Western domination on the field of trauma and the increasingly compelling challenges that come from a variety of voices, Bryan Cheyette challenges the long-standing binary opposition between "the *West* and the *Rest*". He suggested that the Holocaust is an exclusively European cultural trauma and argues, like Rothberg, for a more complex examination of the overlapping histories of anti-semitism and colonialism, including an exploration of the colonial precedents for the genocidal practices associated with the Holocaust. Cheyette also argued for the decolonization not just of trauma theory, but of all disciplinary subjects and all forms of cultural enquiry including postcolonial studies itself.

In answering the central question about future directions of field, Stef Craps argues that it is worthy to mention that the potential contribution of the *Decolonizing Trauma Project* tends to shed light on "the inappropriateness and the injustice of applying western frameworks to a colonial or postcolonial situation" (Craps, 2015, p. 5), scholars and critics are now concerned with producing a concrete alternative; however more work needs to be done on the practical development of alternatives to the dominant trauma discourse. As he suggests, this requires

"specialized knowledge of other cultures and languages, of the different media and forms of expression they use, and of local beliefs about suffering and healing" [18]. His view is echoed by the editors of another recent study of postcolonial trauma fiction, who argue that theory needs to be enriched by a knowledge of social context, combining "the psychological and the cultural, in an interdisciplinary approach that draws on psychoanalysis, sociology, philosophy, and history in the study of the aesthetic representation of trauma" (Herrero,2011, p. 38). This means that, while trauma theory has to be reformed in the light of postcolonial critique, the challenge now is to apply these insights in our practice namely in the African contexts as it is a immense context. This might in turn necessitate a shift in power from the Western metropolitan centers of academe to more localized peripheries of knowledge.

Such a Decolonized Trauma Theory is to be applied on the postcolonial African novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* as traumatic shadows seem to thoroughly haunt several sections of the novel and seem to resemble the contemporary literary techniques such as, repetition, focalization, lacunae, confusion, open, undecided and sometimes hopeful endings, and disrupted chronology. In this novel, there is often a repetition of the same terrific traumatic scenes from different points of view and that's why we find different characters describing the same scene using different diction depending on the extent to which each character got influenced and perpetuated; Major characters like Olanna, Ugwu and Richard have been equally exposed to the same Biafran war circumstances but differently behaved and reacted. The traumatic atmosphere awakened the characters' selfhood and made it difficult to pace up with the effortless and the passive capacity of acting as agents. The traumatic shadows of Biafra throughout the novel challenged the chronology of the story. As trauma disrupts the psyche so as the fluidity of the traumatic events are disrupted by gaps and fragmentations; also, dialogues and monologues are diversified exponentially when the post traumatic psychological turmoil takes place. The order of scenes could be scrambled and the post-traumatic memories can be hard to be situated in a clearly defined timeframe because they seem to have taken place in a temporal vacuum.

Laplanche, in discussing the possible relationship between trauma and the role of memory, advocates the idea that the original traumatic moment and its reemergence into awareness are interpreted as 'deferred action' or *afterwardness* (Laplanche 1999, p. 260) to elaborate its original significance and to incorporate multiple aspects of its ambiguous temporality. However, Laplanche considers that it is necessary to take into account what is not known. As the first event in the past can never be fully known, it is given to the surrounding to retranslations and reinterpretations, and there is always something left untranslated. In Laplanche's account of Freud's *views* temporality of trauma is opened up beyond the deterministic model towards the flexibility. Freud himself began to realize that memories are not fixed and can be subject to changes. Moreover, Laplanche goes on to describe the effects of traumatic shadows on the self and identity. The effects of traumas can be in two kinds, positive and negative: reconstructive or deconstructive. The former are attempts to remember the forgotten traumatic experiences or better to make them real and revived the lost identities through possible linguistic strategies of narrating and writing. Laplanche also summarizes these efforts under the name of fixations to the trauma and as a compulsion to repeat. Unlike this claim, the negative reactions follow the opposite aim that nothing of the forgotten traumatic memories shall be remembered and nothing repeated. These are better called defensive reactions. The principal expression is what is called 'avoidances', which may be intensified into inhibitions, phobias and shadows.

Dominick LaCapra, in addition, is advocating that traumatic memories can be a path for healing and self reincarnation because the compulsive repetition of acting-out of a traumatic past release inner wounds" (*LaCapra*, 1978,p. 121). On the other hand, Anne Whitehead investigates the so called "memory boom," and diagnoses "the cultural obsessions" widespread with regard to both individual and collective memory (Whitehead, 2010, p. 1-2).

Because of this concern, trauma writing in the contemporary age tends to literarily and performatively exhibit how the obsessions with memory and with trauma reinforce each other; Fictional writers thus depicted vivid memory mania scenes to particularly revive moments of the trauma crisis at times when identity and selfhood come to be described as fragile and threatened by a frequent after-effect series of trauma namely trauma of war.

As discussed above, trauma theory and postcolonial criticism manifest the ongoing renewal of trauma theory despite the fact that trauma theory seems inadequate to the research agenda of postcolonial studies because some inherit Eurocentric fundamental issues. The new *Decolonized Trauma Approach* engages a comprehensive, conceptualization of the colonial presence and oppression and the postcolonial legacy of trauma and formulates possible directions in which to expand trauma's conceptual framework, in order to respond more adequately to postcolonial ways of understanding history, memory and trauma and the loss of identity. Postcolonial trauma literature thus serves the quest for africanness in the purely postcolonial African literature that should be the urgent preoccupation of African writers. OFlinn's (1975) article *"Towards a sociology of the Nigerian novel"* shows statistically that creative works from Nigeria, and in particular the South East region of Nigeria, from where Chinua Achebe comes, have enjoyed commendable boost since after the publication of *Things Fall Apart* in 1958. Nigerian fiction has continued to flourish even after the Nigerian civil war during which there was the inevitable lull in the production of novels. Names such as Chimamanda Adichie and many more make an impressive list of creative writers from that region. However, along with a tendency to inappropriate sublimation, trauma studies have also been criticized for being overly burdened by Western Euro-centralism and pathologization. Claire Stocks has shown how the canonical trauma theory originating in the 1990s is predicated on a "binary that juxtaposes the healthy, unified subject with a pathological, fractured self" (Stocks, 2006, p. 73-74), and asks how we can go beyond this and "account for subjects who do not have a singular self which precedes the trauma and to which they might seek to return after exposure to traumatic events" (Stocks, 2006, p. 77)

3. *Half of a Yellow Sun* a Literary Situation

It is worthy to note that a great deal of the novel comes from the author's imagination; Indeed, *Half of a Yellow Sun* represents an important artistic expression for Adichie not only the presence of her parents' stories was important for Adichie, but also the absence of her grandfathers. She dedicates her novel to them in the epigraph: "My grandfathers, whom I never knew, Nwoye David Adichie and Aro-Nweke Felix Odigwe, did not survive the war; My grandmothers, Nwabuodu Regina Odigwe and Nwamgbafor Agnes Adichie, remarkable women both, did" (Adichie, 2012, p. 8). "This book is dedicated to their memories: ka fa nodu na ndokwa. And to Mellitus, wherever he may be. Their non-presence in her childhood can be seen as a bodily absence which influenced her; their death was a trauma that was passed down to her through her parents "Our histories cling to us to construct and delight" (Adichie, 2012, p. 9). This statement is extracted from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's 2012 Commonwealth Lecture. Although there exist a huge literature written within the Nigerian space for showing the Biafran's tremendous potential for dehumanizing and desolation, its reverberations in modern African literature are signifiers for a profound social guilt. Adichie's position as a third generation historical novelist went beyond aesthetics as she minutely reveals the horrors and the consequences of witnessing those horrors from a psychological perspective; The trauma of war, a shattering experience in itself particularly when it is inflicted by African on African. Her postcolonial traumatic scene where people's selfhood and identities were extremely diminished foregrounds a proposal for understanding not the reasons underlying an act, but the reasons for the inability to react.

The unforgotten past that haunted the present inspired Adichie to *write Half of a Yellow* (2006), which won the Orange Women's Prize for fiction in 2007. This epigraph "our histories

cling to us," is as such significant that Adichie employs to intimate her motivation and legitimize her authorship and ownership of the history of Biafra: Adichie's recourse to her ancestry to conjure up the dark memories. In the main, Heather Hewett discusses Nigerian writing in her essay, *Coming of Age: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the Voice of the Third Generation"*. In this essay she mentions how Ngugi wa Thiongo has defined three "stages" of African literature: "the age of anti-colonial struggle, the age of independence, and the age of neo-colonialism" (Hewett, 2010, p. 5). Basically, critics have divided the literary tradition of Nigeria into three generations. Writers, who have published work before and directly after independence (1960), such as Chinua Achebe, are included in the first generation. Those writers whose work was published after the Nigerian Civil War (1966-1967), as for example Niyi Osundare, are called the second generation. The third generation includes the writers who published their works in the middle of the 1980s and this makes a strong link for her inclusion.

Adichie inherited the trauma of her parents and ancestors and this novel is an incarnation of their past, and of her own inherited traumatic shadows. This phenomenon has been discussed by scholars such as Eva Hoffman, Marianne Hirsch, Melvin Jules Bukiet and Susan Suleiman. Adichie is a witness to the testimonies of those who experienced the traumatic events firsthand. She mentions this in interviews: "My parents' stories formed the backbone of my research: for *Half of a Yellow Sun* (Adichie, 2006, p. 9). In the particular case of Adichie, the apparently goal for writing about such a historical landmarks and its aftermaths is not to represent the Nigeria-Biafra War as objectively as possible; but Adichie's project is far more personal, and deeply rooted in her individual inherited traumatic shadows. Adichie sums up her reasons in an interview. (Adichie,2006,p. 7) as she said "because I grew up in the shadow of Biafra" and "because I wanted to engage with my history in order to make sense of my present, many of the issues that led to the war remain unresolved in Nigeria today". She is involved in the goal of sense-making of an event. However, in these remarks, her personal involvement is evident. She does not necessarily want to make sense only of the past, but make sense of the relationship between *"the shadow of Biafra",* which represents her past, and her own personal present. In the same vein, in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy writing about history is mainly to "suggests the possibility of better understanding ourselves in the present, by understanding the forces, choices, and circumstances that brought us to our current situation". (Little, 2010,p. 4) ; Here, it seems that this is a reason for writing that Adichie has in common with the historian, which is made evident by the quote mentioned above. However, she remains, first and foremost, a literary author.

What Adichie stresses is her and her family's deep personal involvement in the Nigeria-Biafra War and how the effects it had on her family reverberate in her own life: "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, because the brutal bequests of colonialism make me angry, because the thought of the egos and indifference of men leading to the unnecessary deaths of men and women and children enrages me, because I don't ever want to forget. (Adichie, 2006, p. 7)

4. *Half of a Yellow Sun* a Historical Situation

Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* is set in Nigeria and deals with two focal periods, the early 60s and the late 60s, which are pivotal landmarks in the postcolonial history of Nigeria. In the late 60s, the country was involved in a bloody and violent inner secession, the Nigeria-Biafra War, which lasted from 1967 to 1970. Adichie shifts between these two time periods in the novel. Pursuing the linearization of the events, Adichie devotes parts of her novels to sketch the events leading up to the violent conflict on the early 60s hereby the main characters are introduced. Since the novel is a real depiction of Biafran historic tensions, it is useful to

investigate the way in which the author chooses to portray them. There are many different ways in which historical events can be approached, and depending on where the emphasis is put, a very different picture may be the outcome. In order to fully understand the Biafran crudest realities portrayed in Adichie's novel, it might be crucial to investigate the origins of the conflict and explain how it could escalate into a full-fledged civil war. For that purpose, Falola Toyin's *Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria* (2009) and Aleksandar Pavović's *Creating New States, Theory and Practice of Secession (2007)* are to be taken into account. Toyin is a Nigerian scholar who focuses on African history; Pavović's work sheds light on the mechanisms of secession, and on the violence they often entail.

Under the philanthropy disguise of bringing light to the darkest places in Africa, Nigeria came under the British colonial rule in the late 19th century and became a British colony in 1914. Nigeria's three prominent ethnic groups: the Igbo in the southeast, the Hausa-Fulani in the north and the Yoruba in the southwest formed its power though each had different cultural customs and political structures. However, because of a common anti-colonial revolutionary mind, the three entirely different ethnic groups were unified in the years of the British presence. Nigeria thereafter got its independence from the United Kingdom in 1960. Due to reasons as less fertile soil, the overpopulated eastern coast, and the search for work, the Igbo and other Easterners migrated to the northern parts of Nigeria. In January 1966 a group of Igbo riots attempted a coup, and Yoruba and Hausa political leaders were killed. The Igbo General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi became President. This coup was perceived as an Igbo conspiracy. It led to a first wave of massacres in which hundreds of Igbos were killed. In July 1966, there occurred a counter-coup by the North, and Ironsi was killed. Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon came to power with the support of the United Kingdom and the United States. However, the military governor of the Eastern Region, Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, refused to recognize Gowon as anything else than a temporary head of state.

Peace accords, like the one at Aburi in Ghana failed, and on 30 May 1967 Ojukwu proclaimed the secession of the southeast of Nigeria as the republic of Biafra. The new flag shows half of a rising sun and was the inspiration for the title of Adichie's novel. The Nigerian government did not recognize this new republic, however, and the Nigeria-Biafra War began in July. Even though the Biafran troops were outnumbered, and had a shortage of weapons, they could achieve some gains in the beginning of the war. However, with the support of the United Kingdom and the USSR, the federal troops dominated the area, and blocked all of Biafra's links to the outside world. Because of this dominion, a great shortage of means and food happened and up to three million people died in Biafra, mostly from starvation. Ojukwu fled, and Biafra surrendered to the federal troops on January 13th, 1970. The split and the violence between the different ethnic groups, however, continued after this. The ethnic tensions are still a part of the Nigerian reality till now.

5. Trauma of War & Biafran Shadows

Again, trauma as a psychologically-oriented field goes back to the early years of twentieth century, which is the time when Sigmund Freud developed his theory of psychoanalysis. Freud was the one who altered the meaning of the nomenclature "*trauma"* shifting from indicating "a physical injury" to a more complex description of "a psychological one". His theory started with the study of the cause of neurosis in hysterical women. However, in the mid 1990s, trauma theory had got a pivotal revival as it becomes an interesting epistemology to be discovered; theorists such as Cathy Caruth relied on Freud's theory as a cornerstone to construct and develop their own ideas on trauma. Other important names in this context are Dominick LaCapra, Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman. Their theories focus on the psychological effects of the Holocaust in the long term, especially in the late twentieth century.

The Holocaust is the most well known traumatic experience for a whole generation of survivors, and it doomed a lot of people's lives in a very drastic way. However, Critics such as Abigail Ward, Sam Durrant, and Amy Novak have broadened the scope of psychoanalysis and addressed several psychological issues namely trauma and the possible problems that the application of trauma theory to postcolonial narratives may pose. Nevertheless, this focus on the Holocaust does not make the theory of trauma entirely specific to this particular event; it can also be applied to other psychological traumas, such as slavery or postcolonial war and domestic abuse. The effects of these multifaceted layers of trauma on the coming generations were also studied and also the inherited ways in which it can be transmitted from parents to children, and even from grandparents to grandchildren. In the case of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, a dual application of trauma theory may take place: on the level of the writer, and on the level of the text itself. On one hand, Adichie is involved in the trauma of her parents and grandparents, who were traumatized directly by the events of the Nigeria-Biafra War. On the other hand, in the narrated story, the characters are faced with traumatic experiences. Olanna witnesses the slaughtered bodies of her niece Arize, her Aunty Ifeka and her Uncle Mbazi. A man called Nnaemeka is shot before the eyes of Richard, and Ugwu is faced with the horrific realities of war, and a trauma of his own doing: he rapes a girl.

Post memory is a nomenclature coined by Hirsch whose idea centers on the difficulty of the traumatic retrospect. It indicates the painful memories which haunt the individual in the aftermaths of the traumatic experience in general and the Holocaust survival in particular. Hirsch drew her ideas on Hoffman's theory of memory. Adichie is part of this generation which Hoffman describes as "the second generation after every calamity". (Hoffman,2008 p. 15). Hirsch defines post-memory as follows: "Post-memory describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right"(Hirsch, 2008, p. 10). It "characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that they couldn't be neither understand nor re-create" (Hirsch, 2008, p. 8). In her analysis of the phenomenon "post-memory", Hirsch uses the Holocaust as her historical frame of reference but, as she states: "My analysis relies on and... is relevant to numerous other contexts of traumatic transfer that can be understood as post-memory" (Hirsch, 2008, p. 108). Adichie is part of the "second generation", she is the daughter of survivors. She was not alive at the moment of the Nigeria-Biafra War, but it is an event that permeates her life: "I grew up in the shadow of Biafra. ... I have always known that I would write a novel about Biafra. " (Adichie, 2006, p. 5)

Of course, the so-called "memories" that Adichie would have about these events are entirely different from those of her parents; she has no lived experience of them but she could reincarnate the memories of the massacres through her characters and how could the trauma of war vanish their well being. As Hirsch indicates, the traumatic memory not only indicates a temporal distance or an aftermath, it also points to "an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture". (Hirsch, 2008,p. 10). This is a case of a psychological turmoil "in between the past and the present, with a gaze facing backwards". This has also been discussed by Andreas Huyssen. All of Adichie's characters in her story of Biafra present the event like, what Huyssen calls "a present past" (Huyssen, 2011, p. 28). He argues that, in the earlier precolonial era, African people's selfhood though mixegenation formed a purely africaness, whereas the colonial presence deeply rooted a hybrid sense of belonging: africaness was in blood not in mind. Hereafter, the twentieth century postcolonial africaness is directed towards a future haunted by the past. Huyssen also mentions that this late generation is full of "a fear, even a terror, of forgetting" that triggers their culture of memory. (Hussyen, 2011,p. 28). Adichie wrote this novel to ensure the continuing remembrance of the Nigeria-Biafra War, so the fear of forgetting can be counted amongst one of her motives for writing. However, it is

not her only reason. She is also concerned with the intersections between history and literature, the construction of reality, and the act of narrating.

In *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture*, Adiele Afigbo refers to the Biafran war (1966-1967), a war of secession, a war of delineating two African world views within the boundaries of the same Nigerian space. She stated that people were heavily damaged by these horrific incidents and their memories about these massacres can never die. In the novel, the image of the calabash is carved by Adichie in a so detailed and flowing manner like a memory. The calabash becomes more of a symbol than of a historical representation, as the remembrance of their content will be, delineating the horrid memory of an ever-present past. The woman with the calabash nudged her, and then motioned to some other people close by. "*Bianu*, come, she said. Come and take a look. She opened the calabash. Take a look, she said again. Olanna looked into the bowl. She saw the little girl's head with the ashy-gray skin and the braided hair and rolled-back eyes and open mouth. She stared at it for a while before she looked away. Somebody screamed. The woman closed the calabash. Do you know, she said, it took me so long to plait this hair? She had such thick hair" (Adichie, 2006, p. 5). An object of tradition and communion, the calabash is also a coffin, a grotesque reliquary for the annulment of a potentiality.

The history of the beheaded child will perpetuate in Olanna's memory as an oral history, a history which will be documented and graved in the evasive book of the young historian novelist: Ugwu " Olanna tells him how the bloodstains on the woman's wrapper blended into the fabric to form a rusty mauve. She describes the carved designs on the woman's calabash, slanting lines crisscrossing each other, and she describes the child's head inside: scruffy braids falling across the dark-brown face, eyes completely white, eerily open, a mouth in a small surprised"(Adichie,2006,p. 6) "That night, she had the first Dark Swoop: "A thick blanket descended from above and pressed itself over her face, firmly, while she struggled to breathe. Then, when it let go, freeing her to take in gulp after gulp of air, she saw burning owls at the window grinning and beckoning to her with charred feathers". (Adichie, 2006, p. 25)

Adichie conjures up bleak colors, or darkness's shadows, creating a scene so obscure and pervaded by fears that dissolution becomes a solution and preservation. The Dark Swoop is a suspended form of existence, from which the choice for life or for death stays both in the hands of the tormented, and in the hands of the tormentor, balancing on the same centers, the remembrance, again and again. The Dark Swoop is a symptom, a result of their dissociation from the strenuous events, and impossible to express, less in an opaque silence, a silence within which any attempt at identifying the wording is futile, the experience is viscerally felt, so incongruous with the normal flow of human evolution, that possesses another language, one unknown to normality. Olanna is initially incapable to recount her Dark Swoops, she wanted to ask [Odenigbo, her husband] to stop being ridiculous, but her lips were heavy. Speaking was a labor. When her parents and Kainene visited, she did not say much; it was Odenigbo who told them what she had seen (Adichie, 2006, p. 26)

Some times after, when Olanna describes the horrors seen and experienced in her escape toward home, she tries to purge her unbalanced mind by transferring the images into somebody else's memory. "A slight movement of the fingers denies the fact of death, a chimera or the illusory investment of a frail noṛ said to images too horrible to grasp. The bodies are like a poorly wiped blackboard, they are objects left behind by the interpreters from a morality with an implausible title such as Death is forever. "Olanna finds an empathic unsettlement in Ugwu, that's why she, chunkily narrates diverse episodes of the massacres. She continues saying: "The rusty mauve of the shrine cries the desperation of a mother who is incapable of coping with losing her son. The braided hair, as a routinely loving gesture, tries to annihilate the act of killing, the disappearance of the innocent victim. " The minuteness of Adichieřs description translates a terror too alien to be interiorized and recognized. Shadows

of Biafran trauma kept haunting Olanna's mind and that was a prospect for Ugwu to listen, imagine and write. Olanna describes "The eyes completely white, eerily open to a tragedy beyond the human comprehension witness individual and even collective acts of sociopathic climaxes". As Michael Harris Bond highlighted, we are well conditioned to find the pain and distress of violence, along with their accompanying embodiments in coagulated blood, amputated limbs, emaciated frames, severed limbs, and death masks, abhorrent but Adichie's mother is left without any countermeasure to her daughter's death, one of many. Olanna thought about the plaited hair resting in the calabash. She visualized the mother braiding it, her fingers oiling it with pomade before dividing it into sections with a wooden comb (Adichie, 2006, p. 8).

Another symptom of remembering trauma is silence, the incapacity of wording the horrors, which go beyond the ordinary dictionary. Richard is incapable of writing about his war experience, but he stops because the sentences (…) sounded just like the articles in the foreign press, as if these killings had not happened and, even if they had, as if they had not quite happened that way. The echo of unreality weighed each word down (Adichie, 2006, p. 48). Ugwu remains also silent about the traumatic events in which, as a combatant, this time, was forced to participate. By his silence, he distances himself from the collective rape in which he was part, but he feels the need to write down Olanna's experience, as if this chronicle would redeem his own abhorrence, as if his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of". (Adichie, 2006,p. 49). The characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are endowed by their authoress with resilience, a resilience which comes from a worldview that believed that "no condition is permanent in this world",(Adichie, 2006,p. 50) or from the detachment of the (white) chronicler, the objectivity of the observer.

At a certain moment, Olanna got tired of remembering, Ugwu describes that moment of her speechlessness as if he sees her again, he sees her before being as such shocked "a return of the authentic self of Olanna: a return of her wisdom and calm "and then: "She thinks, she visualizes the past, the peaceful gestures of the other reality, before the trauma". Adichie subtly invites us to recourse in the original selfhood, and to an acceptance of that small traumatic moments cherished by a frightened psyche. Olanna, thereafter kept testifying her flashbacks, but as several separated chunks as she remembers them, she says: "Mothers preserve parts of their dead babies, braiding their hair as in the homely acts of peace before the war, care for the decaying bodies, because denying is the only rational way to cope". (Adichie,2006, p. 38) The image will haunt Olanna the entire journey through the perils of war. Motherhood refused to her will amount to a severed head which, in the end, could have been any child's head, including hers.

One way of working through the psychological strain of trauma is to invest it with forgiveness. The intellectual in the world of horrors "Olanna" tries to behave decent to recognize, understand and give meaning to the traumatic shadows that haunt her mind and her performance but this goes beyond her will. The repetition of the interjection and the action in Olanna's mind about a woman who was bagging not to be killed "*Mmee-mmeemmee*, her lips are shaking, please don't kill me, *mmee-mmeemmee*!" and in the sandstorm drawn in the distance of the living eyes" (Adichie, 2006, p. 17). Olanna was not able to forget that harshness and how soldiers could be deprived of humanity and kill a woman. the scene of murder is so incomprehensible that it must be reduced, minimized and grounded in obscure places of imagination, where only ants could live and die, because "they are killing us like ants" Olanna speaks to herself. Then she must say it "Did you hear what I said? Ants. (Adichie, 2006, p. 12). The witnessing eyes have seen plenty, as Richard also says "I saw a whole family, a father and mother and three children, lying on the road to the motor park, just lying there. " (Adichie,2006,p. 13). Vultures are feeding on the bodies dumped outside the city walls, and war means to acknowledge what the eyes see "teachers hacked down in Zaria,

a full Catholic church in Sokoto set on fire, a pregnant woman split open in Kano. " (Adichie, 2006, p. 14)

Ugwu empathic unsettlement makes his imagination fertile and thus his reaction of the listener is denial "Ugwu that night felt a denial and the surge of loneliness in the storm of all of that" (Adichie, 2006, p. 13): remembering the unspoken atrocities. Death must be remembered in the private space of the inner self, it must be altered to a meaning sustained by the reflective thinking of the rationale mind. As Adichie maintains, this is what war denies to its sufferers, the moment of intimacy with life itself. Adichie's teenager, Ugwu, retreats, because it is too much, words are too heavy and bloody and their heralds are viciously reiterating them as a newly-bred litany of delusion. (…) Ugwu no longer listened. *It started in Kano* rang in his head. He did not want to tidy the guest room and find bed sheets and warm the soup and make fresh *garri* for them. He wanted them to leave right away. Or, if they would not leave, he wanted them to shut their filthy mouths. He wanted the radio announcers to be silent too, but they were not. They repeated the news of the killings in Maiduguri until Ugwu wanted to throw the radio out of the window. (Adichie, 2006, p. 15)

The memory of the traumatic scenes couldn't get out of neither Olanna nor Ugwu and Richard's mind. Those shadows invaded their souls so as they remember every single massacre scene. Olanna sees first the smoke "rising like tall gray shadows, she smells the scent of burning. On the strange, unfamiliar street, she paused for a moment because of the flames billowing from the roof, with grit and ash floating in the air". (Adichie, 2006, p. 18). She sees the bodies, crumpled like rug dolls in the derision of the theatrical display, in the ungainly twist "surrounded by the complex universe which used to be the brain of her uncle, now nothing more than something creamy white oozed through the large gash on the back of her uncle's head" (Adichie, 2006, p. 19). "The cuts on Aunty Ifeka's naked body were smaller, dotting her arms and legs like slightly parted red lips" (Adichie, 2006, p. 20) and " the red of the smile is substituted by the vivid lesions of a desecrated icon". The traumatic event remains incomprehensible; less it could be reshaped and imagined in the language of the living. The reaction is visceral, before being rational: Olanna felt a watery queasiness in her bowels before the numbness spread over her and stopped at her feet. The dream-like quality of the scene is amplified by the smoke, within which the human shapes drift like plumes of smoke, the curtain between acceptance and the refusal to comprehend the blood-stained grotesque of the axes and machetes the shapes instrument. The arms transform the obscurity in an artisanship of a monster's mind. Richard suddenly remembers "The bodies are merely obstacles which are not for stepping aside, but for stepping over. A woman's headless body, becoming the elongation of the bodiless head of the child, two images forcefully brought together in an attempt of making sense of the meaninglessness". (Adichie,2006,p. 45)

Another element of the traumatic process is experienced by Richard, and it is shame, shame at not feeling anything besides relief that his helplessness in protecting his friends remained undiscovered, selfish return to the gilt of being an outsider powerless against the cultural clash between two alien cultures. "He could not have saved Nnaemeka, but he should have *thought* about him first, he rationalizes his own too humanly boundaries, he knows that his perception of the present alters in a perception of a false image, one in which he ceases to be consumed by the other's death. He stared at himself and wondered if it really had happened, if he really had seen men die, if the lingering smells from (…) bloodied human bodies were only in his imagination. But he knew it had certainly happened and he questioned it only because he will lead himself to. (Adichie, 2006, p. 23)

The reactions to trauma and remembrance reflect the same stillness invoked by Adichie in expressing the tragic past: Olanna's mother collapsed; "she simply began to slide down as if her bones had liquefied until she half lay, half sat on the floor, Kainene cries for the first time since she and Olanna were children" (Adichie, 2006, p. 50). In his attempt to bring solace to

a grieving family, Richard wants to give meaning to his presence, to be the magnanimous angel who brought the last hours of their son to them, in search of his own redemption. But the death of the son takes away any other significance, the people surrounding the grieving close circle are still shadows, alike shadows pursuing a tradition rendered meaningless by the loss, because Richard's visit is not defined by the last.

Richard, like Olanna, remembered everything, in purges in which he hopes his memory would suppress itself, but instead everything "he took on a terrible transparence and he had only to close his eyes to see the freshly dead bodies on the floor of the airport and to recall the pitch of the screams" (Adicie, 2006, p. 28). Madness appears to be the expression of a freedom, but the escape is denied by the lucid mind. A mind enough lucid " to write calm replies to Aunt Elizabeth's frantic letters and tell her that he was fine and did not plan to return to England, to ask her to please stop sending flimsy air-mail editions of newspapers with articles about the Nigerian pogroms circled in pencil" (Adichie, 2006, p. 29).

The terrifying images of the starving child, "moving with small gestures impossible if he had some flesh underneath the skin, of the taut globes that were their bellies, and their buttocks and chests (…) collapsed into folds of rumpled skin, is morbidly contrasted with the fatness, the vibrancy and the livelihood of the flesh flies, reigning against the defeated and humiliated humanity". Igbo nation has become "the thick ugly odors of unwashed bodies and rotting flesh from the shallow graves behind the buildings, flies (…) over the sores on children's bodies, an ugly rash of reddened bites around their waists, like hives steeped in blood. (Adichie, 2006, p. 44)

6. Trauma & the Return to Selfhood: Uneasy Alliance

6.1. Reincarnating the Self through Narrating Biafra

Half of a Yellow Sun is the mixture of interwoven stories and thus a mixture of different narrators. The aspect of telling or narrating is central to the novel as it was the relief through which characters were able to remember, testify and write down their horrific memories. Adichie has different narrative strategies intersect in her novel which helped the characters to work through their trauma: Ugwu writes the story of the Nigeria-Biafra War in a book, Richard is a novelist. Richard and Ugwu 's articulation of their traumas is central to working through it. Adichie combines these to question the boundaries between the literary, the historical and the psychological.

The question of authorship, and its relationship to history, is one of the central issues in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In addition, Adichie has worked this issue into her novel by creating the characters Ugwu and Richard Churchill. Both are from very different backgrounds: they each represent two opposite views on life. Ugwu, the humble boy, comes from a small village, Opi, and he leaves it to come to Nsukka and work for Odengibo as a houseboy. Olanna used to rely a lot on him as he is "the mature child" though he was educationally limited. Because of his early maturity, Olanna empathic unsettlement comes from Ugwu as he was "the one and the only one who could listen and imagine" (Adichie, 2006, p. 98). Richard is an Englishman who has come to Nigeria to study Igbo-Ukwu art as he was fond of it. His project was to write about it but it seems that trauma penetrated his mind and absorbed his desire so that "he would narrate what really happened there only". They are the frame narrators in the novel; it is through them that Adichie tries to make a point about who history belongs to and who should write about it. Ugwu is the writer of "The Book", which is a historical account from the time period from the British colonization to the Nigeria-Biafra War and it includes the testimonial chunks Olanna narrated. Adichie uses The Book to voice her own views on history, who should write it, and how it is constructed. These questions are complicated further in the African context because of the presence of the white colonizer who has had a decisive influence on the dominant narrative about the continent and its history. Writing, for

adichie, has got a critical effectiveness as it proves worthy in preserving history and providing a relief in the process of the self assertion. Both Ugwu and Olanna, contributed in establishing a worthy corpus that as they described it "was that through that book that I finally could recognize and accept the fact that I was dead by my memories and I lost many of my beloved and many of her people", she, "as people knew her, speaks sedately as if her soul came back to her, she speaks faithfully: Allah does not allow this, Mohammed said. Allah will not forgive them. Allah will not forgive the people who have made them do this. Allah will *never* forgive this. ". "I might forget but I will never forgive" (Adichie, 2006,p. 68)

6.1.1. The Ownership of History

There are excerpts from this book inserted at regular intervals in the main story. They appear typically at the end of a chapter, and the final part of the late sixties constitutes a larger gap in the intervals between the excerpts. This is the part where a lot of formative events happen for the character Ugwu, who is the author of The Book. Hence, this may be the reason for the larger gap, as these events are formative for Ugwu as a writer. For much of the novel, the reader is meant to believe that Richard Churchill is the author of The Book. Only on the very last page the real author or narrator is revealed: Ugwu. This mistaken identity is put purposefully as Adichie wants to prove that Richard is presented as a struggling writer, he is fascinated by the Igbo culture and history, he is the one that decides on the title: "The World Was Silent When We Died", and he has an academic background. However, her purpose was mainly to show that Ugwu is not the author: "he seems to be rather unknowing about the political and economical issues of Nigeria, he cannot read or write well when he arrives at Odenigbo's house, and his status as a houseboy does not make him the most evident candidate for the position as author of a historical book".

The opposition between these two characters raises the question of "who has the authoritative voice to represent the history of Africa?" Its history has been preserved by a multitude of voices and sources, from the African unwritten sources and memory, which includes storytelling and the oral tradition, to the oppressive voice of the colonizer. After the Nigerian independence of 1960, African intellectuals argued that the African people needed to take back their own history, out of the colonizer's grip. The confusion about the author of The Book is a device Adichie uses to put emphasis on the fact that in the colonial era Africa's history had become a topic for the white colonizer. During this time, Africa was presented as the "dark continent" with no history that was worth mentioning. Ugwu is doing what Chinua Achebe did before him: taking back the right to his own history, and trying to present it in his words and on paper. Richard is writing to compensate for his postcolonial neurosis, and is therefore writing in a colonial context. (Masterson, 2000, p. 144) Even though he tries his hardest to become an integral part of the Biafran culture and its people, he always remains an outsider.

Through the entire course of the novel, Richard is struggling to write the novel that will connect him to the African tradition, he is fascinated by Igbo-Ukwu art, and his novel goes through different titles, "all referring to the Igbo past and culture: The Basket of Hands, and In the Time of Roped Pots. But his search results in the realization that he himself is still the result of colonial prejudice, as the poet Okeoma points out after Richard commented on the complex Igbo art of the ninth century: "You sound surprised, as if you never imagined these people [Igbo people] capable of such things" (Adichie, 2006, p. 111). Richard is very troubled by the remark, and does not consider himself to be influenced by any prejudice. As he learns to speak Igbo, and gets further integrated into the Igbo culture, he begins to consider himself as a Biafran: "We are still extracting from some fields we control in Egbema. " (Adichie, 2006, p. 372). But in the end he realizes: "The war isn't my story to tell, really but I felt a relief and a peace of mind. " (Adichie, 2006, p. 425). Something that Ugwu had always known: "Ugwu nodded. He had never thought that it was. " (Adichie, 2006, p. 425)

In this way, Richard has a symbolical role for Adichie. As he "gradually finds himself paralyzed for words, in his place Ugwu rises up as the historian far more suited for the task" (Hawley, 2012, p. 21). Ugwu borrowed the title of The Book "The World Was Silent When We Died" from Richard, who got it from something Colonel Madu said to him: "The world has to know the truth of what is happening, because they simply cannot remain silent while we die." (Adichie,2006, p. 305) ;Colonel Madu asked Richard to write articles for the Propaganda Directorate, and Richard accepts, this becomes the way in which he makes his contribution. The line stays with him, so he decides to use it for his book which he later gives up. It is worth noting that the title which he ultimately decides on comes from an indigenous Nigerian, and not from himself. Whereas Richard found writing such a struggle, for Ugwu it seems to be the next logical step in his life, and he seems to have a far more natural relationship to the material he writes about. As he starts writing he tries out different things, neither poetry nor his own love story works out, but when he writes about the war, the words seem to sound right. However, his writings also stem from an experience he had in the war which had a large impact on his life. Ugwu raped a girl. By presenting Ugwu as the only one suited to write the story of Biafra, Adichie validates her own role as a writer and shows the different ways in which history can be preserved. Hawley argues that "the Biafra War, though a war she Adichie has not personally experienced, is her legacy, and its telling arguably her duty" (Hawley, 2012, p. 21). Adichie herself affirms that she "feels a real sense of connection with the country Nigeria" and with the people, so this may account for putting the story of the war in the hands in the indigenous Nigerian Ugwu, rather than the British Richard from overseas. (Adichie, "I left home to find home"). She herself acknowledges this, that by making Ugwu the writer of The Book, she "wanted to make a strongly-felt political point about who should be writing the stories of Africa" (Adichie, 2006, p. 3); Adichie uses her novel as a way to deal with the past of Nigeria, which is also her past. She does this by showing her view on how the roles should be divided. Her opinion on who should write history of Nigeria resonates through the entire novel, and finally comes full circle in the revelation of Ugwu as the writer of The Book.

6.2.Reincarnating the Self through Writing about Biafra

The Book Returning to the excerpts from The Book, which is in essence a historical account of the time period from the British colonization to the Nigeria-Biafra War. Each has a different perspective, but they form a coherent narrative. John Marx discusses this in his essay "Failed State Fiction" (Marx, 2013, p. 615-616) Ugwu is not only a historian, he writes about various aspects that concern the way in which the Nigeria- Biafra War came about. This reflects reality, as history had many different dimensions. History is being preserved by people who come from a variety of disciplines, not only historians, but also creative writers and archaeologists. By constructing The Book is this manner, Adichie again emphasizes the multi-dimensionality of reality and history. Ugwu approaches Nigeria's past from many different angles, showing that there are as many interpretations as there are angles. This is the same narrative strategy Adichie uses in the entire novel. In this way, Ugwu also occupies an intermediary position as historian novelist, just like Adichie does. In some passages of The Book, Ugwu uses strategies that Ankersmit categorizes as pertaining to the historian, such as an emphasis on "saying" in the passages that focus more on the economical and political past. However, he also uses strategies that pertain to the novelist, as he puts emphasizes "showing" in other passages that focus more on the human, personal aspect of the past: facts that Olanna testifies. He, like Adichie, uses the felt history to punctuate the political and economical events.

The first excerpt describes the prologue of The Book: "For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash". (Adichie, 2006, p. 82); It functions like a "memoir of witnessing", as it describes how Olanna gives testimony to Ugwu about what she witnessed

on the train (Marx, 2012, p. 616). In this passage, the focus is on "showing" reality that is open to the reader's interpretation. Here The Book also deals with the applied knowledge of the past. The first excerpt includes a description of the cover of the book, which is a map. The second excerpt focuses on the colonial aspect of how Nigeria was formed: "In 1914, the governor-general joined the North and the South, and his wife picked a name. Nigeria was born" (Adichie, 2006, p. 115) A fourth discusses the economy of Nigeria that was inexistent until independence, and a fifth discusses the starvation that reigned in Biafra during the war. The sixth excerpt describes the international reactions, or the lack thereof to the Biafran Republic. These passages focus more on saying in unambiguous ways: this is what it was like. The seventh excerpt represents the epilogue, which is a poem Ugwu wrote, modeled after a poem by Okeoma. Lastly, the eighth excerpt only consists of one line: "Ugwu writes his dedication last: For Master, my good man;" which ends the novel. (Adichie, 2006, p. 433). It is through this line that the reader finally comes to the realization that Ugwu is in fact the author of The Book. As a writer, Ugwu approaches the war from a lot of different angles: from a personal point of view, a historical, economical, political, international one, and a poetic one. This mirrors Adichie's approach to her novel. Like Adichie, Ugwu mixes the personal and the political, with the inclusion of Olanna's anecdote about the woman with the calabash (Adihie, 2006, p. 82)

7. Conclusion

This paper sought to have a postcolonial reading of a Nigerian novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda N'guzie Adichie. To sum up, the novel is a real depiction of a *Decolonized Trauma Model* as it connects a traumatic experience with a postcolonial African context and as it is full of images of war within the Nigerian space which erupts with a tremendous potential of dehumanizing the self. In the novel, the form of the trauma adopted is the trauma of war and the process of accepting the harshness of traumatic incidents is challenged as characters behaved differently. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, with a personal and a national motivation, reveals the horrors and the consequences of watching those horrors from a psychological perspective which defines a particular worldview, a proposal for understanding not the reasons underlying an act, but the reasons for the inability to preserve the self and react defensively. Indeed, Adichie shows how can the self, that used to value its African belonging, be in a double edged position of either to adapt and reconstruct or perish and deconstruct when the society collapses. In Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), the peace of mind and the self in daily life has been altered and the characters react in extra-ordinary ways which tightly influence their selfhood and identities. Adichie's characters are incapable of interiorizing the atrocities and as a result, they cease to define themselves as products of normality, mediate on a crossway between acting toward rebellion or toward assimilation and transformation. Through the acts of narrating and writing about trauma using several harsh jargon and bloody metaphors, Adichie's characters could work through trauma and voice the wound inflicted by the Biafran war, a battle asserting the tragedy of believing in balance and the right to intimacy. These linguistic mechanisms show how could the trauma of war, a shattering experience in itself, escalate in social illness when inflicted by African on African that's why issues about authorship and ownership of history were to be analyzed. As trauma haunts the entire parts of the novel, Nigerians in the last part gained their independence: a healing potential is tracing lines, but the futility of such a lesson in history is once again proven to be the only stable assertion. Adichie's narrative enterprise is distressing, not by insisting on the substance of horror, but by describing it minutely, with a rationality that belies the grotesque of the images darkening her writing.

References

1. Achebe, Christie. (2014). *Igbo Women in the Nigerian-Biafran War 1967-1970: An Interplay of Control, Journal of Black Studies,* Vol. 40, No. 5 (May 2010), pp. 78,811,

published by Sage Publications, Inc., <http://www. jstor. org/40648606>, accessed 11/16/2014, 03:27.
2. Adesanmi, Pius and Chris Dunton. (2005). *Nigeria's Third Generation Writing: Historiography and Preliminary Theoretical Considerations",* English in Africa, 1, 32.
3. Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. (2014). *African Authenticityr and the Biafran Experience*, *Transition* No. 99 (2008), <http://www. jstor. org. /stable/20204260>, accessed 10/25/2014, 12:03.
4. Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. (2006). *Half of a Yellow Sun*, New York: Anchor Books, 2006.
5. Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. (2011) *"I Left Home to Find Home*" <http://www. guardian. co. uk/travel/2005/mar/06/observerescapesection3> [accessed 22 April].
6. Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. (2006). The Story Behind the Book: Q&A with the Author‟ <http://www. halfofayellowsun. com/content. php?page=tsbtb&n=5&f=2> [accessed 30 March 2011].
7. Bessel van der Kolk, and Onno van der Hart. (1995). *the Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma.* In Trauma: Explorations in Memory. Edited by Cathy Caruth. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.
8. Black, Dora, Newman, Martin, Harris-Hendriks, Jean, Mezey, Gillian (eds.). (1997)
9. Bryce, Jane. 52008). Half and Half Children": Third-Generation Women Writers and the New Nigerian Novel‟, *Research in African Literature*, 2.
10.Caruth, Cathy. (2004). Trauma and Experience: Introduction‟, in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: John Hopkins university press).
11.Drožđek, Boris, Wilson, John. P. (Eds.). (2007). Voices *of Trauma. Treating Survivors AcrossCultures*, New York: Springer Science and Business Media, LLC.
12.Frantz Fanon. (1952). *Black Skins, White Masks.* Grove Press: 251. USA
13.Frantz Fanon. (1961). *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press: 251. USA
14.Hawley, John C. (2008). *Biafra as Heritage and Symbol: Adichie, Mbachu and Iweala"*, in *Research in African Literatures*, 39, 2.
15.Hewett, Heather. (2005). *Coming of Age: Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie and the Voice of the Third Generation", English in Africa*, 1, 32.
16.Ingelaere, Bert, (2009): '"*Does the truth pass across the fire without burning?" Psychological Trauma. A Developmental Approach*, London: Gaskell, Royal College of Psychiatrists.
17.Jill Bennet, and Rosanne Kennedy. (2003). *"Introduction In World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time"*. Edited by Jill Bennet and Rosanne Kennedy. New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
18.Jones, Manina, (2003): '*Stolen Life?* Reading through Two I's in Postcolonial
Collaborative Autobiography', in Laura Moss, ed., *Is Trauma Postcolonial? Unsettling Canadian Literature* (Waterloo, Ontario:Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2003), pp. 207–22
19.Kadar, Marlene(2005): '*Wounding Events and the Limits of Autobiography', in Vijay Agnew, ed., Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) pp. 81–109
20.Kaplan, E. Ann,(2005): *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2005)
21. LaCapra, Dominick. (2001). *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Maryland: The JohnHopkins
University Press). *Locating the short circuit in Rwanda's Gacaca courts', Journal of Modern African Studies*, 47. 4 (2009), 507–28
22. Michelle Balaev. (2014). *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

23. Michael Harris Bond. ;(2007). *Culture and Collective Violence: How Good People, Usually Men, Do Bad Things*, in Boris Drožđek, John. P. Wilson (eds.), *Voices of Trauma. Treating Survivors across Cultures*, New York: Springer Science and Business Media, LLC.
24. Michael Rothberg. (2011). "From Gaza to Warsaw: Mapping multidirectional memory. " Criticism 53:523–48.
25. Michael Rothberg. (2008). *"Decolonizing Trauma Studies: A Response. "* Studies in the Novel 40: 224–34.
26. Michael Rothberg. (2009). *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.
27. Moodley, R., West, W. (2005). *Integrating traditional practice into counseling and Psychotherapy*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Productions.
28. Nijenhuis, Ellert and Otto van der Hart. (2011): *"Dissociation and Trauma: A New Definition and Comparison with Previous Formulations," Journal of Trauma and Dissociation* 12. 4 416–445.
29. Novak, Amy. (2014). *Who Speaks? Who listens?: The Problem of Address In Two Nigerian Trauma Novels, Studies in the Novel,* Vol. 40, No. 1/2, *Postcolonial Trauma Novels* (Spring- Summer 2008), pp. 31-51, <http://www. jstor. org/stable/29533858>, accessed 09/27/2014,1:52.
30. Piers, Craig. (1999) :*"Remembering Trauma: A Characterological Perspective. " Trauma and Memory*. Eds Linda Williams and Victoria Banyard. Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 1999. 57–67.
31. Roger Luckhurst. (2008). *The Trauma Question*. London: Routledge
32. Stef Craps, and Gert Buelens. (2008). *"Introduction: Postcolonial Trauma Novels and Studies in the Novel.* Yak production.
33. Stef Craps. (2013). *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
34. Tatum, B. D. (2000): *The complexity of identity: "Who am I?. "* In Adams, M., Blumenfeld, W. J., Hackman, H. W., Zuniga, X., Peters, M. L. (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice: An anthology on racism, sexism, anti-semitism, heterosexism, classism and ableism (pp. 9-14).* New York: Routledge.
35. Ward, Abigail. (2007). Psychological formulations", in *The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by John McLeod (Oxfordshire: Routledge), pp. 190 – 201.
36. Young, Allan. (1995): *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.