

A Half-Ride toward the Radiant Sun in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

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Abstract

This paper is built on the argument that, in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the Biafran resistance and its subsequent failure spring from a series of malfunctions in the administration of Nigeria during the first decade that follows its independence. Each ethnic group realises that its dream for social justice after British imperialism has been deferred by the neo-colonial regime in seat. Hence, this paper seeks to explore the three responsive phases of discovery, shock and disenchantment that undergird the postcolonial condition of Nigerians after independence as revealed in the novel. Relying on the postcolonial literary theory, this paper illustrates that post-independence struggles are rooted in 'halfness', the inability of the colonized to fully conceive and concretize their dreams and self-made promises. From the analysis, it is realised that: the sun is a symbol of prosperity and freedom; the 'halfness' of the sun in this novel metaphorically indicates the unfinished march toward that sun; both exogenous and endogenous factors jeopardise Nigeria's ride toward prosperity; and national identity/prosperity constitute a perennial quest in post-independent African nations like Nigeria. At the end of this novel one identifies an ounce of hope which hangs on the spiritual strength of native culture, on its power to reconcile the fragments of the postcolonial being.

Keywords: *Half-ride, Nation, Disenchantment, Sun, Post-independence*

Introduction

After the scramble for and distribution of African traditional communities at the exclusion of the latter, so-called independent states in Africa faced the challenge of building nations in which a strong feeling of belonging would synchronize the different cultural sensitivities that had been forced to live together. In this line of thought, Partha Chatterjee (2003) in "Nationalism as a Problem" submits that "historically, the political community of the nation superseded the preceding 'cultural systems' of religious community and dynastic realm" (p.164). It is the wrong negotiation of this fundamental change (from once-independent traditional communities to territorial nations) that has led to post-independence disillusionment and, in some cases, to violent

secessionist movements. This political disenchantment coupled with socio-economic precariousness has been the logical consequence of not only colonial mutilation but also, as Frantz Fanon (2003) puts it in "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness", "the result of the intellectual laziness of the national middle class, of its spiritual penury, and of the profoundly cosmopolitan mold that its mind is set in"(p.156).

This paper argues that the sun of self-determination and prosperity as portrayed in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* has not yet been reached by Africans (and Nigerians in particular) because of their unpreparedness to ride toward that sun, hence justifying our qualification of this ride as being a half one. The 'halfness' of this ride is discussed using three phases which, in our opinion, explain the incompleteness of Nigerian national identity: Discovery, Shock and Disenchantment. The main question that this study seeks to answer is: What is it that is incomplete in *Half of a Yellow Sun*?

Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* has undoubtedly received much scholarly attention since its publication in 2006. The literature produced about this novel usually dwells on issues of sexuality, identity, diaspora, violence and, war. For instance, In "War Trauma and the Dynamics of Closure: A Hysterical Memory of Battling through Embers in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*", Asma Zahoor (2018) focuses on the everlasting cicatricial marks which the Biafran war has left in the memory of Nigerians. The emotional wounds of the war are what cause Adichie, in Zahoor's opinion, to give an open ending to her novel and the themes of brutality, inhumanity and disillusionment are accentuated by this open end technique.

The most important issue discussed in this article is the significance of Kainene's disappearance. The study links Kainene's irresolvable absence to the lack of closure in the novel. According to Zahoor, Kairene's disappearance means that the painful memories of the war subsist in the minds and hearts of all Nigerians. Talking about the end of the novel, Asma Zahoor (2018) says it provides "a conclusion which is open ended to devise a symbolic thought of the incessant suffering that war perpetrates" (p. 65). The researcher sustains her argument with the fact that the novel is written some thirty years after the end of the war because the feelings and regrets which this war caused still vibrate in the consciousness of every Nigerian.

This article ties with our present study in that it indicates that all does not end with the war: the war comes and goes but its embers keep burning Nigerian consciousness. But the point on which our studies diverge is that Zahoor(2008) contends that the embers burn the memory while we posit that these embers rather burn part of Nigerian identity which should be recovered. We find it simplistic to limit Kainene's disappearance to memory: her loss (especially when we link it to her twin hood) indicates Nigeria's perpetual quest for wholeness. Nigerian identity is in parts or in halves at the end of the war and its various fragments are yet to be found and reassembled. It is only when Nigerian

identity will be complete/wholly that *Half of a Yellow Sun* will receive its final closure.

Kalu Wosu's "Writing and Discourse: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* as a Civil War Narrative" analyses Adichie's second novel from the prisms of historicity and discourse. His article highlights the unpreparedness of Africans for national leadership after European colonization. At the beginning of his article, Wosu (2018) admits that "With independence came disillusionment and frustration. The Africans themselves were clearly not prepared for political leadership at any level, and this led to unprecedented political imbroglio" (p.121). According to him, the novel in Africa has become the cherished artistic medium for post-independence writers who want to express their disgust with regard to the state of affairs in their various countries. It is for this reason that the novel's discursive techniques are analyzed in his article in a bid to establish the relationship that exists between prose writing, history and discourse.

Wosu discusses two key points in his article: Firstly, he discusses the historicity of *Half of a Yellow Sun*. He applies a New Historicist approach which consists in using other fictional and non-fictional narratives of a given period to analyze the historical authenticity of a literary text. For instance, Wosu uses Alexander Madiebo's non-fictional book, *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War* and Elechi Amadi's novel, *Sunset in Biafra* to show that the events narrated by Adichie are historically exact. They are exact because the other narratives written about the Biafran war paint the same chaotic image of despondence and brutality that we observe in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Secondly, Wosu's article discusses the ideological position of Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. He paraphrases Roland Barthes who believes that "writing... presupposes an ideological position" (p. 129). Before penning down any narrative, the writer is already ideologically positioned because every writing reproduces and reshapes an ideological space. Otherwise, there would be no writing. Since every literary work is directed by a definite discourse, Wosu deduces that the story narrated in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is not an innocent story. In his opinion, Adichie wants to make known her own perspective, that of the oppressed and marginalized Igbo. We agree with Wosu when he thinks Adichie's motive in her second novel is to recall. It is in this process of remembering that she retraces the various stages leading to Biafran war and disenchantment, and it is this process that we subject to scrutiny in the present study. Zahoor's and Wosu's articles have their merits but what we find lacking and seek to add are the chronological trends followed by the Igbos' postcolonial condition in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and the significance of the "half" concept in understanding this novel.

There are two concepts that need to be defined within the scope of this paper: disenchantment/disillusionment and nation. Disenchantment in the ambits of postcolonial African literature refers to a pessimistic mind-set prevalent in post-independent societies wherein victims of European colonial brutality quickly

turn out to inherit, perpetrate and consolidate the violence of their ‘gone’ master over their own kin. This new form of colonisation shatters the aspirations of colonies to self-determination and prosperity, leading to what has been termed post-independence disillusionment. So this disillusionment is caused by a sort of rupture in the legitimate hopes of the masses. This rupture breaks the lintel of the peoples’ dreams and leaves them with the painful feeling that they have been betrayed. In *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, Bill Ashcroft et al (2013) point out that “it has been argued by some that the new élites brought to power by independence, and often educated and trained by the colonialist powers, were unrepresentative of the people and acted as unwitting or even willing agents (*compradors*) for the former colonial rulers” (p.178). The allegiance of those presiding over the destiny of Africans to the metropolis godfathers enlivens the disenchantment of the people who either become pessimistically apolitical or stage unsuccessful resistance movements as is the case in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

‘Nation’ is etymologically linked to a Latin word, *natio*, meaning “birth”. People sharing a common ancestry or place of origin can thus be considered as forming a nation. These nations which have a precise territory, culture, science and spirituality are not similar to nations born of the colonial desire. The latter nations consist in several once-autonomous cultural communities to whom the yoke of unity was arbitrarily prescribed by the colonialist so that they would form states recognizable by the Occident. The problem with these nation-states has always been their proclivity to fragmentation based on those stolen historical identities and autonomies. This reality is exposed by Ashcroft et al (2013) in *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts* when they argue: “that nations were and are profoundly unstable formations, always likely to collapse back into subdivisions of clan, ‘tribe’, language or religious group, is nothing new” (p.167). This statement poses the problem of national identities in once-colonised territories because the newly-merged cultural groups do not recognize themselves in the umbrella under which the colonialist has forced them to seek refuge – and their suspicion is justified because the nation-states bring them at loggerheads. Hence, misrepresentations, corruption and nationalist (as in tribal) sentiments plunge the colonized in another big mess like the civil war and secession which *Half of a Yellow Sun* portrays.

Our focus in this research is the failure of post-independence nations to attain and secure genuine freedom for themselves. The postcolonial literary theory is relevant to this discussion because postcolonialism is in itself the fruit of the failure of the decolonisation process and serves in dissecting the dynamics of this failure. Bill Ashcroft et al (2013) in *Postcolonial studies: The key concepts* define decolonisation as “the process of revealing and dismantling colonialist power in all its forms” (p.73). What Postcolonialism has achieved till now is the ‘revealing’ of the overt and hidden manifestations of colonial rule. As regards the dismantling of all forms of colonial hegemony, Postcolonial theorists and writers offer a dim hope – one that is rooted in indigenous cultures whose present authenticity is also problematic. The decolonisation of African

states like Nigeria still meet with violent opposition from colonial and neo-colonial capitals as depicted in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Postcolonialism can be defined as a theory and movement concerned with the resistance of colonised entities to hegemonic discourses and the exploration of various collateral effects related to the colonial encounter. In "The Postcolonial Condition", Phyllis Taoua (2010) explains that during the 1980s, the notion of the postcolonial "gained currency as a category of experience" (p.209). This experience can be traced in slavery, colonization and neo-imperialism which have bequeathed shaky identities to non-European worlds till date. He goes further to situate disenchantment as the insignia of the first part of the postcolonial era. He says that "during the first phase (1960–89), African novels conveyed a gathering sense of disillusionment" (Taoua, 2010, p.211). This disillusionment is constitutive of the postcolonial condition because it marks the confusion and wretchedness that weaken Africans' zeal to stand successfully for a brighter future, a truer freedom.

The appeal of Postcolonialism to the post-independence era is equally captured by George Lamming (quoted in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*) when he affirms that "the colonial experience is a *live* experience in the *consciousness* of these people. ... The experience is a continuing *psychic* experience that has to be dealt with and will have to be dealt with long after the actual colonial situation formally 'ends'" (Lomba, 1998, p.155). Therefore, when Adichie makes the reader sentient of the pangs of nationhood and liberation in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, she assumes a postcolonial stance, one of investigating and indicting the enduring colonial consciousness which directs governance and all sorts of experience in post-independence Nigeria.

Discovering Their Own World

Throughout the Occident's history of the world, one notices the inclination that has always lain with her to avert the 'discovery' of non-European territories. Such tales of discovery have been debunked in postcolonial discourse due to their denial of the existence of whole civilisations in those territories that did not need disclosure from strangers. However, the tragedy of the colonial encounter and the formal departure of the colonialist imposed another form of discovery on the natives: they had to meet with, understand and manage the socio-cultural, political and economic legacies bequeathed to them by colonial rule. These legacies have drastically perturbed the cultural evolution of the non-European world, especially that of Africa and have been so sudden that the unprepared natives at best have been hybridised and at worst have been acculturated. Set in post-independence Nigeria, *Half of a Yellow Sun*'s depiction of the early sixties provides a clear picture of the journey of discovery made by Ugwu and Olanna to and within Nigeria.

Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* opens with Ugwu's journey from his native Opi village to the town of Nsukka. The wide streets and sky-coloured bungalows fascinate him and he even loses interest in his Aunt's talk because he is "too choked with expectation, too busy imagining his new life away from the

village” (Adichie, 2006, p.4). His imagination is at work because he is in a new universe which ought to be his but which he has just started to contemplate. The narrator insists on his mental struggle to grasp the reality of the artificial newness he is confronted with. As he enters Odenigbo’s parlour, we are told:

He closed his eyes and tried to re-imagine this spacious room with the alien furniture, but he couldn't. He opened his eyes, overcome by a new wonder, and looked around to make sure it was all real. To think that he would sit on these sofas, polish this slippery-smooth floor, wash these gauzy curtains. (Adichie, 2006, p.6)

At this early phase of discovery, Ugwu is not yet able to internalize the material comfort and western paraphernalia that occupy the native’s space. This is evident in that he quickly resorts to Igbo ancestral wisdom when he inadvertently burns Odenigbo’s pair of socks. Faced with this error that can ruin his stay in Nsukka, Ugwu decides to soften Odenigbo’s anger by spicing that day’s stew with the *arigbe* plant often used by his grandmother. With time, Ugwu familiarizes himself so much with books and with the habits of post-independence Nigerian intellectuals that he fears any situation that can make him return to the rural milieu. Brushing his teeth with a toothbrush and toothpaste rather than a chewing stick; attending to Odenigbo’s guests at dusk with champagne rather than kolanuts/palm-wine and watching Odenigbo going to play tennis are new traditions that try to replace Igbo cultural ways he has imbibed till now. Interestingly, Ugwu’s discovery of the transition of his world does not alienate him from Opi but rather makes him imagine a mingling of both realities. This hybrid stance is voiced when his sick mother is catered for in Odenigbo’s home. The narrator says of Ugwu that “He wished his whole village were here, so he could join in the moonlit conversations and quarrels and yet live in Master’s house with its running taps and refrigerator and stove” (Adichie, 2006, p.87). Ugwu manages well his discovery of the post-colonial world unlike Harrison who proudly refers to African herbs as being “bad, from the witch doctor... devilish” (Adichie, 2006, p.69). It is worth noting however that no hint is given that Ugwu understands the neo-colonial implication of calling Odenigbo “Master”. He unconsciously stages the colonial hierarchy regulating post-independence functioning and this informs the reader that by inheriting occidental customs and ways, the Nigerian middle class perpetuate the societal stratification established by the colonialist.

Olanna’s return to Nigeria after her studies abroad does not constitute in itself her discovery of post-independence Nigeria. Her discovery is instead rooted in her desire to live the experiences and struggles of the masses within a post-colonial setting. Having gotten a glimpse of life in the metropolis, Olanna completes her experiences by getting in touch with the daily tussles of her compatriots in Nigeria after independence. For instance, when buying her ticket for the university theatre, she discovers that her kin have an inferiority complex vis-à-vis Europeans. The fact that the black ticket seller privileges the white man on the queue and tries to speak with British accent demonstrates in Olanna’s eyes that the native’s affection for colonialist ways is indeed as strong

as it were during formal colonization. It is this affection that makes Olanna to create distance between her bourgeois parents and herself. She realises that her parents reproduce the European mentality of having people who work for them like slaves. Olanna is bemused when Kainene and her parents ungratefully disregard the efforts made by Maxwell, the servant, to prepare avocado for their dinner. The narrator says “Olanna wished they would; it was such a simple thing to do, to acknowledge the humanity of the people who served them. She had suggested it once; her father said he paid them good salaries, and her mother said thanking them would give them room to be insulting” (Adichie, 2006, p.29). It is this lessening ‘humanity’– stirred by the growing concern for material prominence – that Olanna discovers to be the norm in social relationships in this once entirely communal world. She can be said to discover these realities only now because in her teens she attended the Heathgrove British Secondary School in Nigeria which deprived her of any closeness with her native Igbo land. Upon returning home, Olanna organizes a visit to Kano where she visits Auntie Ifeka, Uncle Mbaezi and their daughter, Arize. With much admiration, Olanna recognizes that “there was an earthiness about” her uncle since his few possessions and natural warmth reflect the cultural authenticity and peace from which their post-independence country is estranged (p.36). Thus, having grown far from her native soil, Olanna returns home to discover lasting imperialist binaries such as the master-slave, capitalist-communal oppositions that operate in the post-independence era.

It is Odenigbo who overtly explains the dilemma of most Nigerians after independence. Using the occasion of his mother’s unwelcoming attitude toward Olanna, Odenigbo tells her that his mother is “trying to make her way in the new world with skills that are better suited for the old one” (Adichie, 2006, p.95). Odenigbo’s mother, guided by native consciousness, does not understand that her son chooses to marry a western-educated woman whose virginity is doubtful and whose breastfeeding was not done by her biological mother. One perceives in her attitude the obsession to preserve her lineage from modern odds. Indeed, the native’s space has been divided into urban and rural settings such that the ‘skills’ (values) that are relevant in villages become irrelevant in colonially-fashioned cities. The discovery of their own world therefore lies in the difficulty for the postcolonial subject to mediate both fractions of his/her world. In the same discussion with Olanna, Odenigbo argues that “The real tragedy of our postcolonial world is not that the majority of people had no say in whether or not they wanted this new world; rather it is that the majority have not been given the tools to *negotiate* this new world”(Adichie, 2006, p.96). Though we share Odenigbo’s view that the crux of the postcolonial condition is this negotiation, we disagree with his expectation that the tools for negotiation have to be ‘given’ to Africans because no instrument from the West can help mitigate the postcolonial situation.

Therefore, the unpreparedness of Africans in general and Nigerians in particular to manage the Occidentalised politico-cultural structure of their world after independence has to be understood as a situation beyond the control

of the natives, contrary to the negotiation which these natives can initiate and control. In the course of re-acting to colonial formations, the colonised need to build their own agency rather than expecting that the tools of their freedom will be 'given' to them.

The Shock of (Mis)Representations in the New Nation

In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Stuart Hall (1997) states that "Representation connects meaning and language to culture.... representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture" (p.15). In post-independence Nigeria, representations are used by ethnic communities to create caricatured knowledge of other tribes in a bid to legitimize their subjugation. When the Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba and other tribes realise that they are in a scramble for political and economic power, the representational phase/arm of their various cultures are ignited and directed toward cultural groups conceived as rivals. In Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the war of misrepresentations is mainly fought in the North-South, Muslim-Christian, Hausa-Igbo and Yoruba-Igbo axes. These representations of course set the pace for resistances that batter the fabric of the Nigerian nation.

The conflict kindled by representational practices is observable in the discrimination suffered by Igbo children with regard to their scholarship in the Northern part of the country. The Southerners who have migrated to the North are rejected by the Hausas who view them as 'invaders' and 'infidels'. This rejection within the boundaries of the post-independence nation pushes the Igbos to start walling themselves. Olanna reminisces the meetings of the Igbo Union (held in her Uncle's house) "where irritated men and women talked about the Northern schools not admitting Igbo children. Uncle Mbaezi had stood up and stamped his foot: "Ndibeanyi! My people! We will build our own school! We will raise money and build our own school!" (Adichie, 2006, p.36). The possessive phrase 'our own' indicates the self-other binary opposition at work in the country: the Igbos start defining their existence as self by excluding the Hausas who they exclude and vice-versa. For example, the man who attempts to woo Olanna in the plane projects the Igbo-phobic mindset shared by most Hausas and Yorubas at the time. He states:

They have finally removed that Igbo vice chancellor from the University of Lagos...Why should an Igbo man be the vice chancellor in Lagos...? The problem with Igbo people is that they want to control everything in this country. Everything. Why can't they stay in their East? They own all the shops; they control the civil service, even the police. If you are arrested for any crime, as long as you can say keda they will let you go. (Adichie, 2006, p.214)

These words capture the extent to which tribalism and regionalism menace national unity and consequently hinder Nigeria's ride towards prosperity. According to Olanna's wooer, Igbos ought to be contained in the East and silenced as regards nation building efforts so that other tribes would get a share

of the national cake supposedly monopolized by the Igbos. This anti-Igbo feeling is even espoused by Susan, a British woman, whose criticism of Igbos can be read as European discomfort towards the Igbo's relative distancing from colonial fashions. In a discussion with Richard, she tells him:

There are lots and lots of Igbo people here—well, they are everywhere really, aren't they? Not that they didn't have it coming to them, when you think about it, with their being so clannish and uppity and controlling the markets. Very Jewish, really. And to think they are relatively uncivilized; one couldn't compare them to the Yoruba, for example, who have had contact with Europeans on the coast for years. (Adichie, 2006, p.145)

Susan compares Igbos to Jews who, in European consciousness, epitomize all that is unconventional, selfish and cruel. William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* actually presents the stereotypical ideas which Europeans bear against the Jews. Antonio, the Italian merchant in the play, views his Christian religion as superior to Shylock's Judaism and proudly uses expressions like "evil soul" and "vile usurer" to describe Shylock and condemn his economic power (1993, p.33). The Igbos in Adichie's novel are victims of similar misrepresentations: not only are they considered 'uncivilized' compared with the Yorubas, but they are also considered as selfish merchants who have monopolized trade in the country. Such negative images and associations, partly triggered by the spirit of rivalry, prevent the Igbos from recognizing themselves in (and aspiring to oneness with) the colonial political construction called Nigeria.

On the other hand, the Hausas are equally likened to "bloody" people who are dirty, extremist and unfit for intellectual pursuits. This is the case with Mohammed, Olanna's former fiancé. He is perceived as dangerous by Kainene and Odenigbo. But the most blatant misrepresentation of Hausas in this novel uses Abdulmalik as vehicular. When Abdulmalik offers Olanna a pair of slippers, the narrator tells us what she thinks about him:

...his narrow face creased in a smile, his teeth stained with kola nut and tobacco and whatever else Olanna did not know, stains of varying shades of yellow and brown. He looked as if it were he who was receiving a gift; he had that expression of people who marvelled at education with the calm certainty that it would never be theirs. (Adichie, 2006, p.38)

This description highlights that the Igbos during this period liken the Hausas to illiterates who do not and cannot have the leadership skills to rule them who are educated. Yacoubou Alou (2017) in "Emerging Themes in Chimamnda N. Adichie's Fiction: Ethnic and National Identity Narratives in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and "A Private Experience" contends that:

Islamophobia and the demonization of the Hausa seem to underlie much of Biafran nationalism present in Adichie's fiction. In Half of a Yellow Sun, we read that "Muslim students were always demonstrating about one thing or the other, after all, and harassing people who were Western-dressed...They use

loudspeakers to proclaim that 'The Igbo must go. The infidels must go'. (p.108)

Such exclusions introduce strife and mutual suspicions which inevitably kill the longing to belong to one nation. No wonder then, that this reciprocal mistrust contaminating the relationship between communities in the country is translated into appalling actions during the civil war, the military coup and the secessionist fight.

Therefore, the various misrepresentations operating in post-independent Nigeria are stirred by a scramble for power among ethnic groups and prelude the inter-tribal massacres described in the novel. If the awkward exercise of power by middle-class elites in the fragmented nation impedes progress, tribal rivalries do jeopardize as much the attainment of unity and prosperity.

Resistance and the Glimmer of Hope

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha (1994) submits that “The global link between colony and metropolis, so central to the ideology of colonialism, is articulated in Kurtz’s emblematic words – ‘the Horror, the Horror!’” (p.212). This implies that any relationship involving the colonized and the colonizer inevitably results in scenes of massacre, moments of dehumanization and civilisational holocausts. This truth is relevant to the post-independence context in Nigeria where the urban centres framed by colonial rule become economic/political capitals that dictate the running of the margins (rural areas). As such, those controlling the capital, generally without the prior consent of the periphery, wield power over the whole country and can use the resources offered by the metropolis (like the army) to consolidate their hegemony. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* reveals the hopes nurtured by Igbos to liberate themselves from a corrupt neo-colonial government confiscating all resources in Lagos; depicts the general disillusionment which attains its peak in the failure of the Biafran secessionist war; and ends with a dim hope of reaching the sun of freedom and prosperity.

Fanon (2003) explains how national unity is endangered in once formally colonized territories in his “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness”. The economically-weak middle class that takes over power after independence falls prey to “narcissism” which provokes socio-political upheavals in the ex-colony and obliges it “to send out frenzied appeals for help to the former mother country” (Fanon, 2003, p.156). Hence, the egotism of this class is the principal justification for the wave of violent protests that occur after independence in most African countries. The Biafran secessionist enterprise falls within this category. As portrayed in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the first phase of this resistance is ideological as observed in the critical analysis made by disillusioned Nigerian intellectuals about their identity and local politics. The second phase is the armed struggle that is staged to forcefully enact freedom from neo-colonialism.

In Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the first phase of resistance is ideological as one follows the discussions held by Odenigbo and other Nigerian intellectuals

on the current ills of the country. The first form of ideological resistance to any form of colonisation is education, reason why Odenigbo is annoyed to notice that Ugwu (as a teen) is a sheer illiterate. Odenigbo wonders: "Education is a priority! How can we resist exploitation if we don't have the tools to understand exploitation?" (Adichie, 2006, p.11) This makes him to sponsor Ugwu's education so that the latter can comprehend the forces at work in his world. Odenigbo's yearn for knowledge of his society is perceived in his reading habits and comments on what is told over the radio. For instance, when he hears about the army sent by Prime Minister Balewa to kill those burning government property in a strike, he immediately condemns the government's use of brutal police force to kill citizens who are simply expressing their profound dissatisfaction with the regime (p.86). During one of his dinners with colleagues, Odenigbo engages in a heated argument with Professor Ezeka to demonstrate that the defence pact signed by P.M. Balewa and Britain indicates that the former is Britain's stooge. He even argues using examples from other African nations:

We are living in a time of great white evil. They are dehumanizing blacks in South Africa and Rhodesia, they fermented what happened in the Congo, they won't let American blacks vote, they won't let the Australian Aborigines vote, but the worst of all is what they are doing here. This defence pact is worse than apartheid and segregation, but we don't realize it. They are controlling us from behind drawn curtains. It is very dangerous! (Adichie, 2006, p.105)

When this ideological resistance to neo-colonialism can no longer contain the boiling activism it generates, and the country continues moving from one military coup to the other, armed struggle presents itself as the necessary evil indispensable for Igbo independence.

The second phase of resistance kicks off with the declaration of secession made by Colonel Ojukwu, mainly at the intention of those living in and originating from Eastern Nigeria. In "Essential Diversity: Post-colonial Theory and African Literature", Anthony Chennells (1999) comments on the effectiveness of such regionalized calls to resistance when he submits that "Anti-colonial struggles in Africa, particularly in the 1960s and early 1970s, invoked as their principle strategy cultural nationalism, which is the most obvious way of contesting the authority of the metropolitan power with the power of the local centre" (p.113). These indigenous populations are closer to cultural authenticity than the urban folk and consequently, they readily offer themselves for any project aiming at breaking with colonialism. Contrary to Kainene and her parents who always avoid involvement in the fight, young illiterate peasants fight wholeheartedly to safeguard what remains of their cultural integrity.

Nonetheless, the hopes contained in the declaration of secession are deferred when The Republic of Biafra remains at the level of an 'imagined community' as its materialization fails. The "unfamiliar" voice announcing the surrender of Biafran secessionists over the radio can only confine itself to thanking those who fought for freedom and justice but cannot do more than urging the neo-

colonialist stooge (who is still in power) to stop the war and negotiate “in the name of humanity” (Adichie, 2006, p.391). In fact, the voice over the radio is begging the corrupt post-independence government to stop the war. The secession fails mainly because the defence pact signed by Nigeria and its former ‘master’ Britain guarantees Britain’s support to and presence in the Nigerian army. The result of this neo-colonial alliance is the successful and frequent air-raids launched with European military planes to annihilate the revolutionaries.

The war ends; much blood has been spilt; many lives have been paralysed; much property has been destroyed; independence is not achieved; freedom and prosperity are not attained; neo-colonial power mongers are still in power and the world is silent. Such are the articulations of the natives’ disenchantment in post-independence Nigeria. In “Anticolonialism, national liberation, and postcolonial nation formation”, Tamara Sivanandan (2004) captures the mood of African countries when the promises of independence miscarry. She states:

It is distressing, therefore, to consider the situation of many of these post-colonial societies some fifty years later, and to reflect on how little of that apparent promise has materialized. The rhetoric of anticolonial nationalism and the dreams of what independence would bring seem misguided in retrospect, for what is common to many – if not most – of these societies is their failure to attain the hoped-for social and economic freedoms for their peoples. (p. 42)

As Sivanandan postulates, it is only upsetting to observe the non-fulfilment of the dreams nurtured by almost a whole continent! It is worth noting that she highlights that these dreams were ‘misguided’ from the onset. Though these dreams for independence and prosperity were legitimate, they were not thoroughly conceived and enacted by Africans. Africans rather fought for these dreams and the European colonialist *granted* them the dreams which the former hurriedly brandished as trophies. This granting implied that they (the Europeans) would leave their imprints on the *gift* of independence. These imprints spoiled the gift and by extension, soiled the hopes of the ex-colonized. Bhabha (1994) in *The Location of Culture* explains this state of disillusionment when he states that “the experience of colonialism is the problem of living in the midst of the incomprehensible” (p.213). It is true that the dreams of most Africans were misguided and deferred. But could things have been done otherwise? What tools and strategies could they have used to carefully plan and concretize their ride toward prosperity? These questions are quite unanswerable. As Bhabha posits, the postcolonial condition involves living without answers to questions about one’s past, present and future. This is part and parcel of the disenchantment syndrome. The post-independence situation, which is in itself an experience of colonialism, allows its victims in a perplexed and confused state especially when their faith in the collapse of colonial institutions (both formal and informal) is shattered by yet another triumph of

One can locate hope in a doleful novel like Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* if one considers Frederic Jameson’s (1986) argument in “Third World Literature in an Era of Multinational Capitalism” where he says:

What all third-world cultural productions have in common, and what distinguishes them radically from analogous cultural forms in the first world [is that] all third-world texts are necessarily ...allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call national allegories, even when, or I should say particularly when, their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel. (p.67)

Even though this assertion can be criticized for its generalization, it harbours pertinence because the failure of Western capitalism to totally alienate the African individual from his/her society has given way for African writers to conceive characters and situations that metaphorically represent the postcolonial world and condition.

Taking into account Jameson's opinion, we contend that Olanna and Kainene in *Half of a Yellow Sun* constitute a twin allegory which reflects the dilemma and 'halfness' of Nigeria after independence and the glimmer of hope. Olanna and Kainene are twins and can be considered to a greater extent as one. They represent Nigeria with the variety of its cultural fabric and its communities that have been forced to live under one national umbrella. The inexplicable affective distance separating them stands for the duality of reactions to post-independence realities: on the hand one some Nigerians (represented by Olanna) stick to the anti-colonial struggle because they notice that the so-called independence is a fake one and that they cannot trust the new black elite with an even management of the colonial heritage. This is noticeable in Olanna's refusal to marry chief Okonji, the minister of Finance. He is one of the architects of capitalism and obviously serves the interests of neo-colonialism. Olanna rather chooses Odenigbo, an intellectual and revolutionary activist who has at heart, the decolonisation of Nigeria.

On the other hand, other Nigerians (epitomised by Kainene) strive to flourish in economic capitalism and seldom pay attention to the plights of the masses. Her high standard of living albeit war in the country and her interest in managing the businesses of her father better than himself testify that she joyfully welcomes the neo-colonial world. Kainene's missing at the end of the novel and Olanna's strong spiritual desire to seek and meet her other half signify the incompleteness of the African/Nigerian self in post-independence setting. The postcolonial being is in halves because the negotiation with colonial bequests is not ended. Olanna's conviction that traditional healing will help bring Kainene back is an indication that recovery and totality of the postcolonial being can only be attained through a recourse to native culture. That is the only glimmer of hope! As the story tilts to its end, were left with the sour taste of incompleteness and a faint hope for a return to normalcy. Though this hope is gleamy, it carries an important religious message that is embedded in the meaning of Kainene's name. 'Kainene' means "Let's watch and see what next God will bring" (Adichie, 2006, p.55). Thus, the religious connotation of Kainene's name informs the reader's mind about the possibility of divine intervention which gives more substance to the hope.

In sum, it is worth noting the two phases of resistance to neo-colonialism in *Half of a Yellow Sun*: the ideological and guerrilla phases. The ideological phase enables the construction of logical justifications for rebellion. This phase is characterised by a constant critique of the regime in seat and a general assurance that taking arms will lead to freedom. The guerrilla phase materialises the ideology of resistance and always involves untold violence. In the case of a postcolony like Nigeria, neo-colonial complicities ensure the failure of resistant movements and extinct almost all hopes of freedom. At this point, native culture seems to be the only reliable road to liberty. However, the socio-economic, cultural, political and psychological entanglements that have characterised Africans in the post-independence era are yet to receive the freeing cultural jolt from the natives.

Conclusion

The half of a glowing yellow sun on the flag of an imagined Biafran community represents on one hand, the much awaited radiant future for a real decolonised and prosperous nation and on the other, the non-fulfilment of this hope/dream. The ride towards this new future is spurred by and remains unachieved due to the subsisting colonialist's presence in 'independent' Nigeria. This paper has endeavoured to demonstrate – with the help of the postcolonial literary theory – that both external and internal factors contribute to the incompleteness of Nigeria's ride toward prosperity and unity. Discovery, Shock and Disenchantment have been discussed as decisive moments that help to understand the failure of Nigeria's ride toward the sun of freedom, unity and prosperity.

The exogenous force which prevents Nigerians from prosperity and a deep sense of unity is, of course, European colonialism. British colonial rule subjects most natives to an inferiority complex as the British position themselves as superior beings from whom the natives should seek modelling and approval. Thus, for as long as British domination lasts, the British conceive Nigeria while the natives follow their instructions. This paternalistic and Master-like hegemony over Nigeria has a heavy toll on the consciousness of the Nigerian middle-class which takes over power after formal colonisation. While the unprepared middle-class inherits and perpetuates British colonial conceptions, the masses 'discover' that their world has been stratified (into urban and rural areas); that Capitalism has gained grounds at the expense of Communalism and that the native has become the Master of fellow natives. Hence, when the political sovereignty which British colonisation usurped is abruptly handed over to the natives, the latter face the challenge of negotiating the transition from the state of colony to the state of an independent nation. Since the natives did not conceive Nigeria, they unfortunately perennate European colonial dichotomies.

The endogenous factor which jeopardises Nigeria's quest for unity and self-determination is misrepresentation. Instead of forming a united front that will successfully face the burning issues of post-independence, Nigerian natives

recoil into the shells of their various cultural groups which oppose one another. This opposition is fuelled by misrepresentations that construct biased knowledge about each of the main cultural entities in the country (Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa). These misrepresentations culminate in successive coup d'états and the Biafran secessionist war. Since the Igbos feel disenchanted by Gowon's neo-colonial leadership, they stage an armed struggle for the liberation of Igbos from Nigeria which they regard as their new colonizer. When the Biafran struggle fails to yield its much awaited fruits (independence and prosperity), the Igbos are disillusioned a second time. Thus, resistance is both a child and a father of disenchantment: it is because of disenchantment that resistance is organised and the failure of resistance also produces disillusion. Nevertheless, the flame of hope is not completely extinct: Olanna firmly relies on the natives' spirituality for the *return* of her twin sister, and by extension, the *completeness* of the postcolonial being and dream.

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