



The writers' tools: Literary techniques in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Roses and Bullets* and *Destination Biafra*

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Abstract

Nigerian female war writers design their stories to revolve around ordinary people especially women and children who were subjected to the horrors of the war without their consent. In order to achieve their communicative purposes of creatively telling their stories, they used language to integrate different techniques such as Role reversal, Creative recollection, Flashback, African story telling technique, Transliteration, Proverbs, Subjectivity in presenting viewpoints, search or quest motif into their novels. Using formalistic approach, the study gave a close reading of the novels by appraising some of the techniques used by Chimamanda Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo in *Roses and Bullets* and Buchi Emecheta in *Destination Biafra* to determine how effectively they have applied them to show their creative competence. The study concludes that the techniques were successfully utilized through the authors' artistic use of language and then recommends that other young writers should adopt these authors use of literary techniques and apply them in writing because it heightens the effect of the narrative by creating suspense and enhancing their thematic focus.

Keywords: literary techniques, formalism, defamiliarization, role reversal, transliteration, proverbs and motif

Introduction

The Nigerian literature which came up as a result of the civil war has its significance in the society and has been evaluated in a question raised by Chinyere Nwahunanya^[1], 'What is the place of Nigerian war literature in the African political and literary experience?' The answer to this pertinent question seems to be embedded in an editorial remark of *A Harvest from Tragedy: Critical Perspectives on Nigerian Civil War Literature*:

In its re-creation and interpretation of history, Nigerian war literature has enriched the existing body of historical writing from Africa, especially historical fiction. In this way, the writers have made literature continue to function as the mirror of society. In the process of mirroring society and criticizing its pitfalls, the war literature also serves as a compass for social redirection. (p.14)

In other words, there is always a purpose for any piece of composition and technique is a means of achieving that purpose. The resources of the language, which encodes the impression of the writer, usually enhance the purpose. It is then, the resource of the language that aids individual writing. Language therefore, contributes immensely to actualize the authors' artistic visions. Ngara Emmanuel^[2] argues that 'although a work of art consists of various elements such as plot, theme, character and ideas... without language these elements would not be what they are. They are realized and given form through the medium of language' (p. 2)

It then means that the success of a novel cannot be achieved unless all other aspects of the novel are harmoniously brought together through the language of the novel. In support of this, Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short^[3] are of the view that

'Great novelist/artist is found in the use of words, and the challenge remains of trying to explain the nature of that artistry, and how it integrates with the larger artistic achievement of the writer' (p. 2). Thus, literary work involves the creative use of language to achieve the authors' communicative purposes.

Adichie, Adimora-Ezeigbo, and Emecheta's novels, designed their stories to revolve around ordinary people, especially women and children who were subjugated to the horrors of the war without their consent. They want to write their stories to honour the innocent victims of the war and collective memory of an entire nation. To achieve this, they linguistically incorporate the seriousness of certain scenes and incidents into the novel. For instance, the clear description of the characters brutal experiences strikes the reader with deep horror. The novels' linguistic medium helps to stamp distinctive personalities of the characters and their actions while making sure that one does not lose the ugly sight of the war situation that is being described.

These female writers have the necessary insight needed to present the inner feelings of women in the light of their experiences from their point of view, which could only vividly capture the agonies felt from the brutalization of the women in the novels. This portrays popular opinion of most female writers in their strive to change the status of women in the society, as succinctly described by Eldred Durosimi Jones^[4]:

A significant development since independence has been the increasing importance of women writers and the consequent focus on women's situation in society, their pre-occupations with family and work, and their attempts to free themselves from the trammels of tradition. (p.1)

The need to restore the dignity of women is what has influenced these writers preoccupation with the recovery of history of the humiliation of women in the novels, which in itself is a form of protest. By returning to the past, with all its pain and trauma, they are stating that the story of the Nigerian Civil war is incomplete if it does not accurately and honestly depict the victimization, maltreatment and brutalization of its most vulnerable victims. She demands vehemently that, in the narration of the condition and situation of women as an endangered specie during the Nigerian Civil War, there must be no ruptures, no silences, and no fragmentation. As a significant event occurring in the past, it must be fully narrated within the present moment in such a way that there is no ambiguity, and by extension, no repression of the truth of what happened. To achieve this, the paper tends to study some of the techniques the authors applied in presenting their works that is giving a close reading of the text and not only looking at the content and the biographical context of a work.

Therefore, this paper hinges on the Formalistic Approach which sees literature as a systematic set of linguistic and structural elements that can be analyzed or can be seen as a self-enclosed system which can be studied not for its content but for its form. It provides readers a way to understand and enjoy a work for its own inherent value as a piece of literary art thereby putting the focus on the text by emphasizing a close reading of the work itself. It does not treat literature as an expression of social, religious or political ideas; neither does it reduce the text to being a promotional effort for some cause or belief. Dobie Ann ^[5] posits that this type of criticism was born as a reaction against the attention that scholars and teachers in the early part of the 20th century paid to the biographical and historical context of a work, thereby diminishing the attention given to the literature itself. The formalists also assert that everyday language is ordinary but literary language is different because it deviates from the expected, using all the devices an author has the power to manipulate to make what is familiar seem strange and unfamiliar. In fact, Victor Shklorosky coined the term 'defamiliarization' to refer to the literary process that gives vitality to language, which otherwise is all too predictable. Defamiliarization is the artful aspect of a work that makes the reader alert and alive; it causes the reader to intensify the attention paid to the text to look again at an image in an effort to take in the unexpected. Their focus was on poetics-the strategies a writer used-rather than on history, biography or subject matter. This is exactly what was achieved in this paper.

The thematic preoccupation of these authors is to paint picturesquely the futility of Nigeria-Biafra war, which killed millions of Nigerian people, and children as well as its attendant consequences in Nigeria's nation-building project and the costly price many innocent people paid for this human error.

The writers' techniques

To bring out the aesthetic beauty in their works, they used different techniques to arrive at their thematic focus and make the readers alert and alive. The techniques are:

Creative recollection

Destination Biafra, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Roses and Bullets* are anchored in creative recollection. The novels are based on the peoples' painful experiences, which, in reality, actually invite repression rather than remembrance. Recollection, viewed from a postmodern perspective, always involves loss or forgetting. Even though, they interpret Nigeria using different codes and from different positions, they are all overshadowed by a prevalent sense of loss. However, their losses in the novels are demonstrated in their dedication and foreword of the works, to the memory of many relatives and friends who died during the war. The authors narration of the Biafran secessionist enclave develops into a symbol of loss for scores of people of Igbo extraction who have been brutalized and traumatized, especially women and children who have anticipated that Republic of Biafra will provide the comfort needed to actualize their humanity and dignity, but only for Biafra to become short lived. The novels are rooted in the characters painful experiences of futility and inexplicable suffering orchestrated by a deep-seated animosity whose consequences were borne by hapless women and children.

For the authors used in this discourse, remembering inevitably entails pain and, eventually, desires for repression transform into a necessity of repression. The experiences of Biafrans are transfigured into a discourse of repression and their recollections of Biafran experiences are translated into a narrative of loss. Within the contemporary Nigerian context, their recollection of Biafran experiences demonstrates more of a loss of memory rather than a recalling of the past. The authors' reflection of Biafra signifies nothing more than the loss of memories of vanished reality.

Role reversal

Emecheta also uses the technique of reversing of role to reveal the prejudices of the reader when she makes her hero a heroine, who joins the army and there she gets treated as a woman by the men she meets throughout the war. Katherine Fishburn ^[6] posits "... that Emecheta has subverted the so-called masculine subject of war from within by the very act of writing about it herself from a woman's perspective. In fact, she might be said to be signifying on those novels that glorify the heroics of soldiers and ignore the pain of the civilians" (p.130).

In the novel, Debbie Ogedemgbe serves as Emecheta's mouthpiece. Unlike her creator who by force of circumstances is away from her homeland, Debbie is fully involved in the issues, indeed more involved than most people. Through Debbie, the author is able to carefully trace the political history of Nigeria over the decades. She is forced to negotiate her position between conflicting sets of discourses: of gender, family, ethnicity, culture, history and nationality. In order to reach reconciliation, Emecheta similarly has to come to terms with herself in relation to the historical situation she is protesting in *Destination Biafra*. Debbie refuses to live a hyphenated experience orchestrated by her repeated rape in her determination to get to Biafra to stop Abosi from continuing with the Biafran project. She manages to get to

Biafra by subverting the burden placed on her by her gender. Debbie's courage in embarking on a mission to Biafra underscores Jean Block's ^[7] argument that, 'Sexual identity means... the earning of a sense of self that includes a recognition of gender secure enough to permit the individual to manifest human qualities that our society... has labeled (manly),'(p.2).

On one hand, Debbie resists the societal codification of her gender hegemonic narrative, and on the other hand, she rejects the male-dominated notion that the army is an exclusive preservation of men by enlisting in the army.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Olanna's strong-willed disposition comes to the fore when she leads the search party for Kainene after the war. This is commendable, especially when men like Odenigbo and Richard have lost all hopes. When Odenigbo and Richard betray emotion over the death of mama and inability to trace Kainene respectively, she is ever ready to console both men. Her resolve to adopt and care for 'Baby' is a good commentary on her love for Odenigbo and in contrast to Eloka's rejection of Ginika in *Roses and Bullets*.

The personality of Kainene makes a strong statement on the virtue Adichie bestows on her female characters. In a typical Igbo fashion, Kainene is a determined business-minded character. She is saddled with the enviable task of managing her father's vast business concern in Port Harcourt. She discharges this duty meritoriously and becomes the cynosure of all eyes. This quality endears her to people hence Richard feels no qualms in denouncing Susan for her. Although she repeatedly regrets the ill preparedness of Biafra for war against Nigeria, she plays her part, during the war. After the fall of Port Harcourt, she relocates to Orlu and establishes a refugee camp to care for the displaced and homeless people. Even though she benefits in terms of contract from the war, she comes to mind as a determined Igbo woman whose commitment to the cause of Biafra is never in doubt. She refuses to move to London with her parents and resolves to thrive in war-torn Biafra. Her trade along enemy zone is a testimony to her determination to make her mark during the war, though she never returns.

African story telling technique

The most interesting feature of the novels is the use of narrative techniques connected to traditional Africa storytelling. The authors applied this technique to entertain, teach historical and moral lessons in their novels. John Hawley ^[8] postulates that Emecheta (and other authors) uses an omniscient author who can peep into secret conferences and private bedrooms, something, which is not common in African oral tradition. However, she used one Africa device; the characters represent whole groups of people. Debbie represents Nigeria as it can become in the future, Alan Gray represents Britain's post-colonial relations with Africa and the little baby Biafra who soon dies of starvation is a clear symbol for the unsuccessful Biafra experiment. Even Adichie and Ezeigbo use the same African story telling technique in telling their stories. Practically, all the characters in the novels represented ideas and political positions of the tribe and classes in a particular time. Therefore, the authors seem to be saying, that war is an enemy of life and community and that we must avoid those conflicts that will trigger off violence.

New realism

New realism is a term used to describe a trend that focuses on true –to –life form that is the factual and easily evident. It is usually applied to literary works that are set in contemporary times and aims at a naturalistic portrayal of a problem plaguing us. Novels written today are written in straightforward language about contemporary issues. Bryce ^[9] points out that the majority of the latest novels written by Nigerian female writers have been realistic. Realist writers like Emecheta, Adichie and Adimora-Ezeigbo portray real life by depicting the traumatic experiences and sexual play of their characters. This is done by attempting to represent reality in their novels as how the characters experienced them. They sought to bring more honest emotions, franker language and bolder ideas to literature. Their novels opened an entirely new range of subjects and little remained that was taboo.

Biblical allusions

Emecheta ^[10] also uses Biblical allusion in the novel as exemplified in the following statement,

'Don't you people fear God' (p.107).

Debbie's mother while scolding the Nigerian soldiers who abuse the refugees by killing an unborn baby and raping Debbie pronounces the above sentence. Emecheta glorifies God-fearing, simple people who want to live in peace and realize that there is someone above everyone; no one has the right to act God and decide over life and death. In the key-chapters of the novel, those that deal in the "Refugees from the Darkening Night", Debbie, experiences a new fellowship in women from a quite different social context than her own. This part shows Emecheta at her best, with allusions to the Bible and African oral tradition, written in the enjoyable language that the reader recognize from her earlier novels.

Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo ^[11] also uses Biblical allusions in *Roses and Bullets* and this shows that in the face of very difficult situation, we turn to God for consolation and protection. Thus, the young Udo who was conscripted into the army was pushed to the war front without proper military training. As he turns to God for solution she records his experiences;

'As each shell landed and exploded, Udo shut his eyes and prayed, remembering he had not prayed regularly since the war started. "God, I didn't forget you, please don't forget me," he prayed. "Save me."(p. 438)

However, *Roses and Bullets* is a bold attempt to bring to our memories once again the futility of war and the need to follow the path of dialogue.

Non-chronological pattern

It is important to note that *Half of a Yellow Sun* ^[12] swings back and forth between the pre-war early 1960s and the conflict stricken southern region in the late 1960s. The swinging movement of the narrative is most effective, as it becomes a device, which draws parallels and creates contrasts that implies the physical, mental and emotional changes the characters endure. There are cruel moments that transport the reader directly to the fighting grounds, for example when Olanna is caught in the north visiting a friend when the first Igbo killings begin and barely makes it back alive to the south: 'A liquid – urine – was spreading on the floor of the train.

Olanna felt it coldly soaking into her dress. The woman with the calabash nudged her, then motioned to some other people close by. 'Bianu, come,' she said. 'Come and take a look.' She opened the calabash... Olanna looked into the bowl. She saw the little girl's head with the ashy-grey skin and the plaited hair and rolled-back eyes and open mouth. She stared at it for a while before she looked away. Somebody screamed.' (p.149) The novel is structured in a non-chronological way; the first part covers the early sixties, the second part jumps ahead to the late sixties, the third part returns to the moment where the first one left off, and the fourth one continues, with the second part on the late sixties. In this way, the second part causes some confusion in the reader's mind because it deals with events of which he has not yet been informed, most notably Odenigbo's infidelity.

Adichie uses the flashbacks and flash-forwards to show the constructed nature of the representation of reality. It is in the second part that Olanna and Richard lived their traumatic experiences that will have a big impact on their lives. Adichie uses the realist mode to tell her story, and represent the traumatic experiences of the characters. Each of the four major parts of the novel is subdivided into chapters.

Each chapter starts with the name of the character whose point of view that chapter represents. First, these follow each other in a fixed order: Ugwu – Olanna – Richard. These alternate systematically until we reach chapter thirteen, which is part of part two: The Late Sixties; this part runs from chapter seven to eighteen. Olanna is featured in chapter thirteen, when according to the order that has been followed Ugwu should have been the next narrator. This is directly after both Olanna and Richard live their traumatic moment, and for the rest of part two the order of the narrators is jumbled. Here the trauma did have an effect on the narrative; it changes the order in which the story is told. The entire part one follows the systematic order, and part three as well. These two parts both represent the early sixties, a period when the war had not yet broken out and no character had lived through any major traumatic moments. Part four picks up where part three left off, and creates a new order of narrators: Olanna – Ugwu – Richard. The use of mediation in this novel also emphasizes the past as something that cannot be grasped immediately, or by one person only. Everyone has their own experience of the past, and their own view on it. This is what the use of different narrators' points out.

The novel does not have an open or undecided ending; it ends on a definitive note: the war for Biafra is over, many things have been lost in the process, and everyone is licking their wounds. This may indicate that for Adichie, after writing her novel, she could finally close off that chapter of her life. On the other hand, she would like it to be closed off. In addition, there is no repetition of scenes from different point of views; the reader through the eyes of one character sees most events. The events follow each other, each seen by another character, and the story advances in this way. This indicates Adichie's view on how reality should be represented in literature.

Roses and Bullet ^[11] is divided into four parts to show the different events that led to the war and the war itself. Part one, 'The Beginning', spanning chapters 1 to 7, shows the beginnings of the war, the increasing number of Igbo people that had left their residence in the different parts of Nigeria to

converge in the Eastern part of the country, as a security measure from the killings and to participate in the war that had already started. Part Two, 'Before the Beginning', relates the gradual tension and preparation for the war; the creation of Biafra; the growing readiness of the federal government and Biafra; the uncertainty and apprehension that filled the new country. For instance, their principal, Miss Broomfield, asked Ginika and other students of Elemenwa Girls' School, Port Harcourt to leave the school for their respective homes, as the new government of Biafra had instructed that the school be vacated. The girls packed their luggage and headed into an uncertain future filled with the sounds of guns and bombs. Part Three, 'The Middle' is the largest, from chapter twelve to thirty three, shows a full-fledged war and the ingenuity, determination, patriotism, lack of sufficient sophisticated weaponry, and the conscription of young boys into the ill-equipped Biafran army. In the midst of the air raids and deaths, marriages were contracted, and friendships were forged. The fourth part, 'The End', throws up the difficult end of a phase of life, while the fifth and last part, 'After the End', offers the possibility of a better life.

Subjectivity in presenting view points

Adichie was a witness to live testimony of her parents and grandparents who were still alive, and were able to tell her stories about the war. Inevitably, she will represent the past in a different way. The use of unreliable narrators and the failure of language are not present in her novel, and this shows that she mediates the past in a different way. The narrators in the novel create tensions, suspense and interest by showing the texts through other eyes, and deepen the significance of the main events in the novels. Adichie describes her characters as follows: 'I wanted to write characters, who are driven by impulses that they may not always be consciously aware of, which I think is true for us human beings' (Adichie,^[13] 'The Story Behind the Book'). Not all the thoughts and actions of a character are questioned or discussed. This puts the emphasis again on subjective experience; each character has his or her own point of view. Adichie attempts to represent reality in her novel as how the characters would experience them. These characters tell the story how they see it. The way in which they do this is through their words: each character has his or her own voice and use of language. Language does not fail to represent the experiences that these characters live through. Adichie represents their experiences in a very clear and detailed manner. An example of this: 'She stopped when she saw the bodies. Uncle Mbaezi lay face down in an ungainly twist, legs splayed. Something creamy-white oozed through the large gash on the back of his head' (p.147). One could say that the description of the traumatic moment is almost too detailed for the reader to bear.

Unlike Adichie, Emecheta and Adimora- Ezeigbo presented their stories through one major character Debbie and Ginika respectively. They also represent their characters experiences in a clear and detailed manner by creating tension and suspense. An example from *Roses and Bullets* ^[11],

... She saw an arm and a leg fly past and land a little distance from her. She shuddered. People were still running past, crying out in their frenzy. As she pressed her head

down once more, Ginika felt a human body land on top of her. She fainted... She flinched at the sight before her – a thin woman with a battered head, still bleeding... the dead and the wounded littered the ground. (p. 211)

Humour

This narrative strategy is intertwined with simple moments where an action or thought shows the distinct emotional and material differences that begin to be reflected in all of the characters; when they realize how much meat they used to have at their disposition or they miss the scent of soap their family members used to carry. Nevertheless, the story continues to surprise, recoiling from melodrama, using humour to pave the way instead. Thus, in *Half of a Yellow Sun* ^[12], ‘A hawkler walked into the compound with an enamel tray covered in newspapers, holding up a brown lizard on a stick... ‘I want some, Mummy Ola, please,’ Baby said. Olanna ignored her and continued to brush her hair. ‘Those things are not good for you,’ Olanna said... Baby began to cry. Olanna turned and looked at Ugwu in exasperation and suddenly they were both smiling at the situation: Baby was crying to be allowed to eat a lizard’ (p. 352).

Myths and fairy tales

The use of myths or fairy tales is present in the narratives and important in Adichie’s representation of the story. The old beliefs of the Igbo tribes are present in the novel, and viewed in different ways by various characters. In this religion, there is a belief in witchcraft, bad omens and spirits. Ugwu stands by these beliefs, as does Odenigbo’s mother, who is a practitioner of witchcraft. Characters such as Olanna, Odenigbo and Richard, who grew up outside of the small villages, consider these beliefs as myths. Ugwu believes in the existence of spirits, it is something, which is present in his everyday life: ‘Ugwu was vaguely frightened the first time he saw him because he had always imagined that only evil spirits had grass-coloured eyes.’ (p.18) Odenigbo’s mother also believes in the power of witchcraft, as the following shows: ‘Please go back and tell those who sent you that you did not find my son. Tell your fellow witches that you did not see him ... Tell them that nobody’s medicine will work on my son’ (Pp.96-97). She said this to Olanna, the woman who Odenigbo is living with. Ugwu believes that Odenigbo’s mother is practicing witchcraft to get rid of Olanna. Odenigbo tries to explain his mother’s behaviour: ‘She’s just a village woman. She’s trying to make her way in a new world with skills that are better suited for the old one.’ (p.100) Ugwu sees her rubbing something on Amala’s back, and this, he believes, leads to Odenigbo cheating on Olanna with Amala. Those who grew up in the city, away from the life in the village do not adhere to these beliefs anymore. Olanna laughs the superstitions away, and calls the medicine ‘supernatural fetishes’ (p.105).

However, as the Nigeria-Biafra War ends, Olanna’s sister Kainene goes missing when she tries to cross the border in search of goods. Olanna searches for her, and when her search leads to nothing, she falls back on the old beliefs and traditions. She consults a *dibia*, which is a so-called ‘medicine man’:

She gave him a bottle of whiskey and some money to buy a goat for the oracle. She drove to the River Niger to throw in a copy of Kainene’s photo. She went to Kainene’s house in Orlu and walked around it three times. And she waited for the week that the *dibia* had stipulated, but Kainene did not come home. (p.433)

When all other hope was lost for her, she turns to her history, the traditions of her ancestors. This seems to mean that it still has some worth for her, and that she is willing to try anything to bring her sister back, - the most valuable thing she lost in the war. She says: ‘I do believe in it. I believe in everything. I believe in anything that will bring my sister home’ (p.433). She is willing to do anything to get her sister back, and she will probably spend the rest of her life looking for her. This shows how tradition may become important again in someone’s life after a traumatic or bitter experience.

Flashbacks and unpredictable resolution

The authors use flashback, which is a device in a narrative of a novel by which an event or scene taking place before the present time in the narrative is inserted into the chronological structure of the work. Adichie makes use of flashbacks, and these are directly tied to traumatic events that the characters have experienced. These flashbacks are experienced by Olanna, Richard and Ugwu. These three also represent the main characters in the novel. When these flashbacks occur, the past invades the present. Richard, Odenigbo and Olanna’s infidelity towards their partners were revealed to us through flashbacks. The flashbacks in the novel were made effective through the swinging of the four parts in the novel.

In *Roses and Bullets*, Ginika’s experiences before the war, her first meeting with Eloka and the reason for Ginika’s antagonism towards his father in the first part of the novel are shown (flashback) in Part 2 – ‘Before the Beginning’ to help us understand exactly what happened before the war started and the reasons behind them.

One of the most significant attributes of the novel- *Roses and Bullets* which many readers will live to remember is that it does not have the ending that many other novels of its type would have had. The 'ending is quite unpredictable. For instance, after professing so much love for Ginika, Eloka does what is least expected; he abandons Ginika, his wife, at the time she needs him the most which is typical of events in the traditional African setting, given the pressure of traditional African mores and norms. This adds to the verisimilitude of the novel. Thus, rather than depicting life as it should be, life is depicted as it is. By implication, the author does not force upon the reader a particular point of view; thence, she reveals her understanding of the fact that every human being is a free agent.

Adimora-Ezeigbo effectively deplores imagination in the telling of the Biafran story but the novel leaves little or no room for the comic. As a work of art that should play on the emotion, there should be touches of humour, which should have flavoured the piece. The fact that the Biafran story is a grave one does not mean that its depiction should be too serious. She uses the omniscient narrative technique.

Incorporation of Igbo phrases

Adichie and Adimora-Ezeigbo incorporated some Igbo phrases in their novel. These Igbo phrases and words are used throughout the novel, reminding the reader that most of the dialogue is in fact in Igbo between different characters in southeastern Nigeria. Often these phrases or words are accompanied by an English translation, other times they are not. Even though it is never pointed out exactly, it can be assumed that the English phrases are a translation of the Igbo ones. When the translation is not given, it seems they want the reader not to understand.

Adichie and Adimora-Ezeigbo's styles are simple, sweet, and effective; she makes use of the English language to write their novels, but also frequently inserts Igbo sentences and words. This makes the reader aware that these characters would be speaking in Igbo to one another. It also shows their status within two worlds. Being within two worlds is a privileged position, because it provides her with the freedom to engage with both cultures, and with two languages. She makes use of the English language, intermixed with Igbo phrases and words. Again, this points to her intermediary position, in-between two worlds. The English used by Adichie and Adimora-Ezeigbo seem to be influenced by the circumstances and the environment in which it is used, and therefore is a very different English than the one brought to Africa by the colonizer. In this case, survival between two tribes was the catalyst in a previously stable country, language reinforce the novel's themes of racial and social division.

Examples of such phrases like the mixing of dialects and words in *Half of a yellow Sun* ^[12] are given below:

'Yes! Yes! Ojukwu, *nye anyi egbe!* Give us guns! *Iwe di anyi n'obi!* There is anger in our hearts!' (p.171).

... women and children, and sat under the *oji* tree with Mr Richard. Children soon surrounded them, chanting *Onye ocha*, white man, reaching out to feel Mr Richard's hair. (p.211)

'Oh, yes, you have brought the houseboy, *ikpotago ya?* (p.4)

Kedu afa gi? What's your name? Master asked, startling him (p. 5)

I'm going for a walk to clear my head, *I nugo?* (p. 6)

Yes, Ugwu. look here, *nee anya*, do you know what that is? (p. 7)

His mother would be preparing the evening meal now, pounding *akpu* in the mortar ... (p.7)

....but he knew they were from the same *umunna* and therefore could never marry (p.8)

Nee anya, this is all water, the seas, and oceans and here's Europe ... (p.10)

Ugwu walked around in search of *arigbe* (p.15)

She smiled. 'it is well, *o di mma* (p.176)

Abu m onye Biafra, Richard said (p.181)

Can you imagine what a situation you would have been in now? *O di egwu!* (p.189)

He and the others sent to sweep the village square in the morning, would instead spend most of their time fighting over the fallen *udala* fruit (p.190)

Do not lie, Olanna Ozobia, *I sikwana asi!* (p.193)

Odinchedo broke off a large leaf from the *ede* plant and gave it to her to use as a makeshift umbrella (p.194).

Ugwu she missed his loyal, smiling face. *Unu anokwa ofuma?* Did you stay well? (p.224)

'You can go and rest, *I nugo*', Mama said. (p.212)

Like Adichie, Akachi-Ezeigbo incorporates some Igbo phrases in her novel. These Igbo phrases and words are used throughout the novel, reminding the reader that most of the dialogues are in fact in Igbo between different characters in southeastern Nigeria. Often these phrases or words are accompanied by an English translation, other times they are not. Some examples from *Roses and Bullets* ^[11] are as follows:

See how slender you are like *ome ji*. I am going to teach this *nni oka* a lesson today (p.21)

Does the gun speak *oyibo?* (p.57)

As I am as short as *ikpi nku*, a stump so to speak, do you think they will even look at me let alone test me for suitability? (p.66)

Nna *ikwadone*, you are ready to go (p.70)

Nwakire, *nno*, welcome back (p.75)

... If you do anything with them *afo ime achala*, pregnancy will come. (p.119)

Bend down properly to sweep, *ukwu ruo gi ala*, you hear. (p.120)

Where is that headstrong boy who thinks he is *eze-onye agwanam*, the one who knows all (p.134)

I can smell the *ukwa* you're cooking; the aroma is delicious (p.204)

They pushed a bench close to the desk and sat down to enjoy the *ogbara otii* (p.222)

Nna, *cherenu*, wait; sit down a moment, his mother implored. (p.243)

...you quite agree, eh? *Lekwenu muo*, look at me – o! (p.313)

So you want to move about in the house empty, *ina ekpokoghari ebe a ?* (p.313)

Ewo ...Ewo... chi m egbule mu o, my *chi* has killed me! (p.332)

What did market women do to be killed like *ehi Awusa*, Fulani cattle. (p.352)

Songs

Adichie used songs for entertainment and a way to show that song is always used in the traditional Igbo society. They express their different feelings and thoughts through songs.

An example of a song used in the passage is

Biafra, kunie, buso Nigeria agha,

Anyi emelie ndi awusa,

Ndi na-amaro chukwu

Tigbue fa, zogbue fa,

Nwelu nwude Gowon. (p.337)

Another example is,

So-lidarity forever!

So-lidarity forever!

Our republic shall vanqish! (p.198)

Adimora-Ezeigbo^[11] uses songs to put life into her story. An example of the such song is

Agawalam ikwa ngbo, Baby m ana-ebe
Si ngbo atukwalam n'isi
Agawalam ikwa ngbo, Baby m ana- ebe
Si ngbo atukwalam n'anya ...
Baby, isi m gbalaga
Onye ga-akwadi ngbo ma mgbalaga? (p.360)

Transliteration

Adichie and Adimora- Ezeigbo use transliteration which is the literal translation involving the syntactical structure from one language to another.

Examples in *Half of a Yellow Sun* ^[12].

But, sah, I am cooking the food of your country all the food you are eating as children I cook (p.73)

Because of too much book, you no longer know how to laugh. (p.130)

It means somebody has done bad medicine for this house (p. 216)

The new one mah, like you tell me (p.341)

My brother get problem before because the first wife is not pregnant and the second wife is not pregnant (p.74)

If you do not attend, Abba will fine you? (p.187)

...touching their hands to their mouths (p.195)

My grandfather used to say that other people just farted but his own fart always released shit.(p.232).

More examples on transliteration from *Roses and Bullet*

Make sure you do not run the race on an empty stomach (p.128)

They said many officers from the East have been slaughtered like cattle ... (p.151)

The woman whose head was eaten by a baby that did not want to stay as Amaoyi people would say (p.205)

When I see the way girls run after soldiers especially officers... (p.243)

There is a flower we saw in this house, which we have come to pluck (p.273)

... know that we are ignorant of who he is until you show him to us by kneeling before him to give the wine (p.275)

So we came to your father's house to marry you for you to come here and be starring us in the face? (p.313)

Graphology

Graphology is the analysis of handwriting to interpret character and personality. They play a major role in communicating the message of a text, as it enables writers and authors to highlight aspects which are markedly and strategically important to the cumulative meaning of a text. The study of paragraphing, topography, bold sentences, capitalization and italics in the novels demonstrate a clear explanation of textual meaning. This discourse contains 'salient graphological features that appeal to the reader's visual imagination and assist his understanding of the writer's message' (Adeyanju,^[14]p.88). Adegoju,^[15] aptly observes '...the meaning generated by verbal signifiers' (p.160). To lend credence to this view, the researcher refers to Hodge and Kress's position as cited by Locke, ^[16] that '... in contemporary society, meaning resides strongly and

persuasively in systems other than the verbal, especially the visual' (p.23). In other words, graphology refers to the visual medium of language that is, it describes the general resources of the written system of language, including punctuation, spelling, typography, alphabet, paragraph structure and it can also be extended to incorporate any significant pictorial and symbolic devices, which supplement the written system. The key point is that, as the present study demonstrates the graphological elements are very important in critical textual analysis, as they are the first qualities of a written and printed text that we notice.

Adichie's text overtly uses paragraph structure and development for stylistic effect. The best or most visible creative use of this device lies in her deformation of standard paragraphing. Adichie, in the opening paragraph of the text, begins with the indenting of the first three lines; where the indenting of the first line of a paragraph is the norm. Subsequently, all of her topic sentences begin with the indenting of the first three lines of the paragraph. This device clearly reflects what has been referred to as a deliberate distortion of language of textual conventions. The following examples from the beginning of the first three chapters of the text confirm this pattern of paragraph structure:

Master was a little crazy; he had spent too many years reading books overseas, talked to himself in his office and did not always return greetings, and had too much hair. Ugwu's aunty said this in a low voice as they walked on the path. (p.3)

Olanna nodded to the High Life music from the car radio. Her hand was on Odenigbo's thigh; she raised it whenever he wanted to change gears, placed it back and laughed when he teased her about being a distracting Aphrodite. It was exhilarating to... (p.26)

Richard said little at the parties Susan took him to. When she introduced him, she always added that he was a writer, and he hoped the other guests assumed he was distant in the way writers were, although he feared they saw through him and knew he... (p.53)

The first few words in major paragraphs of each chapter in *Roses and Bullets* are in the upper case

IT WAS quite hot in the afternoon... (p.38)

GINIKA DISCOVERED Udo sitting on a metal chair in the veranda... (p.202)

GINIKA RETURNED during the holidays... (p.158)

GINIKA AND Udo were almost at the gate... (p.212)

TWO DAYS after Amaka told ginika about her family... (p.268)

WHEN GINIKA chatted with Amaka later that evening... (p.265)

AMA-OYI WAS bombed again but this time... (p.262)

Another interesting part of this device is the bolding and capitalizing of the first few words of the opening sentence of the most of Adichie and Adimora- Ezeigbo's paragraphs while Emecheta left the first few letters of her paragraph in the upper case form. This is obviously a violation of the graphological convention or practice and one significant stylistic effect of this technique is that it gives deliberate

prominence to those words in bold. The examples of the extract below will amplify the underlying point:

Half of a Yellow Sun ^[12]

Ugwu cleared the dining table slowly: He removed the glasses first, then the stew-smearied bowls and the cutlery, and finally he stacked plate on top of plate. Even if he hadn't peeked through the kitchen door as they ate, he would still know who had sat where... (p.83)

Olanna looked at Odenigbo: through the glass for a while before she opened the door. She closed her eye as he walked in, as if doing so would deny her the pleasure that the scent of his Old Spice always brought. (p.100)

Roses and Bullets

Ginika watched the man drive off in... (p.1)

The next day, Ginika rose early... (p.34)

Ginika thought it was not wise to go too... (p.53)

Eloka sat behind the wheel but... (p.73)

Ginika was the first to hear that Auntie Chito... (p.73)

It did not surprise anyone when Ginika dressed up the next morning... (p.77)

Ginika went to see her aunt and her family... (p.195)

Destination Biafra

THE GOVERNOR'S residence stood majestic in its Georgian elegance... (p.1)

AFTER THE Sarduana made his statement, parties in the south intensified... (p.18)

SAMUEL OGEDEMGBE rolled this way and that on his cool white-sheeted bed... (p.25)

TWO ARMY CARS swerved at neck-breaking speed into a quite... (p.52)

IT WAS THE early hours of the morning when the air was... (p.61)

EVERY ONE STAND up and put you're your hands on your head... (p.79)

Furthermore, in *Destination Biafra*^[17] each chapter has a heading like

The First Election (p.1), Emergency Action (p.52), Chaos (p.79), Divide and Rule (p.107), A Delicate Mission (p.122), The Invincible Army (p.136), Operation Mosquito (p.146), The Tainted Women (p.157), The Holocaust (p.246). These peculiar headings give an insight to the chapters.

The use of upper case and bolding in written language will project the writer as loud. This means that emphasis is laid on such words, which decidedly makes them louder and thus, more attention is naturally focused on them than the others in the same passage.

Motif

Motif is a recurring structure, contrast, or other devices that develops a literary works major theme. The presence of a quest or a search in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is an essential component of the narrative. The search for Kainene functions as a quest in the final part of the novel, both Olanna and Richard are focused entirely on filling the emptiness her absence has left. Nevertheless, there is a difference between the two; while Olanna cannot give up hope; Richard slowly comes to the realization that he will not see her again. He realizes this when Madu, an old friend of Kainene, punches

him after he accuses him of touching her: 'Darkness descended on him, and when it lifted, he knew that he would never see Kainene again and that his life would always be like a candlelit room; he would see things only in shadow, only in half glimpses.' (p.430) He will never know what really happened to Kainene; this is what the imagery used here suggests: the world cannot be seen clearly by candlelight, one is not able to discern everything, and a shadow only shows the imprint of something. All of these images refer to a world where one only gets a hint or a trace of what is there, and not the complete picture. This may refer to Adichie's own experience of the situation of the civil war; she only sees the shadow of the event, never the event itself. The presence of a quest emphasizes the feeling of loss and absence.

The civil war was characterized by disorder and many people fled from one place to another in search of safety and good relationships were broken. This was well recorded in the novels used in this research work because the people relocated due to the increasing crisis. In the four novels used in this work, there was clear evidence of series of movements. Olanna and her family moved as the war keep on getting nearer to them. Debbie moved from Lagos to the east and heard many bitter experiences on the way. Ginika and her family moved too. There were constant movements till the abrupt end of the war.

Symbols

The authors in the novels use symbolisms mostly to allude to death. These symbols are also used to create a gloomy sensation in the novels. They use the Africa story-telling technique already mentioned to make the truth more acceptable to the reader, according to the old truth that hundreds of victims never provoke the same tender feeling as one that you really get to know.

Nwachukwu-Agbada ^[17] writes that Emecheta uses childbirth and deaths to symbolize conflicts. Since she is telling of women and children's war –history, these are natural symbols to use: the pregnant refugee-woman on the run for safety in Biafra gets her child cut out of her stomach by Nigerian soldiers as a strong symbol of what the federal government has done to Biafra. At the same time, the rape symbolizes the division, the civil war causes in Nigeria observes Tuzyline Jita Allan ^[18].

Emecheta links Nigeria's history with personal history especially in the relationship of her main characters, Saka Mohmoh and Chijioke Abosi. This is grounded in symbolic evaluation of Abosi and Mohmoh's wives inability to have children in the novel. While Abosi's wife suffered repeated miscarriages, Mohmoh's wife gives birth to a stillborn.

Abosi, the Biafra leader, and his wife suffer from being unable to have children and finally the desired pregnancy ends in a miscarriage at the same time as the hope for a Biafra nation dies before the nation is born. Saka Momoh, the president of Nigeria has a wife who is expecting a baby. The period of labour becomes dangerous for his wife and he has difficulties deciding whether he shall permit the doctors to carry out a caesarean and when he finally gives his permission, the child is dead. In addition, the baby proves to be an awful froglike monster. However, his wife, though in very bad shape survives. With this incident, Emecheta depicts how the

indecisiveness of Momoh was disastrous for Nigeria.

The little baby-boy Biafra who travels on Debbie's back and finally dies from starvation is a clear symbol of the Republic of Biafra and Debbie's own feelings of responsibility towards it. As little Biafra dies of starvation, the Republic of Biafra had no possibility to survive and was literally destroyed by starvation.

Roses and Bullets tells the story of a real situation, where a nation's future and hope (roses) were brought down by bullets of hate and disunity. It also deals with a nation's tale in which its fallen roses (children, the brightest and most talented) inevitably stare the people in the face as well as engrave moral scars on the conscience of this nation. The 'roses' symbolize the generation to come as well as future of the nation, while bullets images war and fierce battle. In an *Interview by Sumaila Umaisha*, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo^[19] has this to say that: The title is symbolic. Roses symbolize youths who perished in the Nigerian Civil War, which is also referred to as the Biafran War. The youth fought the war and died in thousands, just like the young children who died of starvation. As Herbert Hoover says, 'Older men declare war, but it is the youth that must fight and die.' So the youth are the flowers of the land that were bighted too soon; they sacrificed their lives. As a matter of fact, this also applied to the Federal side. Bullets represent violence and death. There was so much violence and so many deaths in the war.

Ugwu, in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, who was later conscripted in the novel, initially desired, at least partially, to serve in the military to fight for the Biafran independence. However, after serving, he experiences the military's corruption, dehumanization of its own soldiers, who are like sheep, and even, participates in the rape of a Biafran woman working at a bar with his fellow soldiers. While serving as a soldier, Ugwu comes across Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. The symbolism is so obvious, that the Biafran soldiers are similar to slaves, exploited and abused to carry out injustice while supposedly 'doing the right thing' by being patriotic. Ugwu decides to name his own story about the Biafran War after Douglass's *Narrative*.

Women as symbol of change

Accordingly, Emecheta uses Debbie as a bridge between men and women, between Abosi and Momoh; she is a kind of agent of change, a mediator who helps Nigeria traverse the strange and uncertain frontiers of political crisis with its challenges, prospect and opportunities. In an Interview with Marie Umeh,^[20] Emecheta says that Debbie is the favourite character of hers: 'If there is any character that I like in all my books, it is Debbie in *Destination Biafra*. I think that she is still my best character and the one that I should like to identify with. Unfortunately, I can never be like her ... I admire women like Debbie who also have a western education' (p.448)

Emecheta in her foreword writes that she chose a non-Igbo female serving in the Nigerian army since she realized that, after reading Wole Soyinka's *The Man Died* her tribe, the Igbo was not the only tribe to suffer during the war.

Porter Abioseh^[21] avers that during the women's long flight through the darkening night she fully develops her thesis that

war affected civilians most and that peace and order would have been restored in Africa if women had led it. Furthermore, she presents her solution to the problem of how to live together across social and ethical barriers. She uses some stories to show how these can be achieved. For example, she said that the Biafran War is a sad, terrifying tale but spotted in streaks of sunlight, exactly like the rainforest the refugees crosses. One of these streaks of sunlight is the mother who breastfeeds both little newborn Biafra and her own baby. Another is the story about the old woman who hides the refugees and thus gets miraculous protection throughout the war. Yet another one is the boy Ngebechi who becomes a mother for his younger brothers when they are separated from their real mother.

Therefore, even if it is easy to agree with the critical view on Debbie as an incredible character, it is equally easy to see why she is Emecheta's favourite. Feminists all over the world often ask for more good examples to follow, and argue that these are too few of these for girls and women to identify with. Therefore, for young women Debbie might serve as a positive role model.

Proverbs

Adimora-Ezeigbo spices her work with suitable proverbs because their functions are to advise, rebuke, or cajole another into accepting other people's opinions.

Some of the examples are:

It is like making a man with an unsightly protuberance dance in the market square. (p.27)

Hold your head up and go with the ebb and flow of the tides or they will drown you. (p.28)

...the chick that stood on one leg the first time it was taken to a new home. (p.109)

The toad does not run for nothing in broad daylight. (p.170)

Our people say, it is the dance that comes out in one's own time that he or she dances.(p.320)

Let us stare back at the thing that is staring us in the face. (p.325)

Conclusion

The authors, whose works have been analysed in this paper, appear to have borrowed a lot of materials from history. This would be to ensure that facts are not misrepresented. Nonetheless, one has to note that literature is not supposed to be a mirror-like representation of history; it must be rightly spiced with creativity, which is the ingredient that marks fiction out from history. As a result, they have succeeded in presenting Nigeria's political history, significantly moderated by literary imagination, such presentation modestly created a fair assessment of the Nigerian civil war. To achieve this, the authors used the different techniques discussed above to accomplish their goals. These techniques have helped in portraying the authors' feelings, their mastery of artistic craft of storytelling and the disastrous effect of the civil war on the society. Their portrayal of vision and artistry is superb not only through the point of view and characterization but in their manipulation of language. This artful presentation of their works makes the readers alert and alive and causes them to intensify the attention paid to the novels. Above all, it helps

the writers to arrive at their thematic focus by enhancing meaning. It is then recommended that other young writers should adopt these authors' use of literary techniques and apply them in writing because it heightens the effect of the narrative by creating suspense.

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