

POSTCOLONIAL ECOCRITICISM AND AFRICAN LITERATURE:
THE NIGERIA CIVIL WAR EXAMPLE

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ABSTRACT

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by Cajetan N. Iheka

The Nigerian Civil War has been a subject of serious literary scholarship over the years. In fact, Kole Omotosho suggests that the war literature has attracted more attention from writers and scholars than other aspects of Nigerian literature (McLuckie 510). Despite the seeming popularity of the war genre that Omotosho's work suggests, scholarship on the war has been limited to anthropocentric analyses of the war. Such analyses pay attention to the effects of the war on the people, that is, men, women, and children, but missing in such scholarship is the implication of the war on the environment, and how that affects the human members of what Aldo Leopold describes as "biotic community." Also, the ongoing concern about climate change and global warming justifies the need for an interdisciplinary study of literature and the environment. The present study, therefore, aims to bridge the seeming gap in scholarship by investigating the culture-nature relationship in a postcolonial ecocritical reading of three African texts. Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty*, Festus Iyayi's *Heroes*, and Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* are chosen for this work because of the similar patterns of thoughts and themes explicated in the text. Generally, such themes as environmental degradation, human exploitation, and trauma are explored in a reading of the novels. The study

concludes that the politics of class, race, gender, and culture combine to engender the human and environmental destruction, as well as, the absurdity that was the Nigerian Civil War. Among other recommendations, the study suggests the need for pragmatic leadership in African nations, the importance of more ecological-related research in African literature, and the need for environmental sustainable awareness and practices among Nigerians and Africans.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of African literature has been the history of the continent itself. Grace Okereke identifies this link when she notes that “[a]ll over Africa, important historical effects affecting the destiny of nations have been fit subject for literary creativity among writers” (145). Okereke’s position echoes that expressed earlier by the Kenyan writer, Ngugi wa Thiongo. According to the celebrated Kenyan writer, African literary works do not exist in a vacuum. Such literary artifacts are always conditioned by the events of the respective societies in which they occur. In other words, Ngugi’s viewpoint is that social relevance is at the heart of the literary experience in Africa. So be it in Ghana, Nigeria, Algeria, South Africa, Kenya, or any other part of Africa, a shared social condition usually precipitates the creative moment at least for the most part. A survey of the literary experience in different parts of the continent will suffice to prove the point of the inextricability of the social condition from the literary experience.

The literary trajectory of the continent can be broadly located in the three phases of African historical development. These broad categories are the pre-colonial period, colonial, and the postcolonial period. The pre-colonial period in Africa was marked by traditional values and practices for the most part. While this is not suggestive of the perfection of the African past, it draws attention to its vitality as against the Eurocentric description of it as savage and barbaric. One major characteristic of this period was that communalism informed human relationships in the different parts of Africa. Particularly, the extended family system was the basis of human interaction instead of the nuclear

mode that is fast eroding the communal value of traditionalism. Kofi Awoonor highlights the characteristics of the pre-colonial era as follows:

The institution of chieftaincy, the divine conception of the role of chiefs, the cult of ancestors, initiation of the various rites of passage from birth to death, the nature and power of kinship groups based on blood, ideas about the Supreme Creator, and the role and assignments of minor gods and deities, the metaphysical conception of the world-these are all generally shared in a united culture and origin in the very dim past. (4)

Similarly, Aime Cesaire nostalgically recalls the above pre-colonial moment when he describes it as the “ante-capitalist” period (44). The reference to capitalism demonstrates that the materialistic inclination of capitalism was absent in Africa until the advent of colonialism. And since Africa was not exposed to the formal educational methods introduced by colonialism at this time, the literary experience of this moment was largely oral and spontaneous. Such oral expressions occurred in the form of proverbs, folktales, and songs. As Onuekwusi puts it, oral literature “refers to all forms of aesthetic expressions in words by which man in pre-literate societies sought to entertain, educate, inform, and excite the emotions of his fellows” (4). Viewed critically, it is proper to conclude that oral literature of traditional African societies share similar roles with contemporary written literature. In other words, both forms of literature delight and teach their audience, and their divergence is merely in the mode of expression. For instance, D.T. Niane’s *Sundiata: An Epic of Mali* is a typical recollection of the work of a griot in the traditional Malian society. Amos Tutuola’s *Palmwine Drinkard* provides another example of traditional folk culture from Nigeria. In this novel, one of the earliest in

Africa, Tutuola adapts the fantastic and realistic components of oral tales to develop one of the pioneer works of African literature.

Where orality characterizes literature in the pre-colonial era, the colonial engagement brought with it formal education that resulted in written African literature. During this time, the colonies had their first access to formal education, and the immediate consequence of formal education was that the colonized people were able to read and write. Therefore, the educated put their service towards the nationalist struggles for independence. Onuekwusi notes that literature was one of the means through which Africans deconstructed the colonial engagement (76). Colonial literature, that was a product of colonialism, became a means by which literary writers gave vent to their expression of protest against the colonial establishment, and underlying these works is the colonial tension between the colonizers and the colonized people. There are several works as there are writers from the continent devoted to the colonial engagement. Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* and *Things fall Apart* (1958) are examples of works dealing with the colonial experience in West Africa. In East Africa, Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Grain of Wheat* (1967) and *Weep not Child* (1964) define the colonial struggle in his native Kenya. In apartheid South Africa, Althol Fulgard's *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* (1976) reflects on the sad experience of blacks in that country, while Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966) is an epitome of the colonial theme in Sudan.

Eventually, the colonial tension in the continent gave rise to independence in several parts of Africa starting from the late 1950s. Ghana became the first African country to gain independence in 1957 while Nigeria gained hers in 1960; both were former British colonies. The dawn of independence in 1960 ushered in a wave of hope

and aspiration in the new nations of Africa. However, the departing colonialists did little to prepare the new nations for the art of modern governance other than “a problematic assemblage of peoples who frequently enough have little in common than proximity” (Hawley 16). Hawley notes further that the situation described above leads to the “injustices of pitting one ethnic group against another” that is at the core of the colonial experience in Africa (16). In addition to Hawley’s point on the “problematic assemblage” of uncommon ethnic groups, the colonizers also ensured that their lackeys would emerge as the leaders of the independent African societies. Using Nigeria as a case study, Morrison argues that “the geopolitical divisions of West Africa were negotiated between Western powers in the 1890s, and [that] the emergence of ‘Nigeria’ itself as a national idea can be traced to . . . the girlfriend of Fredrick (later Lord) Lugard [the first colonial Governor of Nigeria], . . . (5). What the foregoing suggests is that the composition of the Nigerian state was arbitrarily decided by the British without the input of the people. Add to that the point raised by Abioseh Porter in his reading of Buchi Emecheta’s *Destination Biafra* and the British design becomes clearer. According to Porter, a significant theme in Emecheta’s novel is that the British ensured a Nigerian leadership under “the feudalistic, politically naïve, and less radical Hausas.” Porter adds that “it was assumed by the British authorities that if they could get the more ambitious and more radical Ibos and Yorubas out of real political control (at least at the Federal level), British economic interests would be safeguarded” (315). While Porter’s study is based on a fictional work of the Nigeria civil war, it is important to recall Ngugi’s position that the social and political milieu is at the heart of African literature. Following Ngugi’s standpoint, therefore, one conclude that the fictional work of Emecheta is mimetic of the social situation in Nigeria.

If Ngugi's position is anything to go by, it means then that the interest of the British, like that of other colonialists, was of primary consideration as the business of colonialism came to an end. It is no wonder then that the leaders elected or appointed at the end of colonialism in some parts of Africa had little or no vision of the responsibilities of governance. With this background, the reader should be least surprised and disappointed at the failure of the national leaders to move the nation forward. The literary experience of the post-colonial era has also been characterized by the failure of political leaders and the disillusionment of the people as a consequence of their disappointment in their leaders. Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born* recreates the corruption, filth, disillusionment, and other vices that characterize post-colonial Ghana. Ousmane Sembene's *Borom Sarat* is an example of such post colonial work from Senegal, while Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* reflects on the writer's perception of the independent Kenyan state. The above list is merely representative, but the current underlying these works is the failure of the elites to advance a responsive governance in the new societies, and the attendant disillusionment of the people who had equated the end of colonialism to the beginning of a prosperous nation and continent.

Similarly, post-colonial Nigeria continues to be characterized by the elite failure that is evident in the other African societies mentioned above. Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* is the celebrated writer's commentary on the sad social realities of the independent Nigerian state. Against the pervasive disorder and uncertainty in the social system, Achebe's novel prophesies a coup, which incidentally, occurs at about the time the novel was published. The coup and other events which this work will address later led to the Nigeria civil war between 1967 and 1970.

In literature, the Nigerian civil war has been the subject of several novels, plays, short stories, and poetry, and critical essays. In fact, Kole Omotoso asserts that the Nigerian Civil War is “the most important theme in Nigerian literature” (qtd. in McLuckie 510). Omotoso’s point here is substantiated by the work of McLuckie, whose seventeen page work in 1987 catalogues works dealing with the theme of the Nigerian civil war in literature. If such a project could yield seventeen pages in 1987, it means that a repeat of such study in 2010 would reveal a lot more. McLuckie includes Chukwuemeka Ike’s *Sunset at Dawn*, Elechi Amadi’s *Enstrangement*, Buchi Emecheta’s *Destination Biafra*, and Ali Mazrui’s *The Trial of Christopher Okigbo* among the novel genre of the war literature, but since the publication of McLuckie’s work, such list need be expanded to include Festus Iyayi’s *Heroes* and Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* that won the Orange Prize for Literature in 2007.

It is in consideration of the need to interrogate the bane of Nigeria, that of healing the wounds of the Nigerian civil war, and checking the ongoing climate crisis that this study investigates the Civil war through the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism. The contemporary concern on global warming and climate change necessitates a consideration of the human-nature relationship in African literary discourse. Specifically, Isidore Okpewho’s *The Last Duty*, Festus Iyayi’s *Heroes*, and Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, all works on the war experience, are chosen for analysis and discussion. These novels are chosen primarily because of their similar pattern of thought on the Biafran war experience. And where Okpewho and Adichie can be said to provide the Igbo account of the war, Iyayi presents a non-Igbo (federal side) response to the war. Further, the researcher is motivated to include Adichie because she represents the post-

war generation of Ndigbo which the researcher proudly belongs to. In other words, the contemporary female voice that Adichie represents here provides an added reason for her inclusion in this study. Since the above novels are based on the Nigerian experience before and during the war, it makes sense to devote some space to the discussion of the development of the Nigerian state and the intrigues that snowballed into the war. It is hoped that the discussion will guide readers to appreciate the relationship between the history and the literature of the war.

The Development of the Nigerian State

The Nigerian state came into being as an amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates by Lord Lugard in 1914. Writing on the forced amalgamation of the diverse people that constitute Nigeria, Nwankwo and Ifejika opine that “the quest for economic and imperial gains” is the motivating factor for the bringing together of the heterogeneous ethnic groups that constitute Nigeria. With the act of amalgamation, Lugard coalesced several geographical entities into one country. Hawley remarks that the forced amalgamation in different parts of the continent is responsible for the instability and clashes in Africa (16). Narrowing their work to Nigeria, Nwankwo and Ifejika share Hawley’s sentiments when they claim that the diverse nature of the Nigerian population is responsible for the “utter lack of internal peace and harmony” in post-independent Nigeria. From the above works, it is possible to extrapolate ethnic divide as the remote cause of the Biafran conflict. But if ethnic rivalry was at the remote core of the conflict, the selfish disposition of the British and the national elite that replaced them can be said to be a contributing factor to the war.

By 1960 when the country gained independence, the British ensured that governance was in the hands of the Northerners. As Nwankwo and Ifejika, among others, have noted, the decision of the British Government to leave power in the hands of the North was taken because the conservative nature of the barely educated Northern elites made them amenable to British control in the days after independence. The seeming benign disposition of the North sharply contradicts that of their progressive Southern counterparts who led the anti-colonialist struggle against the British (2). The difference between the North and the South in terms of education can be deduced from the account of Nwankwo and Ifejika who posit that as at 1947, “there were only 251 Northern students attending secondary [high] school in Northern Nigeria.” The authors add that the Northern figure represents only 2.5 percent of the people receiving secondary education in Nigeria (28). If Nwankwo and Ifejika’s figure is anything, it suggests that Southerners constitute the other 97.5 percent of people attending secondary schools at that time. Considering the given background and the place of education in the development of societies, it is accurate to conclude that the South was far developed and better prepared for leadership at independence.

But considering the interest of Britain in Nigeria where crude oil had just been discovered in commercial quantity, the British Government handed over power to an inept Abubakar Tafawa Balewa as Prime Minister in 1960. In fact, Nwankwo and Ifejika explain that Nigerians considered Balewa as “excessively moderate, cautious, weak and uninspiring.” They further note that “he [Balewa] came later to be regarded as a stooge of the colonial masters from whom Nigerian nationalists have wrestled independence” (39). With little or no preparedness for the demands of a heterogeneous society like Nigeria,

Balewa watched helplessly as the nascent nation was fraught with electoral crises, census malpractices, the Western Region crisis, among others. Onyema provides a summary of the political crises that is worth repeating here:

. . . in 1962, and 1963, there was crisis over the national census. It was said to have been skewed in favor of some ethnic groups in order to position them to benefit from the national number-based sharing formula [of the federal allocation]. This happened contemporaneously with the break-up of the crisis-ridden Action Group party and the declaration of a state of emergency in Western Nigeria. The 1964 Federal and 1965 Western Regional elections, also controversial and flawed, gave fillip to multiple national protests and crises which set the stage for the military to intervene on January 15, 1966. (21)

Disillusioned by the post-independence tensions and crises, Nigerians received the news of the January 15, 1966 coup with jubilation. The coup which was led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu, an Igbo, was interpreted by the North as an Igbo coup because most of those killed or affected by the coup were Northerners. The Northern elements in the Army responded with a counter-coup that was targeted at Igbo officers six months later. Uzoigwe's insightful analysis of the events that led to the war is worth summarizing here. According to Uzoigwe, the first coup of January 15, 1966 was interpreted by the North as an Igbo attempt to dominate the country. The Northern interpretation was predicated on the fact that only one Igbo officer was a casualty in the first coup. For the North, the fact that only one Igbo officer died in that coup was not a coincidence. Therefore, the Northern coup eliminated the military head of state, General Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo, who foiled the first coup alongside other Igbo officers. The Northerners did not stop there as

the coup was followed by successive pogroms in the North. As Uzoigwe asserts, the pogroms of May 29, July 29, September 29, and October 29, 1966 left no fewer than thirty thousand Igbos dead and another two million returning to the East for safety (97). If the death toll demonstrates the tragic catastrophe before the war, it is the dates of the pogroms that suggest a planned and coordinated Igbo cleansing effort.

With several Igbos dead and many others returning to the East, the Governor of the Eastern Region, Lt. Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, declared the sovereign state of Biafra after the various meetings convened to discuss the workability and future of the Nigerian state, like the Aburi conference in Ghana, yielded no fruitful result. As a basis for the secession, Ojukwu cites the inability of the Yakubu Gowon led central government to guarantee the safety of the Igbos (Uzoigwe 105). Federal Nigeria under Gowon's watch responded with a police action that metamorphosed into a three-year war in which the masses and the environment were the sacrificial lambs offered on the altar of ethnicity and leadership tussle between Gowon and Ojukwu. Hawley aptly captures the tragedy when he states that "by the end of the war, over three million I[g]bos had fled to the east, and thereby bolstered ethnic division of the country." Hawley adds that "up to the same number died, either from the fighting itself or from starvation and disease" (16). Hawley's record of the estimated human casualties of the civil war is heart wrenching and speaks to the grisly nature of that period of Nigerian history. Add to it the environmental consequence which Hawley did not mention and one finds a complete destruction that was the Nigerian Biafra war.

The foregoing discussion is central to an understanding of the treatment of the war theme in Nigerian literature. From the forced amalgamation of the Northern and

Southern protectorates into Nigeria, to the British decision to hand power to an unprepared and unqualified Northern hegemony at independence, the reader encounters the sowing of the seed of the Nigerian civil war. The various crises of post independence Nigeria were uncontrolled by the inept Balewa led central government. The January 15 coup of 1966 was the natural reaction to the series of crises that had bedeviled the nascent nation while the counter coup, the pogroms in the North, and the inability of Gowon and Ojukwu to reach a compromise made the Nigerian civil war an unavoidable and inevitable aspect of Nigerian history. The next section examines existing scholarship on the civil war in literature that the present study intends to build on.

The Civil War in Literature

For a meaningful discussion of the criticism of the Nigerian war literature, it is important to justify the rationale for such tragic works. This becomes important considering the recollection of tragic moments that the Biafran experience represents. However, several writers have provided insights into the necessity for such works that embody the Biafran experience. According to Morrison, “it is to the novel and autobiography that the task has fallen of untangling the entire painful civil war experience” (6). Where Morrison’s claim is limited in its exclusion of poetry, drama, and short stories as other avenues for examining the “war experience,” his commentary is insightful as far as it attempts to provide a justification for the tendency of creative writers and participants in the warfare to recreate their experience in the form of memoirs, plays, poetry, novel, short story, etc. In a similar move that supports Morrison’s viewpoint, Hawley asserts that in the absence of a “similar forum” like the South African

Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “time and art, may by default have become the only effective means to digest the poison of the past and to slowly heal from within the damage that has been done” (16).

From the foregoing, it is possible to state that Morrison and Hawley provide two reasons to justify the inclusion of the war literature in the canon of Nigerian and African literature. Where Morrison points at the need to examine the national destiny and progress from the prism of the literature of the war, Hawley’s effort alludes to the therapeutic advantage that the war literature can offer to those traumatized by the war. Similarly, the writing of Onyema supports that of Morrison and Hawley. According to Onyema, considering that writing about trauma “offers one an easement from the inhibitions of horror and frees one from the isolationist burden of silences through shared experiences,” the civil war writers “have discharged a burden of history and attained this [*sic*] easement and release that reconnects them to nature and the sociopolitical process” (33). Onyema further adds a third benefit of writing on the war experience when he notes that writers thematize the futility of wars with their effort to recreate “the devastation and horrors of war and exposing the greed, deceit, and selfishness that harbinger it” (33). A basic interpretation of Onyema’s argument would be that war writings help to forestall the occurrence of subsequent wars by highlighting the destructive tendencies that accompany war. Maybe this is a reason why Nigeria is yet to witness another full blown war despite certain implosions that have occurred over the course of the nation’s history. However, the effect of war writings to forestall future wars must not be overemphasized. It is worthy of mention that existing war writings have been unable to stop the destructive wars in other parts of the African continent and beyond. Such crises like that of Darfur,

Somalia, and even Congo, demonstrate that the role of existing war literature in relation to stopping future crises is limited. But even at that, the fact that war literature has the potential of showing the dangers of war, alongside the possibility of progress and healing that it offers, makes it necessary to devote the rest of this section to a review of existing scholarship on the Nigerian civil war.

Categorically, the present review of the literary criticism of the Nigerian Civil war will be done under three broad classifications determined arbitrarily for the purpose of the study. These broad categories include prose criticism, poetry analysis, and the interpretation of autobiographical writings on the war. Drama is missing in this classification because of the dearth of scholarship devoted to the few plays on the war subject. In contrast, the prose genre has received extensive attention, perhaps, because of the sheer number of works in the prose genre. Onuekwusi testifies to the abundance of works in the prose genre when he asserts that no genre of literature has benefitted more from the intellectual harvest of the Nigerian civil war more than the novel genre. (134). Writing in 1994, Grace Okereke laments the male dominated space of war literature, but sixteen years later, the gender pendulum has swunged to include more female voices (145). No wonder then that in addition to including a female authored text as a primary source, the present study begins its review of the prose genre with a discussion of the work of Buchi Emecheta, a female writer.

According to Okereke, “Emecheta systematically weaves in the sub themes that build up to the major theme of war – the corrupt Nigerian politics and neo-colonialism.” Okereke adds that another central concern of Emecheta’s *Destination Biafra* is the “new role of women in the survival of a nation.” (146). While admitting some flaws in

Emecheta's *Destination Biafra*, Okereke argues that with the novel, "Emecheta has successfully carved out a place for women writers and for women in general" (156). Recognizing the significance of Emecheta's contribution to gender balance, Abioseh Porter makes a similar case for the uniqueness of her thematic preoccupation too. According to Porter, where most male writers devote attention to the events of the war and the aftermath of such events, Emecheta looks back to explain, albeit in fictional terms, the reason behind the war and the role of women in the war" (314). Porter's point seems to identify the significance of Emecheta's contribution to war literature. The work of Joya Uraizee and Ann Adams seem to complement the work of Abioseh Porter in that both writers explicate the theme of failed internal leadership and the international collaboration that contributed to the war. According to Adams, "Emecheta, [in *Destination Biafra*], clearly charts the various internal fissures and schisms" in Nigeria, in addition, to showing ways that "foreign intervention" aggravated the situation (288).

The foregoing discussion is instrumental to the discussion of leadership in the present study. However, Emecheta's portrayal of the war as one that was precipitated by the absence of women in leadership is reductionist in the same way that her portrayal of her protagonist, Debbie, is characteristic of an unexamined feminist endeavor.

Nwachukwu-Agbada has noted the problematic of Emecheta's feminist position in *Destination Biafra*. According to Nwachukwu-Agbada, Emecheta's portrayal of Debbie is quixotic and her actions hardly tenable in the real world (393). It seems then that against Emecheta's stance on the possibility of women to transcend social conflicts in Africa, it is in the reasons that she adduced for the war that her novel's greatest

achievement lies. As Nwachukwu-Agbada has noted, it is merely a coincidence that the internal politicians and their international collaborators are males (392).

Where the foregoing suggests that Buchi Emecheta pays attention to the causes of the war, other critics have identified works that emphasize the events of the war and the accompanying devastation and horror. For instance, Clement Okafor's reading of Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* identifies the sufferings of the Igbo before and during the war. Specifically, Okafor highlights the hunger, displacement, disease, and death that characterized the experience of the Igbos during the war (37). Iniobong Uko is another critic that has condemned the Biafra war as an effort in futility. In her reading of selected short stories on the war, Uko laments the "insanity" that characterizes the war. For Uko, the Biafran leadership deserves reprimand for fighting a war it was ill-prepared for (49). Therefore, she condemns the Biafran leadership for "deluding the masses into a false feeling of hope, protection, and victory in the futile war" (57).

Similarly, the conscription of child soldiers is another low moment of the Biafran war that Uko denounces in her essay. According to her "young boys were forced to serve in the Biafran army" and with "no training or uniforms, and inadequate food and arms" (55). Uko's argument here brings to fore the morality of abusing children in the name of war. Hawley's study on the Biafran war mentions other places that children are conscripted to fight in wars. The mention of places like Uganda, Burundi, Ivory Coast, Congo, among others, reveals the cancerous nature of child violence. The "brutalization of the young," that child soldiers represent speaks to the horrors of war and the need for children to be spared the systemic violence whenever war becomes inevitable (Hawley 22). As I have argued elsewhere, the prevalence of child soldiers in wars in Africa

indicates the prioritization of political expediency over the cause of humanity, morality, and ethics (Iheka 78-9). It therefore, means, that the position of Uko and Hawley as to the need to condemn and stop the use of child soldiers on the continent is an important point that literary studies on the war brings to the table of political scientists and policy makers on the continent.

Apart from the abuse of the male child in the form of forced conscription and militarization, women are not left out of the abuse as they are raped and/or killed by the soldiers. Andrew Armstrong's reading of the works of Ben Okri and Festus Iyayi identifies the violence against women. In the essay that discusses the implication of representation in the Nigerian civil war, Armstrong recounts the tragedies of the characters of Ifeyiwa and Ndudi in Okri's *Dangerous Love* and Iyayi's *Heroes*. According to Armstrong, the death of Ifeyiwa and the rape of Ndudi by the soldiers are tragedies that the protagonists in the novels are unable to represent adequately. The difficulty in articulation and representation, which Armstrong describes, is significant of the horrors faced by women in the war (182). Also, Benedict Nweke's reading of Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* reveals the tendency of violence against women. As Nweke's reading demonstrates; Anulika, the protagonist's cousin is raped by the Nigerian soldiers while his sister, Nnesinachi, accepts to take refuge with a Nigerian soldier in order to escape similar experiences. Nweke's point shows the tragedy of women who are abused by men during the war. Even Nnesinachi's case is not radically different. Although she escapes "conventional" rape, the fact that her cohabitation with the federal soldier is forced means that she experiences rape, too, even if it is from another dimension.

James Young's insightful essay on the experiences of women during the Jewish Holocaust shows that the violence against women was motivated by a desire to decimate the source of reproduction and life. Young specifically argues that violence against Jewish women was to ensure an extinction of the Jewish race, because the survival of a single Jewish female portends the possibility of producing another Jewish generation to replace the dead ones (1779). Young's analysis of the Jewish women can be applied here for an understanding of the various forms of violence against women in the war. Following Young's argument, it is possible to suggest that the experiences of Ifeyiwa, Ndudi, Anulika, and Nnesimachi in the work of Armstrong and Nweke are meant to disturb the regenerative cycle of the Igbos. On a larger scale too, it is possible to argue that the various attacks on a non-combatant female gender can be justified by Young's work that emphasizes the tendency of such attacks to eliminate the gender that has procreative abilities.

If the foregoing discussion depicts an overview of criticism on the prose genre, the poetry genre too is worthy of explication for its contribution to the war writings and criticism. For instance, Afam Ebeogu and Chris Onyema, argue that Wole Soyinka and Chris Okigbo predicted the civil war in their poetry. Where Ebeogu asserts that Soyinka's "Season" and Okigbo's "Path of Thunder" are some of the poems prophesying war (36), Onyema acknowledges "Thunder can Break" as Okigbo's prophetic poem (22). Ebeogu further adds that oral poetry was the "immediate literary consequence" of the outbreak of the war (36). Here, Ebeogu alludes to the poetic rendition of the war songs in Biafra. Citing "Nzogbu Nzogbu" and other war songs, Ebeogu comments that this aspect of oral literature "communicated an infectious high spiritedness and bravado." As Ebeogu

affirms too, some of these songs became “propagandistic chorals” that were used to deceive the masses of a possibility of Biafran victory in a war that it was unprepared for (36). However, the deceptive nature of some of the songs does not invalidate their importance in the war. In fact, and as Imo Eshiet has noted elsewhere, “the songs muster and fuse these with the exigencies of the times in a driving attempt to incentivize and urge Biafrans to the urgency for struggle and commitment to the war effort (143). It is therefore possible to conclude that literature helped in the war effort in Biafra; at least to the extent that it propelled the soldiers and the civilians.

The works of Ebeogu and Eshiet, discussed above, suggest the importance of the propagandistic chorals to the war. One would expect, therefore, that such importance indicates the need for works that are devoted to the literary study of the use of propaganda in the Nigerian civil war. However, there is no evidence of that, especially, if the review of existing literature for the present study is anything to go by. Instead, available discourse on propaganda concerns the World Wars and other foreign conflicts. Deepa Kumar’s “War Propaganda and the (Ab)uses of Women,” for instance, examines the Iraqi war and how the media constructed the rescue story of the US soldier, Private Jessica Lynch, from Iraq. Similarly, Noel Valis has devoted a study to Hemingway’s representation of propaganda in the Spanish Civil War. In the above works, the authors discuss the uses to which propaganda can be put to in wars. Following these studies, the present work intends to examine the literary representation of the use of propaganda in the Nigerian Civil war.

Written war poetry is the sequel to the oral poetry that emerged during the war. Ebeogu establishes that the oral poetry “anticipated the written poetry that would spring

from the war” (38). Composed by established poets and in English too, these poems have been the subject of literary criticism of the war literature. Afam Ebeogu’s analysis of poems by different authors depicts various thematic concerns of the war poems. Particularly, Ebeogu asserts that like their oral counterparts, the written poetry too is “permeated with the sense of agony” (48). It is the sense of agony that one finds in Ogaga Okuyade’s study of the Nigerian civil war poetry. In a study that eclectically deals with the work of several poets, Okuyade describes Odia Ofeimun’s “Where Bullets Have Spoken,” as “Ofeimun’s charming, rhapsodic and evocative lines.” Okuyade adds further that the poem which he [Ofeimun] realizes through incantatory poetics evoke the horrifying agony of war” (133). Of course, the agony that foregrounds the work of Ebeogu and Okuyade refers to the aftermath of the inhuman and destructive tendencies of the war. In fact, Okuyade goes on to locate the agony in Catherine Acholonu’s *Nigeria in the Year 1999*. According to Okuyade, Acholonu’s collection “is suffused with metaphors of loss, rape, personal and collective angst” (133). Overall, the written poetry from the war has been a medium through which the poets express their frustration and experience of the Nigerian civil war. So, where the war oral poetry represents a traditional, motivating and propagandistic force during the war, the written form that started appearing at the end of the war presents a platform through which the poets problematize their experience and knowledge of the civil war.

The business of writing about the Nigerian civil war has not been the exclusive preserve of creative writers and critics. In fact, the political actors and participants in the war have documented their experiences in memoirs and other forms of autobiographical writings. Creative writers too have employed this medium of linguistic expression but it

has been mainly used by the participants of the war. Of course, such writings have become subject of literary explication too. McLuckie, for example, has analyzed the war memoirs of Wole Soyinka, Elechi Amadi, and Ken Saro Wiwa. In his readings of these works, McLuckie identifies the tendency to tell the personal story and how each of the writers contributes to the history of the civil war.

Of course, like all personal accounts, McLuckie identifies the limitation and subjectivity of each writer's story (50). Despite their shortcomings, however, McLuckie does not hesitate to differentiate this kind of memoirs from that of the politicians and military officers who were participants in the war. Philip Effiong's *Nigeria and Biafra: My Story* is an example of such political memoirs. Of course, Philip Effiong was Odumegwu Ojukwu's second in command in the Biafran hierarchy. Isidore Diala's "History, Memoir, & a Soldier's Conscience" provides one of the earliest responses to Effiong's memoir. In the essay, Diala locates Effiong's burden in his characterization of his boss, Ojukwu. In his final assessment of the memoir, Diala dismisses the memoir as "Effiong's testament to his apparently ambivalent devotion to Biafra (126). While Diala's assessment might represent his personal reaction to Effiong's work, the point that his essay foregrounds is the propensity of such memoirs to portray their authors in positive light. Another major demerit of such political memoirs is their silence on the agency of the masses and the combat soldiers. Instead, the politicians receive kudos for their bravado and courage in prosecuting and winning the war.

From the foregoing, the reader can extrapolate several themes relating to the war experience, including agony, failed leadership on both local and international levels, violence, propaganda, etc. Where the foregoing analysis describes the implication of the

war for the human component of the ecosystem, there is a disturbing silence on its effect on the environment and how the environment interacts and affects human beings during the war. The absence of an ecocriticism of the war, therefore, provides a window for an original contribution to the Nigerian civil war epistemology. In an attempt to fill the vacuum identified above, the rest of this literature review addresses the concept of ecocriticism and its implication for a postcolonial space like Nigeria. In other words, how the application of ecocritical theory to a postcolonial society makes for a variant of ecocriticism known as Postcolonial ecocriticism is discussed subsequently.

Postcolonial Ecocriticism

Tracing the development of ecocriticism, Anthony Vital contends that the concept of ecocriticism originated from North America from where it spread to Europe (87). According to Michael Cohen, “ecocritics focused on ‘nature writing,’ in specifically ‘environmental texts’” (15). Cohen’s submission suggests an ecocentric or deep ecological perspective that celebrates nature. The work of Daniel Fried tends to support Cohen’s position when he submits that “the lure of nature uncontaminated not only by human development but also by human error is central to the works of some of the most prominent of American nature writers, from Henry Thoreau and Aldo Leopold, to Edward Abbey and Annie Dillard” (311). However, more recent work in ecocriticism in Euro-America recognizes the need to consider humanity in any environmental discourse. As such, scholars like Lawrence Buell, while conceptualizing ecocriticism “as a site of environmental-ethical reflection. . .” admits the “textual, theoretical, and historical analysis of the palatial basis of human experience” within the scope of ecocriticism (qtd.

in Cohen 17). Taken together, the reader notices that the ecocritical project has witnessed a shift from “nature writing for nature sake” to one that is politically and socially committed. Despite the shift in focus, critics have argued that postcolonial states, especially in Africa, deserve a non-western ecocritical paradigm that accommodates the dynamics of developing postcolonial societies. In other words, such critics argue that the problem of poverty, underdevelopment, and politics of exploitation make it impossible for people in developing countries to appreciate and conserve the environment as their Western counterparts could. As such, Graham Huggan, among others, has canvassed for a postcolonial ecocriticism while others like Anthony Vital make a case for an African ecocriticism (87). Underlying these frameworks is the belief that the dynamics of development of postcolonial states makes it impossible for them to be accommodated in the western notion of ecocriticism; the present study is therefore, indebted to the work of Graham Huggan among others who have made a case for postcolonial ecocriticism.

Writing on the scope of postcolonialism, Bill Aschcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin have argued that “all post-colonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination, and independence has not solved this problem.” Aschcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, further argues, that “the development of new elites within independent societies,” among other reasons [also] “testify to the fact that post-colonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction” (2). The point being made here is that postcolonialism concerns itself with resistance to the colonial engagement and the neo-colonial leadership and elites that emerged at independence.

Following the work of Ashcroft and his colleagues, it is obvious that Nigeria is a postcolonial state. The country witnessed colonial rule until October 1960 when it gained independence. And even after independence, the problem of leadership has ensured it fits into the neo-colonial classification. In fact, the work of Ann Adams is worth repeating here to buttress the postcolonial status of Nigeria. In her reading of Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra*, Adams asserts that "the various internal fissures and schisms," by the politicians alongside an execrable "foreign intervention" led to the civil war. The above suggests that the various elements that constitute the postcolonial are present in the Nigerian example: corrupt and inept internal leaders, foreign intervention, and the masses that are at the receiving end. The result, then, is that the empire/colony binary becomes ubiquitous in any attempt to characterize the set of relationships that climaxed in the war. The binary reinforces the colonial "Other" that has been a subject of research for different postcolonial and cultural theorists. Robert Young captures a definition of postcolonialism that fits the above description. According to him, [p]ostcolonialism names a politics and philosophy of activism that contest the disparit[ies of social and economic inequality], and in so doing continues in a new way the anti-colonial struggles of the past" (qtd. in Huggan "Postcolonial ecocriticism" 6). This parasitic kind of relationship characterizing the empire/colony binary and the elite/masses dichotomy limits the effectiveness of the brand of ecocriticism that originated in America, and calls for a postcolonial ecocriticism that echoes Raymond Williams' assertion on the inextricability of social and environmental issues in environmental literary criticism.

Recent scholarship on postcolonial ecocriticism demonstrates the need for a peculiar brand of criticism that addresses the social and environmental exploitation that

the empire in collaboration with their compradors continues to inflict on their former colonies. Graham Huggan, a prominent figure in postcolonial criticism, has defined some criteria for a successful postcolonial ecocriticism. According to Huggan in "Greening Postcolonialism: Ecocritical Perspectives," an effective ecocriticism must be consistent with the wants of the "real world" just as it should also serve political intent. Huggan further demonstrates this in his more recent essay where he uses the example of Judith Wright, the Australian poet, to show the "alliance" between social concern and environmentalism. Although Huggan's demonstration focuses on Australia, he acknowledges the role of the Nigerian born Ken Saro Wiwa in the struggle for social and environmental justice ("Postcolonial ecocriticism" 7). Before Huggan, Ramachandra Guha's "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique," has indicated that the emphasis on wilderness conservation, that is characteristic of American ecocriticism, is unsustainable in third world situations (71-83). Although western practices of ecocriticism has shifted over time to accommodate social exigencies, the fact that Guha highlights is that the social situation in the third world does not support an environmental practice based on Western notions.

Similarly, Byron Caminero- Santangelo addresses the implication of postcolonial ecocriticism in "Different Shades of Green: Ecocriticism and African Literature." Caminero-Santangelo's essay highlights the romanticist inclination of Eurocentric ecocriticism and condemns its de-emphasis of the human echo of the eco-system. Here, Caminero-Santangelo's work does not necessarily suggest that ecocriticism in Euro-America does not accommodate the human aspects of the ecosystem. What she frowns at, however, is its tendency not to recognize the interconnectedness between nature and

culture in postcolonial spaces. Adopting the examples of Nuruddin Farrah's *Secrets* and Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Grain of Wheat*, Caminero- Santangelo advocates the need for an ecocriticism that accommodates the interests of the human and non-human elements of the African ecosystem where culture depends largely on nature for existence. Moreover, Kwaku Asante-Darko's "The Flora and Fauna of Negritude Poetry: An Ecocritical Reading," embraces the human and non-human component of the ecosystem. According to Asante-Darko, negritude poems "embody pedagogy of ecological awareness" and have a positive influence on the way readers are expected to treat the environment." Like other works portrayed above, Asante-Darko's work indicates the benefits of ecocriticism to the reader and to the environment also.

In Nigeria, some works have been devoted to ecocriticism but as William Slaymaker has noted, such disquisitions have always been to the extent to which they help elucidate the Nigerian social and political climate. Citing the example of the poet, Niyi Osundare, Slaymaker argues that although Osundare explicates environmental and ecological themes in his poetry, "still, typical reviews of his poetry do not examine in detail his ecological or environmental themes." However, Slaymaker adds that "[w]hat interests critics of Osundare's nature poetry most is his critique of political corruption in Nigeria, his support of peasants and farmers and others who live on and off the land, and his thematic examinations of history and revolution" (134-35). Slaymaker's viewpoint explains the emphasis on the human and non-human components of the ecosystem in postcolonial ecocriticism. With a series of social and political upheavals in Nigeria, critics of Osundare's poetry would have been engaging in trivial matters if their criticism

had focused primarily on the environment without considering the social problems of a people plagued by existential problems.

However, the dearth of scholarship that engages with ecocritical issues in Nigerian literature does not signal the absence of a few works that deals with some ecological issues. Michael Lundblad's "Malignant and Beneficent Fictions: Constructing Nature in Ecocriticism and Achebe's *Arrow of God* is an example of the few available works. Like other postcolonial ecocritical critics, Lundblad's thesis in his article is that Achebe's Igboland and Nigeria cannot afford to engage in a Western type of ecocriticism because the "'pressing concerns of daily life' in Nigeria today or the Igboland of Achebe's novel get ignored when we shift our attention to [pure] environmental crises. . . ." (9) If Lundblad's position is taken seriously, it means that Nigeria cannot afford an ecocriticism that privileges the environment to the detriment of anthropocentric concerns.

But where Lundblad's essay focuses on Igboland in Nigeria, it does not accommodate the Nigerian civil war and its environmental implications. In fact, there is no work (at least that I know of) that is devoted to a study of the environmental consequence of the Nigeria civil war. Instead, as the foregoing review demonstrates, the emphasis has been on the implications of the war for humanity. Instead, existing ecocritical scholarship on wars in Africa focuses on places like Zimbabwe among others. Eldred Jones' "Land, War, and Literature in Zimbabwe" is a fine example of such works devoted to the war in Zimbabwe. The closest to a criticism of the environment in the Nigerian civil war is Christine Ombaka's "War and Environment in African Literature." However, Ombaka's work is limited by the fact that it surveys various African conflicts. Particularly, the work mentions the Mau Mau insurrection in colonial Kenya, among

others (331). And even when it discusses the Nigerian civil war, it does that in a casual manner that does not encourage an extensive discussion of the conflict. But one point that Ombaka's study implies is the introductory nature of environmental discourse in African war criticism. The subsequent chapters of this work therefore aims to mitigate the gap in scholarship by analyzing the war novels of Okpewho, Iyayi, and Adichie from the prism of postcolonial ecocriticism.

The next chapter employs postcolonial theory to discuss characterization in Okpewho's *The Last Duty*. Where the discussion positions the characters of Toje and Ali as emblematic of the arrogance and exploitative actions of the elite during the Nigerian civil war, the environment, Aku, Odibo, and Oshevire are discussed as representatives of the masses who are exploited against by the elite. Of course, the premium placed on the environment in this study makes it possible to situate it as a character in the novel. Chapter III utilizes Aldo Leopold's land ethic theory to read Iyayi's *Heroes*. This particular reading of the novel examines the relationship among the different members of the biotic community, and reveals the absence of an ecological conscience in the relationship between human beings and other members of the biotic community. Besides the lack of ecological conscience, the chapter demonstrates the hierarchies of oppression that characterize war-time Biafra: the elite exploit the rank and file and the masses, and they in turn oppress the environment. A discussion of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* in chapter IV highlights the limitation of ecofeminism theory, and argues that the politics of class, race, and culture complicate any gendered reading of female and environmental exploitation. Chapter V concludes the study with a comparative analysis of the novel that is followed by some recommendations.

CHAPTER II

CHARACTERIZING THE POSTCOLONIAL IN *THE LAST DUTY*

Introduction

The Last Duty is Isidore Okpewho's fictional representation of the Nigerian civil war, and in the novel, Okpewho demonstrates the effects of war on human relationships and on the psyche of the individual. The novel is set in Uruekpe, a border town with the rebel Simbians (the Igbos). In the novel, Oshevire is a business rival of Toje, the proud businessman and one of the Chiefs of Uruekpe. Threatened by the rapid growth of Oshevire's business, Toje conspires to label him a rebel collaborator, and since Oshevire is married to a Simbian, Toje's conspiracy sounds believable and he is arrested and detained at Iddu. In Oshevire's absence, Toje consolidates his business in the same way that he begins an erotic relationship with Aku, Oshevire's wife. Unable to resist Toje's gifts and protection in a hostile community, Aku caves in to Toje's overtures. However, Toje is unable to satisfy her due to his impotence. Aku relies on Odibo, Toje's servant, to attain sexual satisfaction. Toje realizes the amorous relationship between Aku and his servant, confronts Odibo and they engage in a deadly fight. In the end, master and servant are evacuated to the hospital while Oshevire is acquitted for lack of evidence. He returns home to the shame visited on his family. Trying to escape from Uruekpe to avoid disgrace, Oshevire is killed by a soldier in the presence of his wife and son.

The story of the novel is told from the first person perspective. In this way, each character tells his/her story without the issue of limited knowledge associated with an omniscient narrator. By allowing the characters: Toje, Aku, Odibo, Oghenovo,

Okumagba, Oshevire, among others to speak for themselves, Okpewho allows the reader to reach conclusions from the conflicting views of the narrators. As Eustace Palmer notes, Okpewho pioneered the use of the multiple point of view narration in African fiction. As such, Palmer describes Okpewho as arguably “the most interesting of all the Nigerian novelists who have written about the Biafran war. Because of Okpewho’s creative dexterity in *The Last Duty*, Palmer laments the limited attention that the novel has received from literary critics (22). In other words, the dearth of existing scholarship on *The Last Duty* indicates the little attention received by the novel. Taken together, Okpewho’s unique experiment with the multiple narrator technique as well as the seeming neglected status of the text justify its inclusion in the present study.

Characterization in the Novel

As indicated earlier, very little scholarship has been devoted to Okpewho’s works, but even much of such scholarly works are devoted to his other novels. Particularly, Okpewho’s *Victims* and *Tides* have been the center of such studies, and these focus primarily on the anthropocentric concerns in the novel. However, this is not to suggest that *The Last Duty* has not attracted any scholarly attention. Writing on the novel, Palmer notes that Okpewho manipulates the multiple narrators’ point of views to portray the horrors of war, especially against women (25). Palmer’s work underscores the destructive capabilities of war and its effects on the human psyche, but in highlighting the effects of war on, Palmer privileges the women whom he considers as the ultimate victims of war. Whereas Palmer privileges women in his assessment of the victims in Okpewho’s war time novel, Koku Amuzu employs the novel to explicate the theme of the futility of war.

According to him, *The Last Duty* is “an account of the way in which an individual [Toje] seizes upon the opportunities the war has created for evil, and by using his social position, influence, and money, turns the virtues of innocent individuals into evil tools with which he subverts the moral foundations of his society and threatens its very survival as a human community” (193). Here, Amuzu draws attention to the class struggle that is implied in the novel. In comparison to Palmer’s argument, Amuzu upholds the argument of the destructive nature of war but differs from Palmer in the categorization of the ultimate casualties of the war. For Amuzu, a reading of the novel depicts the lower class in society as the ultimate victims of the war.

There is palpable evidence to link Palmer and Amuzu’s readings of the novel to an anthropocentric analysis of the effects of the Nigerian Civil war. In other words, the critical projects of the above critics identify the human dimension of the destruction occasioned by the Nigerian civil war. What is missing in the above analysis of the novel is the environmental implication of the war. The present study, therefore, differs from existing scholarship by categorizing the environment as a character in discussing the novel’s characterization. The ongoing praxis for environmental protection in the light of climate change and global warming makes it necessary to assess the human treatment of the environment in the past. As a work grounded in postcolonial theory, the analysis of the novel is predicated along colonial lines: colonizer/elites and the colonized/lower-class.

In *The Last Duty*, the reader is exposed to the elite/masses dichotomy that characterizes postcolonial relations. Already, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin include the exploitative actions of neo-colonial elites in their scope of the

postcolonial in the introduction to their *Postcolonial Studies Reader* (2). The elites in the new postcolonial states are interested in maintaining the distance between them and the masses. As such, Toje is perturbed by Oshevire's business exploits. It is interesting to note that in keeping with postcolonial thought, Toje adulterates his rubber to maximize profit; Oshevire sells original products to the government produce board. As such, the board prefers the quality of Oshevire's rubber. In this way, Toje sees Oshevire as a threat to his primitive accumulative tendencies.

The outbreak of the war provides an opportunity for Toje to demonstrate his class struggle with Oshevire, while the latter's sympathetic nature provides an opportunity for the proud and rich Toje to exact his pound of flesh on him. As a reading of the novel shows, the rescue of a young Simbian boy is tendered as evidence to support the accusation that Oshevire is a rebel collaborator. Amuzu's articulation on the senselessness of wars is evident in Oshevire's testimony before the tribunal investigating him. When asked to defend himself against the allegation that he aided the escape of a rebel, Oshevire painstakingly notes thus:

I saw that boy as a human being, and that was my only concern. It still is my only concern. I felt deeply moved to see human life in danger. Though that boy's face had been slightly disfigured I could clearly see that he was too young and I could not bear to watch him fall into the hands of a merciless mob that could have taken his life right there before me. I felt concerned then at the total loss of reason among many people in our town- how several helpless people who could not possibly have been soldiers were hunted down and pitilessly brutalized for just no cause. (*TLD* 194)

Oshevire is quoted at length to demonstrate the irrationality that characterizes war time situations: a mob of about twenty persons chase after a boy of approximately thirteen years. They are undeterred by his disfigured face and seek his life. Such inhuman attitudes buttress what Afam Ebeogu has described elsewhere as “the agony of war” (36). It also speaks to the abuse of child rights that foregrounds African conflicts. In chasing after a young boy, the mob abdicates their responsibility to protect the young.

If the foregoing represents the agony of war, the character of Toje highlights the capitalist role of the elites in such moments of crisis. In his reading of Buchi Emecheta’s *Destination Biafra*, Abioseh Porter identifies the actions of the elites as constituting part of the reason for the war in the first place. But it is important to add that besides causing or contributing to the war, the elites are also the beneficiaries of war moments in so far as their capitalist and exploitative activities gained momentum during the war; the character of Toje exemplifies this charge in *The Last Duty*.

Where the masses like Odibo and Aku are impoverished and suffer as a consequence of the war, Toje maintains a contracting business with the military. In fact, Toje complains about the newspapers’ account of the “hoarding activities of food contractors” and the effects of the activities on the price of foodstuffs. In fact, he suggests that the opinion of the contractors need to be sought by the journalists before going to press (*TLD* 29). The business ethics of Toje and his diatribe against the newspaper story is symbolic of the capitalistic inclination of the Nigerian elites during the Nigerian civil war. Among other scholars, Onuekwusi has highlighted the exploitative activities of Nigerian business elites during the war. According to him, such persons negotiate contracts for relief materials that do not reach the people who need them. Instead, the

materials end up in the market where they are sold at exorbitant rates to the impoverished masses who can barely afford them (46).

It is, therefore, not surprising that given the setting of the war in a war situation, Toje still enjoys the luxuries of peace times. For instance, he patronizes the prostitutes at Iddu and suspects that the careless escapade with a prostitute might be the source of his impotence. His arrogant attitude and behavior also betray the indifference of elites:

Every town must have a few people whose names lend respect to the community. They should be the town's foremost citizens, men of some distinction. It isn't that these are the first men to be called to arms when a fight ensues between their town and another- no, that's a thing of the past. There are occasions when credits or endowments are to be bestowed on towns, when what a town gets depends on who its foremost citizens are, so that when the name of such a place comes up, it is generally asked, 'Who is there?' A town is worth nothing if it has no names on whom its very credit hangs. I am one of those very few names that mean anything here in Uruekpe. Everybody knows that- or should. (*TLD* 4-5)

The above is representative of Toje's grandiloquent exhortations of his self-importance throughout the novel. His arrogance can be easily explained by the fact that he is unaffected by the horrors of the war. He quickly excuses his class from direct participation in warfare but he benefits more from the war. In fact, his dwindling rubber business is substituted by a thriving business that supplies food to the military. The point that the foregoing demonstrates is the tendency of the elites to utilize every opportunity to pursue their capitalistic orientation.

Besides the example of Toje, the self importance of Ali, the military commander, also demonstrates the disconnect between the masses and the elites. Where the casualties of war increase daily, Ali enjoys the grandeur of self delusions. Early in the novel, he revels in the people's praise of him. He has gone round the town to ascertain the damage done to the town by a recent air raid, but he is also quick to admit that the war is ongoing and the situation is still dangerous. However, Ali does not fail to enjoy the triumphant moment. As he himself puts it, "I feel joy this great moment" (*TLD* 3). Ali's glorification is symbolic because a war time situation is not a time for a crowd to move around carelessly as the people were doing. One could imagine the casualty rate if an air raid happens to occur at that point. Ali's aides would have spirited him away with little or no risk while the people are left to die, but his sense of pride prevents Ali from reminding the people of the perils of such public praise. Where he is quick to remind the civilians of the need to be careful in the later part of the novel, he silently enjoys the glorification of the masses in the first scene of the novel. So, whether it is Toje or Ali, the point that Okpewho's novel seems to make is the indifference of the elites in a war time situation; the lifestyle of such people is least affected by conflicts.

Where the elites like Toje and Ali are least disturbed by the war, the real victims of the war are members of the lower- class and the environment who suffer from the effects of the conflict. A discussion of the characters depicting the lower class will suffice to buttress the point. The character of Oshevire is an indicator of the virtues of the lower-class: he is humble, humane as exemplified by his rescue of the young Simbian at his personal peril. Through his hard work too, Oshevire attempts to transcend the social ladder, but his effort is thwarted by Toje, a member of the upper class. Amuzu

summarizes the class struggle thus: “Because he [Toje] hates Oshevire, another rubber farmer whom he considers a rival and a threat to his position both in the rubber industry and in the town, he decides to eliminate him.” Amuzu adds that Toje exploits his social standing to report Oshevire as an ‘enemy collaborator’ (195). Oshevire is detained for three years in a move that confirms Toje’s disposition to widen the gap between him and Oshevire. The detention provides Toje the opportunity to consolidate his business and ruin Oshevire’s household. On a larger scale, it makes a postcolonial comment on the relationship between the neo-colonial elite and the disillusioned masses, that is, the propensity of the elites to consolidate the gap between their class and that of the masses at all cost.

In the absence of Oshevire, Toje exploits the helplessness of Aku. Realizing her alienation as a result of her Simbian status, Toje lavishes gifts on Aku and her son in order to maintain a colonial hold on her. In projecting colonialism, the colonialists argue that they were on a civilization mission, but masked behind the civilizing veil was a trenchant exploitative attitude. Guised as a developmental and humanitarian project, colonialism succeeds in furthering the interest of the colonizer. And since Fanon has argued in *The Wretched of the Earth* that the national bourgeoisie continued the practices of their colonial predecessors, one can argue that Toje ostensibly represents an internal colonizer in Okpewho’s novel (1580). Like the European colonizer, he fronts a humanitarian intent while using the exploiting for his selfish disposition. In other words, just like colonialism fronts the 3Cs: Christianity, Commerce, and Civilization, in its quest for control of the colonies, Toje’s kindness towards Aku can be read in similar light: the use of gifts to ensure the control of her body.

Given Toje's colonialist tendency and the helplessness of a woman whose husband and breadwinner is imprisoned in a war-time, it is important to deconstruct the masculine reading of Aku. In his study of the novel, Palmer has commented on the patriarchal reading of the character of Aku. According to Palmer, blaming Aku for her predicament is characteristic of "a male-oriented society where sympathy goes to the cuckolded husband" (25). Building on the work of Palmer, Onuekwusi exonerates Aku from blame. Instead, the critic argues that "her isolation, Toje's antics to take her to bed, the dependence of her life and that of her only child on Toje's charity," among other factors, are responsible for her fall (121). Unable to fend for herself and her only son in a time of war, it became impossible to resist the antics of a man on whose benevolence their survival depends. Amuzu asserts that the reluctance of Aku to flee Uruokpe when Simbians were being killed demonstrates her love for Oshevire (196).

As a consequence of his actions at the end of the novel, Palmer notes that Oshevire fails when it matters most. He notes instead that Oshevire "allows himself to be blinded by passion from seeing the real truth." In reaching this conclusion, Palmer explains that Okpewho's multiple narrative technique makes the reader aware that Aku is a dutiful wife who tries to stand by her man (27). Elsewhere, Amuzu describes Oshevire as "a beacon of integrity" who demonstrates courage and conviction to save the life of the young Simbian (196). Unfortunately, Oshevire does not appreciate the circumstance of his wife's seeming infidelity and that constitutes his hubris. His indiscretion costs him his life as he tries to escape the shame of a cuckold. But as Amuzu has noted, the misfortune of the Oshevires represent the strain and impact which war visits on human families and individuals. For Amuzu, the "nihilism of war," that the foregoing illustrates, challenges

the place of morality in war. In addition, the fate of the Oshevires illuminates the class struggle that characterizes postcolonial societies. The dawn of independence has brought about little or no significant difference to the social situation of the masses. Instead, the postcolonial leaders engender the same exploitative thrust of the colonialists. The ongoing discourse locates Toje as the neo-colonialist per excellence while the Oshevires symbolize the masses.

The character of Odibo is also worthy of note in any meaningful consideration of the class struggle that is at the heart of Okpewho's novel. In fact, the master-servant relationship between Toje and Odibo raises, once more, the colonial relationship in the novel. As such, Toje looks at Odibo with the colonial gaze. The work of Frantz Fanon provides an insightful description of the relationship between the duo. According to Fanon:

The settler paints a picture of the colonized as a sort of quintessence of evil. . .

The black is declared insensible to ethics, he represents . . . the absence of values.

. . He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the

absolute evil. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near to him;

he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty and

morality. . . At times this Manichaeism goes to its logical conclusion and

dehumanizes the colonized, or to speak plainly it turns him into an animal. (32)

While it is possible to argue the absence of "the settler" in the above paradigm, a recall of the scope of postcolonialism put forward by Ashcroft, Griffin, and Tiffin makes the work of Fanon relevant here. For Ashcroft and his colleagues, the neocolonialist replaces the settler in the colonial chain of being. If the ongoing discourse on the

character of Toje is not misleading, then, it is possible to see him as a quintessence of the colonizer that Fanon refers to here.

On the other hand, Odibo fits the character of the colonized. To Toje, Odibo is an epitome of evil and therefore only worthy of contempt. This is how Toje describes him: “What use is this awkward mass of a body, . . . if you cannot help yourself. And you have no mind. No sense. Nothing. All you have is a huge body. And that is no use to anyone. No use at all, not even to yourself. Utterly useless” (*TLD* 60). This is only one of the several instances where Toje ridicules and debases the humanity of Odibo. The consequence of such manicheanism is that Odibo becomes dehumanized and accepts his worthlessness: “I know I am not worth much. Or anything. I know I cannot help myself or anybody. I cannot think or do anything” (*TLD* 60). With these statements, the reader notices a completion of Fanon’s cycle: Toje debases Odibo and the latter accepts his inhumanity.

But the interesting point to note is the usefulness of the worthless Odibo to the capitalist orientation of Toje. Despite his seeming inhumanity (in Toje’s term), Odibo is a valuable beast of burden to him. During peacetime, he works on Toje’s rubber plantation, but with the war, he assists in the business of supplying food materials to the military base at Uruekpe. Fanon’s criticism of the national bourgeoisie’s exploitation of their agricultural workers is insightful in understanding the relationship between Toje and Odibo. As Fanon puts it, [t]he exploitation of agricultural workers will be intensified and made legitimate” by the post-colonial elites (1581). Fanon’s view clearly explains Odibo’s ordeal; Toje exploits him and expects his gratitude and loyalty also. Another point being raised is the ambivalence that characterizes the relationship between Toje and

Odibo. Where Odibo is denigrated and abused, he remains instrumental to the business activities of Toje. Odibo also serves as the messenger in Toje's relationship with Aku. And this is in addition to the fact that his house is used as Toje's rendezvous. In all of these roles, Toje, as characteristic of the upper class, does not appreciate Odibo's contribution to his empire. Instead, Odibo remains a wretched of the earth that should remain thankful for Toje's benevolence.

Where the foregoing demonstrates the exploitative thrust of the neo-colonial Toje, it is the ongoing civil war that complicates the case of Odibo. As he admits, the realities of the war limit the choices of the individual in the quest for survival. Even when he recognizes that he is a mere tool being exploited by Toje, he sadly recognizes the difficulty of locating alternative employment in a war time. But when Odibo's precarious situation is contrasted with that of Toje, the distinction between the elites and the masses is underscored. Where Toje and other members of his class become war contractors who hoard relief materials and maximize profit in the process, the common people like Odibo and the Oshevires are affected by the horrors of war. Odibo is unable to find another job while Oshevire's detention makes his family amenable to the antics of Toje. On a larger scale, the plight of Odibo and the Oshevires is representative of the plight of the common people in a stratified postcolonial society.

In lamenting the plight of the common people, one needs to acknowledge the effect of the war on the psychology of the combatant soldiers too. Although the soldiers seem to depict power in moments of war, they are a significant part of Fanon's colonized. An example to buttress this point is the case of the executed soldier in *The Last Duty*. He is aware of an amorous relationship between his girlfriend and his senior colleague.

Unable to contain the Sergeant's sexual relations with his beloved, he intrudes into their privacy on a particular day and kills his lover and his senior colleague. Although the arrogant Ali is quick to dismiss the incident as "a mere private love dispute," the situation speaks to the traumatic consequence of the war on combatant soldiers (*TLD* 16-18).

Writing on the place of trauma in wars, Charles Myers argues that the brutalities of war alter the personality of the combatant soldier. As such, Myers notes that such soldiers require psychological treatment if they are to return to normalcy (22). Similarly Jonathan Shay argues that, "[s]evere trauma explodes the cohesion of consciousness" (188).

The works of Myers, and Shay, among other trauma scholars, are instrumental for an understanding of the stoic and impassive nature of the executed soldier. After killing his lover and the Sergeant, the reader is shocked to understand that the soldier "was neither sorry nor afraid." It is instructive to note Ali's rationale for the soldier's courage: "He had confronted death too often, face to face, to be scared by just one more picture of it on this creature." Here, Ali underscores the negative impact of the war on the average soldier (*TLD* 18). Killing is a regular ritual in wars and so, two additional deaths do not constitute any additional burden for war combatants.

Shay has noted that "[w]hen a survivor creates [a] fully realized narrative that brings together the shattered knowledge of what happened, the emotions that were aroused by the meanings of the events, and the bodily sensations that the physical events created, the survivor pieces back together the fragmentation of consciousness that trauma has caused" (188). Here, Shay identifies the need for post traumatic condition treatment for war combatants. But even where Commander Ali recognizes that the soldier's stoic disposition was occasioned by the effect of war violence, he does not seek treatment for

the erring soldiers. Instead, he executes him to serve as a deterrent to other soldiers. Ali's sense of military discipline is noteworthy, but killing and making a show of the death of a traumatized soldier is not the right way to guarantee order in the military establishment.

Recognizing the traumatic experience of the soldier should have warranted the need for psychological treatment for the combatant soldiers. Instead, Ali sees the tragic incident as an opportunity to maintain discipline. Since severe trauma affects the cohesion of the victim's consciousness, it means, then, that Ali's concept of deterrence might be ineffective overall. It takes a mentally balanced individual to rationalize the consequence of their actions, but if the traumatized soldiers are unconscious of their attitudes as the work of Shay suggests, traumatized soldiers will very probably undertake similar actions since they can hardly rationalize their behaviors. Overall, the discourse on trauma shows the irresponsibility of the military authorities to the need of their soldiers. It foregrounds the exploitation of the soldiers by their senior colleagues and speaks to the fact that the Nigerian war veterans have not been taken care of by successive governments in Nigeria. Where there is historical documentation of the treatment of World War I and II veterans, there is no evidence to show that the Nigerian veterans receive post-traumatic stress treatment after the war. If anything, what is revealed here is the exploitation of the rank and file of the military. Of course, their colonizer is the military hierarchy and the government who constitute a significant portion of the Nigerian elite (*TLD* 16-19). The discussion of the soldiers' exploitation is continued in a reading of *Heroes* in the next chapter.

The culture of violence that the civil war leaves on the impressionable mind of the young is another effect of the war that is decipherable from Okpewho's novel. By

allowing the characters to speak for themselves, the reader is led into the inner motivations of Oghenovo, the son of Oshevire. Through his infantile but sincere speech acts, the reader sees the brutalities that wars visit on children. In addition to losing paternal care as a result of his father's detention, the constant gunshots and the movement of soldiers leave a violent imprint on his mind. For example, he constructs a wooden gun for a toy. When prodded by Odibo on how he learnt how to make a gun, Oghenovo responds that he learned from seeing the soldier's gun. But Oghenovo does not stop there, he informs Odibo that he plans to shoot Onome with the gun. Oghenovo explains that Onome calls his father a thief (*TLD* 139). In the previous chapter, John Hawley has noted the horrors of exposing children to warfare. Referring specifically to the use of child soldiers in Africa, Hawley laments the abuse of such children in wars. Hawley's point can be extended to understand the implication of the culture of violence on Oghenovo. Although he is yet too young to be conscripted like the child soldiers discussed in the subsequent chapters, his case is not totally different from that of child soldiers in that it is Spivak's "systemic violence" that is manifested in both situations. Where the child soldiers are directly involved in perpetuating violence, Oghenovo is a regular witness to acts of violence and plans to visit such on his peer, Onome. Because such violent acts are repressed and not treated, the war children tend to perpetuate the untreated traumatic violence in the post war society. Of course, the underlying theme here too is what Amuzu has clearly depicted as the absurdity of war (196).

One character that is probably the greatest victim of war is the environment, but unfortunately, it hardly receives recognition when the casualties of war are counted. The situation is not different in postcolonial African literary studies too where the emphasis

remains on the human casualties of war. *The Last Duty* is no exception to the norm. As the existing scholarship on the novel indicates, the effects of war on the human component of the ecology dominate criticism of the novel. But that is not to say that it is impossible to evaluate the place of the environment in the novel. As the subsequent lines demonstrate, the activities of the elites were also destructive and exploitative of the environment, and the environmental degradation is significant because of the silence/passive nature of the environment. Whereas Oshevire, Odibo, and Aku could act and speak for themselves, the absence of agency on the part of the environment foregrounds the need to speak for it.

The incidence of air raids is one prominent indicator of war in the *The Last Duty*, and it also represents the major channel of environmental degradation in the novel. When the Wright Brothers invented the airplane in 1903, it was designed to ease transportation and a symbol of the technological advancement of the 20th century human society. Unfortunately, the destructive tendencies of technology were highlighted by the use of air planes for World War I. As Jason Ridler puts it, “the ground soldiers of the Great War lived, fought, and died in an environment created by industrial technology.” On the environment, Ridler explains that, “[s]hellfire turned the land into a lunar wasteland of ruptured ground and ruined homes” (223). The reader of *The Last Duty* probably shares Ridler’s sentiments considering the effects of the Simbian air raids in Uruekpe. For instance, the novel begins with Ali assessing the damage after an air raid (*TLD* 3). Later in the novel, he laments the destruction of air raid thus: “Six persons were destroyed in that raid; fourteen persons injured- most of them critical cases; four houses were burnt to the ground, all of them completely burnt by the resulting flames; (*TLD* 94).

Apart from the human casualties recorded above, the physical environment of Uruekpe is affected too. With the corpses littering the ground and the burnt houses too, it makes sense to include the physical landscape as a casualty of war. The presence of bunkers in the novel also indicates a rape of the environment. As Ridler has argued, those trenches and bunkers dug for protection give way to “flooding, vermin and disease” (223). Implied by flooding too is the possible soil erosion that goes with it. Taken together, one can argue that flooding, one of the products of bunkers, is an environmental disaster that threatens the landscape and the people on it. And although the novel does not indicate the effect on the forests and animals, it is arguable that they are affected by the air raids too.

Emphasizing the impact of air raids on the environment, Ridler notes that the ground is the recipient of the destruction caused in the air. According to him, “the familiar sight of flaming and smoking planes” vanishes and the “sky is left clean of the stain of combat (226). Where Ridler’s point demonstrates the impact of air raid and war on the landscape, his proposition of a clean and stainless sky does not stand the logic of present day debate on global warming and climate change. Against Ridler’s position, air raids affect the landscape in the same way that the sky is affected. As such, Ridler’s rhetoric of a clean sky cannot be considered a valid position. Instead, gun fires and the residue of other weapons of war emit toxic gases into the atmosphere. These gases, in turn, cause global warming. And according to David Biello, global warming causes heat waves, heavy rains, drought, sea level rise, among others (144-45). Biello’s articulation suggests the negative impacts of global warming and demonstrates the need for sustainable environmental practices.

The preceding argument on the environment centers on environmental degradation and the need for environmental conservation, but it does not accommodate what David Landis Barnhill has described in “Surveying the Landscape: A New Approach to Nature Writing,” as “Ecosocial politics” (281). In his essay’s endnote, Barnhill explains that he uses “ecosocial” to reflect the interconnectedness of environmental and social issues” (289). Here, Barnhill echoes postcolonial ecocritics who argue that ecocriticism in political societies must be implicated in social and political commitments; therefore, a discussion of the implication of environmental degradation to the human society of Uruekpe is important.

Of course, the novel records the deaths occasioned by the air raids and exchange of gun fire. For instance, the earlier discussion of the effect of an air raid mentions the death of six persons and that fourteen persons are critically injured (*TLD* 94). Elsewhere, the human casualty rate is given as twenty-two soldiers and fifty-seven civilians. These deaths are symbolic of the mass destruction of human lives during the Nigerian civil war. Also, the incidence of burnt houses also speaks to another implication of environmental despoliation to humanity. The example of Godinheaven whose house is razed is symbolic because the air raid eliminates members of his family and does not spare his house either (*TLD* 202). The example of Godinheaven demonstrates that such environmental destruction affects the human society also. The African cosmology places a spiritual emphasis and connection to the land and home, and given such background, the devastation of the burnt houses for Godinheaven’s family can be imagined. In fact, such environmental disturbances create a disconnect and psychological disorientation for the victims.

Conclusion

The foregoing reading of Okpewho's *The Last Duty* categorized the characters in the novel into the colonizer/elites and the colonized/lower-class. In the group of the colonizers are Toje and Ali who are unaffected by the war. Instead, the war provided an opportunity for them to maintain their strong hold on the lower-class. For Toje, he profits from supplying food materials to the military and so is unaffected by the realities of war. He also exploits the Oshevires and Aku to suit his colonial project. On the other hand, Ali is representative of the exploitative thrust of the military hierarchy against its rank and file. On the other side of the divide are Oshevire, Aku, Odibo, the environment, and the other lower-class characters that are manipulated to suit the whims of the elites. In the end, the reader appreciates the absurdity of war and sees how the fate of the environment and the lower-class human characters are intertwined especially in postcolonial societies. The next chapter examines how Iyayi explores the politics of exploitation further in a reading of *Heroes*.

CHAPTER III

LAND ETHIC AND EXPLOITATION IN IYAYI'S *HEROES*

Introduction

Festus Iyayi's *Heroes* is a novel that uses the Nigeria Civil war to highlight the class struggle and the inequitable distribution of resources in Nigeria. The protagonist of the novel, Osime Iyere, is a journalist who lives in Benin, and the novel opens with the recapture of Benin from the Biafran troops that had earlier occupied it. With the Federal forces in control of the city, Osime, like other Nigerians at the time, expects an end to the killings associated with the Biafran soldiers, but time and events proves him wrong. First, he is brutalized by the Federal soldiers at the stadium where he had gone to witness a cultural display in honor of the Federal troops. In addition to his maltreatment in the hands of the soldiers, Osime witnesses his landlord, Mr Ohiali, die from gun wounds inflicted by the Federal troops in Benin. Like other Igbos living in Benin, Ohiali reports to the Police post as demanded of all Igbos after the Federal troops recaptured the town. But on arriving at the venue, he is grilled by the soldiers who accuse him of supporting the Biafran rebels during their brief occupation of the town. Despite Ohiali's denial, he is killed by the soldiers. Taken together, these two events serve to illuminate the war for Osime. In other words, he realizes that beyond the reasons adduced for the war, the greed of the elite is responsible for the outbreak of the war. For Osime, the ethnic rivalry adduced as reason for the war is insignificant because the average Yoruba have more in common with the average Igbo and Hausa more than with the elite within his/her tribe. As such, Osime believes that ethnic rivalry is a veil with which the elites (as represented

by Ojukwu on the Biafran side and Gowon on the Nigerian side) cover their selfish disposition that is at the heart of the war.

Overall, the novel takes the reader through the suffering, humiliation, and defeat of the common Nigerians during the war. Particularly, the novel highlights the pitiable conditions of the soldiers who are hardly recognized for their gallantry. Instead, the novel contends that the generals (who contribute nothing to the war) take the glory for the exploits of the war. As such, Osime argues that the enemies are not the soldiers or the ordinary citizens on either sides. Rather, he notes that the enemies are the elites on both sides of the war. Therefore, Osime advocates for a “third army” that recognizes the ulterior motive behind the war. The third army, that is reminiscent of Soyinka’s third force in *The Man Died*, is expected to mobilize the masses against the elite.

Interrogating Land Ethic in the Novel

Like other novels devoted to the Nigeria Civil War, *Heroes* has been the subject of some literary criticism, and of particular interest to critics is the Marxist reading of the novel. According to Firinne Ni Chreachain, *Heroes* represents “Iyayi’s attack on bourgeois historiography” that privileges the historic accounts of the elite” (44). In this way, Chreachain criticizes the historical under-representation of the lower class soldiers and civilians who are the true heroes of the war. Where Chreachain validates the Marxist reading of the novel, he faults Iyayi’s choice of Osime to speak for the proletariat class. For Chreachain, “the petty-bourgeois intellectual, privileged in terms of narrative exposure, thus dominates the narrative at the expense of the rank and file” (48). The rank and file of the military, who are the subaltern and proletariat, ought to dominate the narrative. But by privileging a petty-bourgeois like Osime, Chreachain argues that Iyayi’s

novel undermines the opportunity “to rewrite history from the perspective of the oppressed” (48).

But Andrew Armstrong disagrees with Chreachain as to the suitability of the character of Osime to speak for the subaltern in Iyayi’s novel. According to Armstrong, Osime “is a witness to the slaughter and horrors of war, the killing, by Federal soldiers, of Ndudi’s father, the carnage of the battle of Onitsha; he sees the bodies of the Biafran prisoners of war massacred in retaliation for the Onitsha defeat of the Federal troops” (178). From Armstrong’s view, as a witness who observes and reflects on his observation, Osime is privileged to understand the dynamics of the war. Similarly, the unfettered access he enjoys as a journalist allows him to see the different perspectives of the conflict. In this way, he is more enlightened than the average rank and file to appreciate the cruelty of the war. Ultimately, his awareness and professional affiliation provide the knowledge and skill to educate the rank and file, and speak for them.

Similarly, Chreachain’s description of Osime as a petty-bourgeois intellectual is an interesting claim that requires clarification. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels explain the division of society into two opposing camps: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Whereas the bourgeoisie class represents the elite group of exploiters, the proletariat comprises of the masses and the “really revolutionary class.” Of course, missing from the above distinction is Chreachain’s “petty-bourgeois intellectual.” Essentially, Osime does not belong to Marx and Engel’s bourgeoisie class. Rather, he is part of the proletariat class that is both exploited and revolutionary. Like Oshevire, Odibo, and the other lower class characters that we see in the discussion of Okpewho’s novel in the previous chapter, Osime is also exposed to the vagaries of the war.

Highlighted in the above analysis is the human cost of the Nigeria Civil War; what is missing in the above explication, however, is what Aldo Leopold has described elsewhere as “The Land Ethic.” According to Leopold, “an ecological interpretation of history” denotes that man is “only a member of a biotic team” (421). As such, Leopold argues that “a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land community to plain member and citizen of it.” Leopold adds that land ethic involves man’s respect for the other members of the biotic community. Earlier in his work, Leopold identifies the other members of the biotic community as the “land and . . . the animals and plants which grow upon it” (420). Leopold’s point suggests that the environment is equally important as the human constituent of any biotic community.

Leopold’s land ethic is similar to the work of recent postcolonial ecocritics who examine how the environment or land has fared as a consequence of anthropocentric activities, but the preceding discussion on Iyayi’s *Heroes* indicates critics’ less concern for the other members of the biotic community. In other words, the anthropocentric dimension of those criticisms de-emphasizes the place of the land and its flora and fauna. But does it mean that *Heroes* does not pay attention to environmental concern? As the analysis of the novel reveals shortly, the implication of the war on the environment is a significant theme of the novel, and its absence in existing scholarship could be explained, perhaps, by Slaymaker’s claim that African writers and scholars are reluctant to explicate the environmental theme because of the western provenance of ecocriticism. According to Slaymaker, black writers and scholars consider ecocriticism as another colonial paradigm that should be contested, but considering the adaptation of ecocritical concepts by postcolonial critics, an African ecocritical analysis is possible with Iyayi’s *Heroes*.

This chapter, therefore, applies Leopold's land ethic to a reading of *Heroes* to build on the existing anthropocentric reading of the novel. Like we noted in the previous chapter, the need for environmental sustainability and biodiversity makes it imperative to consider the inter-relationship among the land, water, air, and the human components of the ecology in a reading of the novel.

Since the environment is neglected in existing studies of Iyayi's narrative, one can begin the analysis of the novel from an environmental perspective. In *Heroes*, one finds a representation of the environmental consequences of the Nigeria civil War in fictional terms, but the fictional nature of the work does not invalidate its historicity. Indeed, Ngugi wa Thiongo, himself, has made a case for the inextricability of African history from its literary corollary. In relation to the Nigeria Civil War, Koku Amuzu posits that while literary works are imaginative, they rely on historical evidence to produce socially committed art (196). *Heroes* is no exception as its historical integrity is achieved by the preponderance of factual events that any follower of the history of the war could relate to.

In the novel, Iyayi highlights the environmental destruction occasioned by technology and other indices of war. With regard to the effect of technology on ecological devastation, Alan Thein Durning argues that technology is one of three variables that affect the ecology. A reading of *Heroes* justifies Durning's implication of technology in environmental deterioration, especially in a postcolonial Nigerian context. In the narrative, just like in we see in the previous chapter, the air raids, like that of Benin, represent the effect of technological warfare on the environment and supports Durning's thesis about the culpability of technology in environmental devastation (*Heroes* 3). As the bombs are dropped, the landscape is affected and the plants and

animals are destroyed. The toxicity of the land as a result of its contact with bombs and other lethal weapons induces a desert-like environment that is unsuitable for agricultural purposes and for the overall health of the land. In other words, air raids affect the survival of any plant and animal that the bombs touch.

Like in Okpweho's novel that was discussed in the previous chapter, a reading of *Heroes* demonstrates that another consequence of the war on the environment is the problem of deforestation. The war precipitates a careless felling of trees either from air raids or by the soldiers for strategic reasons (72). Cumulatively, the fallen trees engender deforestation, and the negative impact of deforestation has been articulated by scholars. In Camilla Toulmin's discourse on the role of forests in Africa, *Writing in Climate Change in Africa*, Toulmin asserts that forests perform two roles on the global climate. First, she notes that forests ensure carbon storage and in the process help to regulate the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. In this way, Toulmin suggests that forests protect the Earth from global warming. In addition, Toulmin argues that forests regulate moisture thereby reducing the risks of erosion, flooding, storms, and other severe weather conditions (70). Toulmin's work on forestry illuminates its benefit for the climatic condition of any society, but Toulmin's argument also implies the negative consequences of deforestation. The implication, of course, is that the war precipitates global warming due to the trees felled by the air raids.

Besides the problem of global warming, another effect of deforestation that Toulmin's work suggests is the problem of erosion and flooding. According to Toulmin, forests control erosion and flooding but with the deforestation occasioned by war, the reader is not surprised when he/she notices the erosion and flooding that characterize the

narrative. A few instances will suffice. Osime's corn plants are flooded and destroyed by erosion from rainfall (5). The school environment described on Osime's way to the stadium is also indicative of the effect of war. As the novel tells us, the school field is flooded and remembering the ongoing war, Osime regrets that nothing could be done about the situation (25). Following the work of Toulmin, one can argue that deforestation caused by the destructive tendencies of the war is responsible for the erosion and flooding that characterize the novel. In addition, the absence of forests to regulate the soil moisture, due to deforestation, exposes the landscape to erosion and flooding.

In addition to deforestation as a source of erosion and flooding, trenches are other indices of war that occasion environmental degradation. According to Jason Ridler in his study of war and the environment in Yeates' *Winged Victory*, "[t]renches and bunkers were dug for protection but soon succumbed to flooding, vermin, and disease" (223). Ridler's work points to trenches as another cause of flooding and a reading of *Heroes* indicates the use of trenches by the soldiers. We see one of those on Osime's trip to Asaba (74). In sum, one can conclude that the landscape is affected and is one major casualty of war.

Like the landscape, the aquatic element of Leopold's biotic community is also affected by the war, and the battle for Onitsha is symbolic of the destruction of the waters in *Heroes*. As the novel reveals, the Biafran soldiers destroy the Niger Bridge to prevent the Federal troops from crossing into their domain. The effect of such destruction is felt in the water that played host to the human casualties and the toxic wastes from the explosions. In other words, the activities of the war also cause water pollution. In their classification of the kinds of water pollution, Prince Olemeforo and Obinna E. Obasi

identify “natural water pollution and man-made pollution of water resources” (28-35). In terms of the Nigeria Civil War, the pollution of the water bodies can be classified as man-made pollution. As the soldiers blow the bridge and the soldiers drop into the river, their blood and dirt affect the cleanliness of the environment. The chemical wastes from the toxic weapons of war also have an effect on the aquatic environment. Particularly, the wastes poison the river creatures and kill some of them in the process. For instance, Olemoforo and Obasi argue that the “plants and animals that cannot survive under the altered PH” of polluted water bodies usually die (33). Olemoforo and Obasi’s point speaks to the destructive nature of the Nigeria Civil War on the hydrographic environment. In other words, the landscape and water bodies are part of the casualty of the Nigeria civil war. Unfortunately, this type of environmental destruction is usually neglected in discussions of the casualties of the war as such discussions generally highlight the anthropocentric consequences of the war instead.

Environmentalists have highlighted the dire consequences of human-induced environmental destruction to humanity. According to John J. Hidore et. al., the overall effect of deforestation, technological activities, and other human practices is the “reduction of surface temperatures” (169). Global warming, as Hidore and his colleagues suggest, is detrimental to the survival of human beings, and scholars have explained some of the human consequences of environmental degradation. For example, Toulmin reports that global warming will lead to scarcity of water in some parts of Africa while other parts face the risk of floods (32). In addition, the dearth of water creatures, according to Olemoforo and Obasi undermines fishing (34). In other words, the dearth of fish means that fishermen and people who enjoy sea foods will be affected by the scarcity of fish and

other sea creatures. In relation to *Heroes*, the pollution of the river by the warring soldiers indicates the destruction of sea creatures and a pollution of the people's source of water:

Similarly, the destruction of plants and animals increases the risk of food crisis. As Toulmin argues, most Africans depend on agriculture for their food and economic revenue. The destruction of plants and animals by the air raids and other war activities threatens the people's survival. Of significance in the preceding analysis is that human destruction of the environment also has some negative effects on the human community.

Iyayi's novel suggests that the rank and file of both the Biafra and Federal troops are the direct exploiters of the environment. The air raids evident in the novel and other activities of the soldiers are destructive to the environment. If the claim is anything, the soldiers induce the ecological disasters through the air raids, shelling, shooting, bridge destruction, and other activities that indicate the absence of what Leopold describes as "ecological conscience" (427). For Leopold, the absence of an ecological conscience means that the soldiers have no "love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value" (Leopold 428). Leopold further distinguishes between "economic value" and "value in the philosophical sense" which he endorses for a positive land ethic (428). In endorsing the philosophical sense of value, Leopold challenges the appreciation of the environment based on its economic value. Here, Leopold projects the capitalist inclination that guides the relationship between humanity and the environment on one hand, and that between the elite and the masses on the other. Where the argument here positions the soldiers as the exploiters of the environment, one needs to acknowledge the hierarchical nature of the military also. In other words, the military hierarchical structure suggests that the actions of the Biafran and Federal troops are conditioned by the

directives of their superior officers. As such, a reading of *Heroes* ostensibly indicts the military officers and other elites as the ultimate exploiter of the environment and the ordinary soldiers who do their bidding.

Writing in “The Influence of Marxist ideology on Festus Iyayi’s Novels,” Aduke Adebayo reads *Heroes* as an attempt to criticize “the ruling class for its insatiable monetary appetite and lusts for power. . . .” (36). As Adebayo acknowledges, Osime, the protagonist is the vehicle through which Iyayi comments on the avarice of the upper class in the narrative. After his brutalization at the stadium as well as the killing of Mr Ohiali by the Federal troops, Osime goes through a transformation that reveals to him the true motive behind the war. Particularly, Osime realizes that greed is at the core of the reason for the war. To justify his claim, Osime informs the reader that the common Nigerian has no problem with members of their social class regardless of their ethnic divide. As such, the reader sees the magnanimity of the Midwestern (non-Igbo) landlord who hides his Igbo friends in his ceiling to save them from the Federal troops. It is instructive to note that the Federal troops kill him when they realize he tries to save his Igbo friends. Similarly, the cordial relationship between Osime and his Igbo landlord’s family is significant of the absence of animosity between the ordinary Igbo and those from other ethnic group. The above serves to question the argument of tribal rivalry put forward as the reason for the secession. Additionally, Osime’s experience at the military camp in Asaba questions the tribal conflict thesis.

On his visit to the building housing the Biafran prisoners of war, Osime is perplexed to notice the camaraderie that exists among the Federal soldiers and their captured Biafran counterparts. Ideally, the tribal tensions should be felt most by the

soldiers who are the direct participants of the war, but in this part of the narrative, the reader sees the prisoners of war engage in different games with their Nigerian counterparts (176). The relaxed atmosphere and the companionship shared by the opposing soldiers indicate that the idea of an ethnic conflict as the root cause of the civil war needs to be interrogated. As Osime concludes after visiting the prisoner of war section of the camp, “[t]he Nigerian soldier has more in common with the Biafran soldier than with the Nigerian general” (177).

From Osime’s account of the relationship between the Federal and the Biafran soldiers, the fact that the animosity between the average Igbo and his/her Yoruba or Hausa played a less significant role in the Nigerian war becomes clear. One point to note is that the prisoner of war story is one that can be found in several factual accounts of the war. Accordingly, the story of the prisoners is an aspect of faction that Iyayi mediates in his fiction. If the attempt to challenge the tribal reason of the war in the preceding lines is relatively valid, there is the need to examine in whose interest the civil war proceeded.

Osime implicates the leadership of both sides in the conflict in his interpretation of the conflict. The novel commends the bravery and sacrifices of the average soldiers of the war, and the dialogue between the sergeant who laments the plight of the common soldiers and Osime is illuminating of the exploitative thrust of the ruling class. As the sergeant tells Osime:

The fact is that you are a journalist. You keep records. You write in the newspapers. After this war many generals will write their accounts in which they will attempt to show that they were the heroes of this war, that it was their grand strategies that won the war. They will tell the world that they single-handedly

fought and won the war. The names of soldiers like Otun, Emmanuel, Ikeshi, and Yemi will never be mentioned. The soldiers take the dirt and the ambushes and the bullets with their lives. The soldiers pay for the unity of this country with their lives and yet, what happens? Always the officers are the heroes. Always the generals, the officers take the credit. Always the generals get the praise. Always they are the heroes. Always. (86)

The sergeant's lament has been quoted to unveil the exploitative and propagandistic inclination of the elites. As the novel reveals, Otun and the other soldiers mentioned above are killed in an ambush set by the opposing army. The officer in charge of the troop escapes and is promoted for bravery. In contrast, the dead soldiers and the living remnant of the troops are not even mentioned. Since the Nigerian war, several memoirs have been written by the officers and their friends, and underlying these memoirs is the penchant of the generals to appropriate credit for whatever victory they deem necessary. In an interview, Festus Iyayi notes that he wrote the novel because the generals and politicians were taking credit for a war they caused (418). Elsewhere, Chrechan recognizes Olusegun Obasanjo's *My Command* as one of those self-adulatory memoirs on the war (43). Apart from Obasanjo, other participants of the war have written memoirs in which they engage in self-glorification for the so called victory or surrender. Phillip Effiong's *Nigeria & Biafra: My Story* is another of those works from the Biafran side of the war. Where Generals Gowon and Ojukwu may not have published their accounts of the war, yet, there have been works, perhaps, commissioned by them to celebrate their contribution to the war. Ojukwu's supporter, Ojukwu's supporter, Fredrick Forsythe has already published *The Biafra Story* to portray Ojukwu as a hero of the war which left

several Igbo dead. The British writer, John De St.Jorre, has also written *The Brothers' War: Biafra and Nigeria*, a book in which he eulogizes the charismatic and pragmatic leadership of Gowon. In general, these memoirs are replete with tales of self-praise and glorification of the writer or the subject in whose favor the work is skewed.

But as a reading of *Heroes* demonstrates, the generals and politicians are more of exploiters than heroes of the war. As Iyere tells us in Benin, the officers fight their war in the offices while the rank and file brave the odds in the field. The battle for the capture of Onitsha is significant and symbolic of the bravado and resilience of the ordinary soldiers. Even when they feel disappointed and betrayed by their leaders, they remain resolute and hopeful of a possible reinforcement from Lagos. When the reinforcement fails to arrive, they decide to destroy their armoury instead of leaving it for the Biafrans to use later. This action constitutes heroism and strong will despite the odds the soldiers face. Similarly, the reader notices the frustration of Captain Kolawole who is demoted for disagreeing with a superior officer over some war tactics. The interesting point to note is that the army lost three hundred men for ignoring Kolawole's suggestion in preference for the superior officer's directive (120). On the other hand, the officer whose error led to the death of three hundred men is promoted to a lieutenant colonel (13).

Taken together, the suffering of the rank and file suggests the possibility of some traumatic aftermath for the soldiers. In explaining the eccentric behavior of Kolawole after his demotion, for instance, Sergeant Kesh Kesh tells reminds Osime that "the war has a way of getting to you[the soldiers]" (121). Other soldiers also make statements that show their grief and disgust. For instance, one of the soldiers laments that "[t]here were sixteen of us. We lost ten. We were caught in an ambush. We had no chance but we

fought well. Our officer escaped. He went back' (85). Elsewhere after the tragedy that was the battle for the recapture of Onitsha, the voice of the captain who laments the betrayal of the troops is significant in the same way that it is touching: 'They abandoned us . . . they left us to the rebels to slaughter. They abandoned us' (213). The tragic tone of the above comments suggests the occurrence of trauma.

Several scholars have highlighted the long-term consequences of trauma on the combatants and non-combatant victims of war. For instance, Lisa A. Brenner, et. al assert that one of the traumatic issues found in soldiers returning from Iraq is traumatic brain injury. According to Brenner and her colleagues, an estimate of 11 to 23% of the soldiers that returned from Iraq suffers from brain injuries (307). The work of Brenner et. al. speak to the post-war consequence of trauma even as it foregrounds the meaninglessness of war. For Cathy Caruth, the concept of trauma involves an unexplainable/indescribable historical moment that is subject to re-occurrence. Following the work of Caruth, Mary Favret concludes in "Everyday War," ". . . that the affective structures demanded by war . . . migrate into everyday life" (629). For the soldiers and non-combatants in the Nigerian Civil War, the ongoing discourse on trauma identifies the enduring mark of the war on the people. In other words, the formal end of the war in 1970, perhaps, did not signal the end of the war. Rather, it probably signifies what Michel Foucault describes as "the continuation of war by other means" since as Caruth suggests, the traumatic victims often repeat the traumatic experiences (15).

Where the war affects the masses (combatant and civilians), the military leadership and politicians are least affected by the tragedy of the war. For instance, the lavish party organized by Brigadier Otunshi in a time of war is indicative of his class's

indifference to the tragic realities of the moment. In the meantime, the rank and file, who take the bullets and bombs, are exempted from the celebration (145-51). Also, the narrative exposes the indiscretion that characterizes Gowon's decision to marry during the war. Although the wedding date is shifted backward to 1968 instead of April 1969 when Gowon's marriage actually occurred, Iyayi's representation of yet another fact of the war is meant to expose yet another indiscriminate action of the ruling class during the war. Where more than one million children and their parents die of hunger, diseases, gunshots and air raids, the head of the Federal Government find such time convenient for his nuptial ceremony. Chreachan, for example, describes Gowon's wedding as another "vulgar insensitivity typical of his [Gowon's] class" (44). The point buttressed here is the callousness and selfish disposition of the ruling class to the detriment of the proletariat class. Although the above analysis addresses the elite on the Federal side, the Biafran elite is not left out of Iyayi's denunciation of the exploitative acts of the bourgeois either.

Where Osime's view that no animosity exists among the proletariat class might appear simplistic, it suggests the need to interrogate the claim by the Ojukwu- led Biafra about the cause of the war. Uzoigwe, among scholars, have argued that Ojukwu declared Biafra as a consequence of the Gowon led federal government to guarantee the safety of the Igbos after the Northern massacre (105). However, Osime tells us in *Heroes* that the massacres were incited by the political leaders and military hierarchy to achieve their aim:

You were all friends and brothers and sisters until this war came. You ate together and played together. And then you wake up one morning and you are told that the Ibo man is now your enemy and a rebel. The Ibo man also wakes up

and he is told that the Hausa man, the Yoruba man, the Midwesterner is his enemy. You are told to take up arms to kill each other. (129)

Osime's point is worthy of consideration against the reaction that trailed the January 15 coup led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu. According to historical accounts, wild jubilation from ordinary Nigerians who were disillusioned with the performance of the national leaders within the past six years of independence greeted the news of the coup, and according to these writers, the North was not left out of the euphoria. Writing in the *Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War*, for instance, Alexander Madiebo, who was the Military Commander in Kaduna at the time of the coup, reports that the coup was well received in the North and that civil servants celebrated the coup with parties (27).

Madiebo adds that Northern soldiers were in support of the coup and even demanded that the Northern Governor, Sir Kashim Ibrahim, be killed for his involvement with the corrupt regime (20). However, the widely celebrated coup was cited as the reason behind the Igbo massacre. According to historians, the North interpreted the January coup to be an orchestrated attempt by the Igbos to dominate the country. The thinking was motivated by the coincidental killing of mainly Hausa officers of Northern extraction in the coup, but even if it is true that the coup was an attempt at Igbo domination, the question that begs for answer is why the immediate reaction of the ordinary Northerner to the coup was jubilation and not rejection of the coup. In other words, if the Northern oligarchy were not responsible for persuading the Northern masses to see the coup as an Igbo one, the immediate reaction of the ordinary Hausa men and women should have been rejection and spontaneous massacre of the Igbo.

Also, if the coup did not enjoy the sympathy of Northern soldiers, why did they surround Nzeogwu and even demanded the death of the Military Governor as Madiebo explained? However, the shift in the attitude of the Northern masses seems to buttress Osime's claim that the massacres were plotted by the Hausa elite. Another indication that the massacres were planned was the strategic dates of the massacres. Uzoigwe reports that the massacres occurred on May 29, July 29, September 29, and October 29, 1966 (97). The success of these massacres on the peculiar dates would only have been possible with the connivance of the Northern elites. Walter Schwartz implicates the Northern leadership in the massacre when he writes "[t]hat the slaughter . . . in several Northern towns testifies to the careful planning and deep involvement of Northern leaders (3-4)

Elsewhere in Biafra, Ojukwu allegedly declared the republic of Biafra to protest against Gowon's handling of the killing of the Igbo. However, what is often glossed over by critics is Ojukwu's reluctance to accept Gowon as head of state at the death of Aguiyi-Ironsi from the second coup. Considering the power struggle between Gowon and Ojukwu, as well as the latter's decision to fight a war he is unprepared for, one could make a case that ambition was partly (if not fully) responsible for Ojukwu's decision to fight the war. Although commentators like Uzoigwe are quick to note that the Constituent Assembly empowered Ojukwu to prosecute the war, Ojukwu's rhetorical abilities makes it possible to argue that propaganda might have been used by Ojukwu to complicate the tragic situation to the assembly. The theme of propaganda is discussed more fully in Adichie's novel in the next chapter, but suffice it to state that *Time* magazine's acknowledgement of Ojukwu's "rare gift of rhetoric" before describing him as "a man who leads his people's military effort and speak for their pain" suggests a strong

oratorical and persuasive personality (10). Similarly evident in the above commentary on Ojukwu is the charismatic personality of the man who had to lead the Igbo people at the age of thirty-two.

The positive attributes of Ojukwu notwithstanding, the ill-equipped nature of the Biafran troops makes it possible to suggest that Ojukwu's ambitious nature aggravated the crisis. Writing on the character of Ojukwu in his memoir, his second in command, Philip Effiong notes that:

The Biafran soldier fought an impossible war under conditions that were totally uncalled (sic). It was the result of one man [Ojukwu] turning what was the people's will to fight a war of survival into a desperate and reckless attempt to a personal ambition – even if it meant destroying the very people he purportedly was fighting to preserve. (237)

Although Effiong's account might have been influenced by his self-glorification project, his portrayal of Ojukwu, nevertheless, finds expression in the unkempt appearance of the Biafran soldiers in Iyayi's *Heroes*. As Umunna tells Osime after offering him the aborted ride to Oganza, 'Even the Biafrans know they will lose. You look at the Biafran soldiers, children of sixteen and seventeen wearing black canvas shoes and carrying dane guns. And then look at the Hausa soldiers, at the Federal troops armed with rifles and automatic guns and planes and tanks . . . ' Umunna's comment highlights the distinction between the Biafran and the Federal soldiers: the Federal soldiers are fully armed and prepared, while their Biafran counterparts are children with dane guns. Of course, implicated in the above discussion is the ill-prepared nature of the Biafran soldiers, in addition to the use of

child soldiers in the Biafran war and other conflicts in Africa. Commenting on the use of child soldiers and the unpreparedness of the Biafran troops, Iniobong Uko asserts that:

Apparently, young boys were forced to serve in the Biafran army. They had no training or uniforms and adequate food and arms. Malnourished, poorly clothed and poorly armed, often abandoned by their Senior Officers and Commanders, the soldiers become frustrated, disillusioned, and desperate. (55)

Overall, the point that is demonstrated here is the absence of adequate weaponry and manpower to fight the war. But that does not deter Ojukwu from prosecuting the war, instead, young boys were conscripted and sent to war with little or no training and arms for the war task. If, as Favret has shown earlier, the traumatic experiences of war-time are carried into everyday life, it is possible, then, that the Biafran children replicate the war-time violence and alienation even in their adult years (629).

Of course, the foregoing suggests that it is possible to agree with Effiong and Osime that greed was at the core of the war. While Effiong is of the opinion that Ojukwu's ambition was privileged in fighting the war, Osime argues that the elite on both sides of the war precipitated the crisis for their selfish disposition. Overall, the foregoing argument validates Osime's claim about the propagandistic nature of the war.

If the elites in *Heroes*, like their counterparts in Okpewho's novel cause and/or benefit from the war, then, the emotional attachment associated with ethnicity in Nigeria makes it possible for the elites on both sides of the war to adduce the ethnic question as the rationale behind the war. Since the elites' selfishness is not an excuse that is acceptable by the masses, the ethnic lie is used to appeal to the emotion of the soldiers and the masses. It is here that Iyere's role is significant and important to a Marxist work

that *Heroes* is. He educates the soldiers and others around him as to the need for a “third army” to fight the real enemies: the elites on both sides of the divide. Although the novel does not end with a revolution like most Marxist works, the revolutionary imperative of Marxist literature is realized in *Heroes* by Osime’s recruitment for the “third army” that will confront the elites on both sides of the conflict. Unlike the Federal and Biafran troops, the third army recruits are not coerced or ethnically hypnotized to accept the war. Instead, there is a rational explanation of the Marxist ideology to Kesh Kesh, Jato, and the other soldiers (129-31). In the end, the third army, according to Osime, will constitute the movement that will “write the history of this war and give each man and woman his or her proper due” (*Heroes* 247).

Conclusion

In the chapter, Iyayi’s *Heroes* highlights what Olu Obafemi has described elsewhere as hierarchies of oppression. Whereas the environment is exploited by the ordinary soldiers who disregard land ethic and manifest the absence of ecological conscience in their treatment of the landscape and aquatic environment, the soldiers are directly exploited by the elites on both sides of the conflict to fight a war that can only promote the interests of the generals, politicians, and other members of their class. The result is that the self-serving interests of the elites are mitigated while the soldiers, ordinary people, and the environment are the victims of the exploitation. In consonance with Marxist ideological theory, Iyayi’s protagonist, Osime, recruits for a movement that will displace the bourgeoisie and recognize the sacrifices of the soldiers and perhaps the violence on the environment as a consequence of the acts of exploitation against it. The

next chapter complicates the politics of exploitation by examining Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* from an ecofeminist perspective.

CHAPTER IV

ECOFEMINISM AND ADICHIE'S *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN*

Introduction

Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* tells the story of the Nigeria Civil war, and unlike most Nigeria civil war novels that is set during the war, Adichie's novel begins with the prelude to the war. Particularly, the beginning of the novel highlights the problems of the newly independent Nigeria. In fact, the census crises, election rigging, and the western region fracas are among the historical moments of the turbulent post-independence Nigeria that Adichie's novel recreates. The novel's protagonist, Ugwu, leaves his rural village to be a house-help to Odenigbo, a professor of mathematics at Nsukka, a university town. At Odenigbo's university residence, Ugwu watches as his boss and other academics critique the new Nigerian elites and the Western powers that still control the new nation despite claims of independence. Nzeogwu leads the first coup which is closely followed by the second one. Through Odenigbo's wife, Olanna, the reader is taken through the horrors of the Igbo massacre in the North. The civil war follows and the reader is perplexed to see the destructive abilities of war on the society. Okeoma, Ekwenugo, and Ikejide are symbolic of the persons who died during the war. Also, the reader notices the devastating effects of the war on human relationships, and the family of Odenigbo clearly typifies that transformation occasioned by war. With the death of his mother during the conflict, Odenigbo becomes detached from his family, indulges in alcoholism, and his relationship with his wife suffers. By the end of the war, Odenigbo has lost his mother, friends, research papers and books. On the other hand,

Kainene, Olanna's twin sister disappears, while Ugwu's sister, Anulika is raped by five federal soldiers.

Exploring the Novel

Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* is one of the latest contributions to Nigeria civil war literature. Adichie's work continues the ongoing conversation on the effect of the Nigeria civil war on the human and non-human components of Leopold's biotic community that we see in the previous chapter. Writing on the novel, John C. Hawley notes that it sheds light on the effects of the war on the characters than on the politics of the war (20). Elsewhere, Ijeoma C. Nwajiaku has noted that the novel deals with love in relationships and the impact of conflicts on human relationships. For Nwajiaku, Adichie "seems to suggest that war time experiences have a profound and transformational effect (48). Here, Nwajiaku seems to buttress Hawley's idea that the novel illuminates the lives and actions of the characters in a war-time situation. Of course, Nwajiaku, herself a female scholar, does not fail to highlight Adichie's feminist inclination. Particularly, she cites the example of Olanna's refusal to marry Odenigbo "in spite of his relentless entreaties, and the example of Kainene's relationship with the British born Richard, and how she controls the relationship (50). These examples demonstrate Adichie's effort to empower and reposition women in a patriarchal Nigerian social system.

The female triumph that the above suggests does not invalidate the place of women as victims of societal exploitation in general and the horrors of war time Biafra in particular. In fact, Adichie's novel provides abundant illustrations to make a case for

female and juvenile exploitation in the war, but what seems to be missing in the seeming anthropocentric politics of exploitation is the exploitation of the environment that the war occasioned. This chapter, therefore, examines the politics of female and environmental exploitation in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and argues that although men are the ostensible perpetrators of oppression of exploitation before and during the Nigerian civil war, the politics of race, class, and culture complicate any gendered reading of feminine and environmental exploitation.

Ecofeminism and Adichie's Novel

According to Carolyn Merchant, the concept of ecofeminism was put forward by Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974 to describe women's tendency to promote biodiversity and environmental sustainability (100-05). As a theory, ecofeminism can be summarized thus: The idea that there is a correlation between the exploitation of women and that of the environment. The other pillar on which ecofeminism is anchored is the belief that women are closer to nature and therefore engage in environmental sustainable practices (King 12-18). Taken together, ecofeminism suggests a male-dominated social system that exploits women and the environment; a society where the women and the environment are victims of patriarchal acts of exploitation and violence.

However, critics have also identified some loopholes inherent in the theoretical framework of ecofeminism. According to Bina Agarwal, for instance, ecofeminism posits 'woman' as a unified construct and such categorization makes it impossible to "differentiate among women by class, race, ethnicity, and so on" (122). Here, Agarwal asserts that ecofeminism fails to account for other factors that contribute to female

oppression in the human society. Similarly, Bronwyn James uses the example of a rural South African locale to show the limitations of ecofeminism. For James, the survival instinct of these South African women motivates their participation in acts of environmental exploitation even when they are repositories of knowledge of environmental sustainability (12). Put differently, the survival needs of the South African women make it impracticable for them to utilize their knowledge of acts of environmental protection. Among other issues, James's work demonstrates the difficulties of universalizing some western paradigms. In particular, the economies of developing nations make it difficult for the women in those societies to entrench environmental ethics in their practices.

However, The Indian ecofeminist, Vandara Shiva has suggested the applicability of ecofeminism to developing nations. Drawing from her work with women activists in the Chikpo movement, an organization that promotes forest protection and regeneration in India, Shiva asserts that the violence against women and against nature are ideologically and materially inextricable (13-15). Here, Shiva contends the universality of ecofeminism by arguing for its applicability in postcolonial societies on the grounds that the parallel between female and environmental exploitation holds true for former colonies. Since Adichie's native Nigeria shares a developing nation status with Shiva's India (at least to an extent), the rest of the chapter interrogates the extent to which female exploitation is parallel with environmental abuse in *Half of a Yellow Sun* on one hand, and examines the claim that women, generally, engage in environmental sustainable practices on the other hand.

Writing in “Exhuming the Ghost of a Troubled Present: History and Survival in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*,” Benedict Onuora Nweke provides some graphic detail of the violence against women and children in the novel. Nweke provides the example of Anulika who is raped by five Nigerian soldiers. He also mentions the children who are killed in the north like the case of the woman carrying a calabash containing her daughter’s head on the train (68). In these examples, Nweke adumbrates the effect of war on women and their children. Other instances of abuse will suffice to buttress the discussion on how Adichie mediates the representation of women in her novel.

While Anulika is raped by five Nigerian soldiers at the capture of Nsukka, Ugwu and other young Biafran soldiers rape the bar attendant in turns (434; 374). Like Anulika, the bar attendant is another victim of rape that is explored in the novel. The bar attendant’s scenario also shows that rape was not the exclusive preserve of the Federal soldiers. It was an act of violence that was perpetrated against vulnerable women in the war by soldiers on both sides of the conflict. Similarly, pregnant women were raped before being killed by the Northerners during the massacres that served as prelude to the war. In his analysis of the violence against women during the Jewish Holocaust, James Young argues that the violence against women was aimed at ensuring the extinction of the Jews. In other words, Young asserts that the procreational ability of the Jewish women was at the core of the tendency to exterminate them (1779). As I have argued elsewhere, Young’s analysis is applicable to the plight of Igbo women during the Northern massacre and in war-time Biafra. The animosity orchestrated by the Northern elites against the Igbo seems to coterminously result in the tendency to wipe out the Igbo

ethnic group or how else could one explain the massacre and the war that left millions of Igbo dead. This perhaps explains why harmless women like the pregnant Arize, Auntie Ifeka, Anulika, and other women suffer from different forms of violence before and during the war (Iheka 80).

If Young's postulation is applicable to those women who are direct victims of the Northerners and the Federal soldiers, one notices the difficulty in applying Young's thesis to an analysis of the case of the bar attendant raped by Ugwu and the other young Biafran soldiers. Here, one notices that the violence is perpetrated against the lady by Biafran soldiers who are supposed to protect her. The point that is raised here, it seems to me, is the abuse of the young that child soldiering portends. John Hawley has lamented the "brutalization of the young" that child soldiering represents when he notes the penchant to recruit child soldiers especially in Africa (22).

Like other scholars who have written on the use of child soldiers in armed conflicts, Hawley condemns the practice of exposing young minds to the horrors of war. Similarly, the 44th United States President, Barack Obama, has condemned the use of child soldiers in wars. Obama asserts that, "it is the death sentence of a society to force children to kill in wars." Taken together, the works of Hawley and Obama speak to the destructive capabilities of the use of child soldiers that we also see in the previous chapter on Iyayi's *Heroes*. Sadly, the Biafran hierarchy subjected their young to the horrors of the war.

Of course, Uko's work on the double-tragedy of the Biafran young male, that is discussed in chapter three of this work is worth repeating here. In addition to being abused, the boys are neither trained nor provided with adequate food and arms before

being sent to the war fronts to die. At least, the case of Ugwu is a testament to Uko's point. Hardly had he been conscripted than he is exposed to the horrors of war. He smokes alongside High-Tech, another child soldier, and together, they commandeer a car before raping the bar attendant (372). These acts of juvenile delinquency expose the dangers of using children to fight in wars. On the effects of the use of child soldiers in wars, Margaret Gecaga argues that child soldiering "presents grave human right problems" (150). She adds that forcing these children to torture and kill leaves some psychological wounds on them (150). Reflecting further on the child soldier's tragedy, Odile M. Casenave notes that literary texts that explicate the theme of child soldiering "ponder the future of these children and the future of society" (62). In other words, the point being made by these writers is the long-term consequences of subjecting the young to violence. Taken together, the above discourse shows the abuse of women and children during the war. There is need to evaluate the rape of the environment also.

Writing in "Reading and Writing the Ecosocial Environment," Julia Martin suggests some headings under which an interrogation of the environment could proceed. Recognizing the social implication of environmental justice, Martin places humanity as the first item on her list. In addition to the human component, animals, forests, waste, and the interdependence of these variables are other factors that are highlighted by Martin. While Martin's categorization provides a framework that is amenable to a discussion of environmental ethic, the physical landscape and water bodies are included here to make for a comprehensive review of the environment in Adichie's novel. Already, the preceding discussion of the female victims of war provides an insight into the oppression that humanity suffered during the war; that needs no repeating again.

But where women and children, as the ongoing discussion suggests, are victims of war exploitation, the animals that we find in Adichie's novel were also exploited. A division of feminist theory known as care theory was formulated by Carol Gilligan in 1982 and this theory has been appropriated by animal rights proponents like Josephine Donovan to advocate for animal rights. For Donovan, "[w]e should not kill, eat, torture, and exploit animals because they do not want to be so treated, and we know that" ("Animal Rights" 375). Donovan's point here echoes that of other environmental critics who argue that all life-forms (including animals) deserve dignity and respect. As expected, the position of Donovan and others in her group of animal rights crusaders has been the subject of criticism over time. For instance, Robert Garner criticizes the supporters of animal care theory because according to him, the principles of the theory are not generalizable to all situations (241). In response to critics like Garner, Donovan writes in "Feminism and the Treatment of Animals: From Care to Dialogue," that most criticisms of animal care theory are based on a misunderstanding of the theory. In her latest contribution to the subject, Donovan emphasizes the "dialogical nature" of care theory. For Donovan, the dialogical basis of the animal rights crusade involves listening to the emotional reaction of the animals in question (305). In other words, the feminist care theory model that Donovan advances, asserts that the wishes of the animals under consideration be considered before killing them for whatever reason (313). Considering that no animal wishes to die, it means that Donovan's argument prohibits the slaughtering of animals in whatever circumstances.

In relation to Adichie's novel, one finds a violation of Donovan's care theory in different ramification. For instance, we are informed that Aunty Ifeka kills a chicken any

time that Olanna pays them a visit in Kano (40). Aunty Ifeka's action represents an abuse of the animal component of the environmental system, and as a further reading of the novel shows, Aunty Ifeka is not alone in the guilt of animal abuse. The Nigeria civil war also provides an opportunity for humanity to debase the animal component of the ecosystem. For instance, the reader encounters Mama Adanna's family dog when the Odenigbos moved to Umuahia (360). However, the threat of Kwashiokor prompts Mama Adanna to kill Bingo in order to supply the proteinous need of her household. Similarly, the indiscriminate killing of lizards and other animals for food represent other forms of animal abuse that one encounters in the novel (361).

Where these actions symbolize the abuse of animals on face value especially in relation to Donovan's argument as to the need to appreciate the wishes of animals, it is important to examine the significance of the war-time violence against animals before labeling the perpetrators of animal oppression as animal exploiters. Scholarship on the Nigeria Civil war has already pointed out the starvation policy of the Federal Government in their bid to break the resilience of the Igbos. Considering the shortage or even unavailability of relief materials, the Igbo resorted to various acts of survival. An example is Mama Adanna who allegedly kills Bingo to provide some protein supplement for her young daughter, Adanna. While her actions could be considered an act of animal cruelty, especially, since it involves a family pet, the effects of Kwashiokor on the young in Biafra speaks to the need to avoid dismissing Garner's point as to the contextual limitation of animal care theory.

Like Garner, Virginia Held has pointed to the limitation of applying the animal care theory to the ". . . actual starving children of Africa" (118). It seems that Held had

the Biafran children in mind when she argues for the exemption of suffering people from the practice of animal rights theory. As such, the killing of Bingo to ensure Adanna's survival can be rationalized in the peculiarly horrendous situation of the Biafran population during the war. If anything, Bingo's death, here, speaks to the need for a localized ecocriticism. Whereas ecocritics in Euro-America would scream of specieism at Bingo's death, the situation in war-time Biafra makes it possible to justify such acts. But if Adanna's case is excusable, as the ongoing conversation suggests, the case of Auntie Ifeka represents a blatant abuse of animal rights. In fact, in Donovan's words, Auntie Ifeka fails to grant "status . . . to whom . . . [she] can communicate cognitively and emotionally as to their needs and wishes" (309).

Besides the animals who are subjected to destruction throughout the novel, the fact that the war precipitates deforestation is another point that is decipherable from the novel. Like the novels of Okpewho and Iyayi in the preceding chapters, Adichie's novel also pays attention to air raids during the war. Several commentators on the Nigeria Civil War have condemned the indiscriminate air raids and bombing of civilian locations during the conflicts. Although little or nothing has been written on it, the forests were not spared the destruction of those air raids. For instance, we witness Richard show Kainene a tree that has been split perhaps by air raid (319). Elsewhere in the novel, the reader notices the destruction of the forests after Ugwu's conscription. As Ugwu and the older soldiers detonate the bombs for the annihilation of their Nigerian counterparts, the narrator tells the reader that the grass catches fire and burn from the explosion (370). Taken together, these actions situate the activities of the warring sides as harbinger of environmental exploitation. It is insightful to note that the air raiders and members of

Ugwu's battalion are males. Following ecofeminism discourse, therefore, men can be aptly described as the destroyers of the forest. In other words, the ecofeminist thesis that projects men as destroyers is sustained to this point.

Where it is possible to gloss over the destruction of the forests, the importance of forest to ecological stability and to humanity makes it necessary to reflect on the significance of its destruction. Already, Bina Agarwal has pointed to the importance of forests to developing societies. Agarwal notes that the "health of forests, . . . , has an impact on the health of soils (especially in the hills) and the availability of ground and surface water for irrigation and drinking" (129). Here, Agarwal points specifically to the benefits of forests to nature and humanity. In fact, Agarwal notes that forests are the source of livelihood for an estimated 30 million or more people in India. Although Agarwal's work is spatially located in India, its conclusions are generalizable to Nigeria that shares a similar developing economy status (to an extent) with India.

Similarly, Toulmin echoes Agarwal's point when she asserts that forests help to absorb excessive carbon that could engender global warming if emitted into the atmosphere. Toulmin also argues that forests help to regulate moisture, thereby, helping to control flooding, erosion, and other natural disasters (70). Taken together, the works of Agarwal and Toulmin buttress the benefits of forests to nature and culture: it controls global warming (which is disastrous to the environment and to humanity), and help provide resources for human sustenance. Similarly, as David Pimentel has noted, forests provide habitat for some animals, species of plants, and microbes (105). It means then that deforestation that wars engender threatens the survival of some species that are rendered homeless as a consequence of deforestation. The incidence of air raids also

makes it possible to argue that some species could lose their lives in the same way that the raids destroy the trees that constitute the forest and provide an habitat for those life-forms.

Waste is another factor implicated in the environmental criticism of Adichie's novel. The destructive activities of the war provide ample human and non-human wastes that affect the aesthetics of the environment. As a reading of the novel demonstrates, the burning of houses, the destruction of the schools, and other consequences of air raids ostensibly dramatize the waste that the debris from these destructive activities inflict on the environment (208;285). Even the burning of Odenigbo's books and research papers by the federal soldiers represents a form of waste and degradation to the physical environment. Also, the heat kills the microbes in the ground. This is how the narrator describes the scene where Odenigbo and his family return to Nsukka after the war: "Ugwu stooped down beside the wildly overgrown bush with the white flowers and stared at the pile of burnt books. They had been heaped together before being set on fire, so he dug through with his hands, to see if the flames had missed any underneath" (431). The description of the scene highlights the waste of the books and the plight of the environment which had to contend with the incendiary violence. The human victims who die from the war constitute other elements of waste that is reflected in Adichie's novel. The toxicity of the shrapnels and other debris of air technology are other forms of waste that the environment had to contend with in the novel

A consideration of the hierarchies of environmental destruction in *Half of a Yellow Sun* will not be complete without examining the effect of war on water and the landscape. A recurrent feature of the war as exemplified in Adichie's novel is the

incidence of air raids. With its lethal and destructive capabilities, the bombs are able to destroy the water channels and even the land. On one raid occasion, for instance, the bomb crater splits the road leading to the school entrance into two (285). The destruction of the road is one of several instances of landscape distortion occasioned by the novel. Besides the physical despoliation of the land, one also notices the impact of toxic materials on the landscape. The soil quality reduces considerably and Kainene's farm fails to yield good harvests (408).

Like in Iyayi's *Heroes*, we also see the impact of war time Biafra on water resources. As the toxic wastes from the use of technology make the land less arable, fertilizers and manures become the means to engender soil fertility. However, such palliative measures are detrimental to the water bodies. As the chemicals are transported to the water bodies by rainfall and wind, the waters are polluted and made unsafe for human use. However, such waters are the main source of the water needs of rural Biafra. At least, the rape of Anulika by the Federal soldiers on her way to the stream is a textual illustration of the people's reliance on rivers and streams for their needs. There is also an evidence of water scarcity in the novel when we see the women reusing water for preparing the staple food, cassava (295). The action of the women suggests the scarcity of water which might have been occasioned partly by deforestation or by restrictions imposed by air raids and the brutalities of the Federal soldiers, the rape of Anulika is worthy of repeat here. From the foregoing, one notices that the different aspects of what Leopold describes in the previous chapter as land ethic was violated in the course of the war. In other words, a reading of Adichie's novel demonstrates the cruelty against animals, the despoliation of forest resources, of water, and the physical landscape. Of

course, the interdependence of nature and culture means that the foregoing destruction had far-reaching implication for humanity.

So far, an attempt has been made to examine the claim of ecofeminism discourse that the exploitation of women by a patriarchal human society is synonymous with the exploitation of the environment. Where a reading of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* positions women, children, and the environment as the ultimate casualties of the war, the limitation of the ecofeminism thesis is evident in its categorization of women as the victims and the male as the exploiters. But as Agarwal notes in her critique of ecofeminism, the politics of class, race, and ethnicity combine with gender to complete the chain of exploitation. Even Adichie recognizes the dynamics of class, race, and gender, when she writes in "African 'Authenticity' and the Biafran Experience," that she chose a number of characters for *Half of a Yellow Sun* to portray the "dynamics of race and class and gender and, even more importantly, how the war complicated these dynamics" (51). To Adichie's list I would add culture due to its rootedness in the Igbo society that Adichie locates her work. As such, the following section examines how class, race, and culture complicate any gendered reading of women and the environment.

In terms of class, Aschroft and his colleagues have highlighted the tension that characterizes the relationship between the neo-colonial elites and their masses (2). Similarly, Franz Fanon has lamented the exploitative thrust of the elite class who he aptly refers to as the "national bourgeoisie (1578). The Nigeria civil war also provides a paradigm for appreciating the class divide that is at the core of the civil war in Nigeria. Several scholars have argued that the massacres of the Igbo in the North as well as the reluctance of the Gowon-led Federal government to mitigate the refugee crisis in the East

were responsible for the outbreak of the war. In the previous chapter, an attempt was made to isolate the leadership on both sides of the war as being the harbinger of the war, and so there is need to complicate the discussion on leadership a bit more to see how the elite contributed to the conflict and its attendant exploitation of people and the environment.

Rational Decision Making is a concept in politics and international relations that is instrumental to our discussion here. As Bruce Russett, Harvey Starr, and David Kinsella describe it, the concept of rational decision making urges policy makers to ascertain the gains and risks associated with a particular decision before ratifying it (163). A model of the rational decision making concept that the authors introduce is the rational actor model. Here, the state actor or decision maker analyzes all options before settling for the least dangerous one (164). The implication of the rational actor model for the war scenario is that the Ojukwu-led Biafran leadership ought to have recognized that secession would be resisted by the Gowon-led Federal government and that Biafra cannot match the military, financial, and diplomatic influence of Nigeria in the international community. However, Ojukwu and his cohorts proceeded with their secession plans. Supporters of Ojukwu, like Fredrick Forsythe, are wont to explain that the Constituent Assembly gave Ojukwu the mandate to declare Biafra, but what these commentators do not admit is that a proviso was attached to the Assembly's mandate. The Assembly mandated Ojukwu to secede on a practicable date, but as the General Officer Commander of the Biafran Army, Alexander Madiebo, argues, the date Ojukwu chose to declare Biafra was not practicable. Among other reasons, Madiebo cites the lack of weaponry to fight the war as a sign of Biafran's unpreparedness for the war. However, Madiebo

suggests that Ojukwu must have acted hurriedly before his appointment as military Governor of the East could be terminated for insubordination by the head of state, Yakubu Gowon (381). Like Ojukwu's deputy, Phillip Effiong, Madiebo, here, alludes to personal greed as part of Ojukwu's motivating factor. Taken together, Ojukwu's indictment by his lieutenants speak to the place of ambition in his quest for a sovereign Biafra.

Apart from acknowledging Madiebo's work as one that provides a framework for the character of Colonel Madu in her work, Adichie's work recreates the propaganda theme that is evident in Madiebo's factual account of the conflict. A few instances from the novel will suffice. On his visit to Nsukka just before the war, Ojukwu asks his audience, "What shall we do? Shall we keep silent and let them force us back into Nigeria? Shall we ignore the thousands of our brothers and sisters killed in the North?" (173). From the above, a perceptive reader could see a leader who had made up his mind and was only seeking the ratification of the people. In fact, the only recourse to the implication of secession is Ojukwu's commentary that the war could be a long one, but even that is immediately followed by another propagandistic statement: 'Even the grass will fight for Biafra' (174). Elsewhere in the novel, Ojukwu declares that "No power in Black Africa can defeat us [Biafra]" (188). These are examples of moments when Ojukwu downplays the precarious nature of war especially for the ill-prepared side. As the Igbo military and political leader, it behooves Ojukwu to explain frankly the implication of the war to his people, but available evidence like that of Madiebo suggests otherwise. Instead, he appeals to the people's pathos and the result is that they believed in

a Biafran victory (93-94). At least the responses of the people at the beginning of the war testify to this.

Olanna and Mrs Muokelu reflect examples of people with the illusion created by Ojukwu's propaganda machine. At the outset of the war, Olanna tells Ugwu that they will return to Nsukka within one month since the Biafran soldiers ' . . . will drive the Nigerians back within a week or two' (181). Of course, the Nigerians were not driven back in two weeks; in fact, the war dragged on until Biafra capitulated after three years. On the other hand, Mrs Muokelu, perhaps, basking in the euphoria of propaganda that a hunter, at one point, shoots down a Nigerian bomber with his hunting gun, concludes that Biafra's victory is inevitable (284-85). Of course, that did not happen. Instead, the war realities show that Biafra was losing its grip by the day due to lack of weaponry, manpower, and other resources that are fundamental to any successful warfare. Rather, Ugwu and other child soldiers are conscripted and sent to the war front. Of course, Ojukwu's class succeeds in deceiving the masses and more people die in the war which did not spare the environment either.

Among other participants in the Nigeria Civil War, Madiebo has written about the pitiable conditions under which the average Biafran fought the war. As such, it is not surprising that the Igbo lost the war. Even that the Igbo held out for three years was less the effort of Ojukwu and his colleagues than it is due to the resilience of the Biafran soldiers and scientists who improvised scientific innovations like the Ogbunigwe (local bomb), petrol, and other necessities. Christian Ukaegbu has written on the stellar performance of the Biafran scientists in a work in which he regrets the inability of the Nigerian leadership to harness those potentials in post-war Nigeria. Instead, the Biafran

leadership succeeded in using propaganda to distract the people from the main issues of the war.

Several writers have also commented on the use of propaganda in wars. For instance, Deepa Kumar argues that war propaganda provides a means to discuss a war “in emotional rather than rational terms” (297). Kumar’s point is applicable to the Biafran situation as fictionalized by Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The novel is replete with stories of saboteurs (real and imaginary) that were blamed for the losses suffered by the Biafran army. Instead of owning up to the rational basis for the successive defeats suffered by the Biafrans, Ojukwu’s propaganda machine started blaming the minority ethnic groups in the East for providing strategic information to the Nigerians. The question that is unanswered till date is how these peasants got access to those classified military information. As a result, several people from the minority groups were killed. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, also, Alice complains to Olanna about the plight of the women that were accused of sabotage and her comment is insightful enough to warrant restating here: ‘Yesterday it was a man from Ogoja. This is nonsense. We cannot keep beating ourselves just because Nigeria is beating us. Somebody like me, I have not eaten proper food in two years. I have not tasted sugar. I have not drunk cold water. Where will I find the energy to aid the enemy?’ (387).

Alice’s point is significant for its interrogation of the saboteur-myth that characterizes war-time Biafra, and also highlights her helplessness in the face of the upper-class deceit. Unfortunately, she is powerless to challenge the upper class who contrives the saboteur myth. In sum, the point that Kumar makes about the U.S. use of the Jessica Lynch story to distract Americans from the tragedy of the Iraqi war is

applicable to the Biafran situation. The Ojukwu-led Biafran leadership sees, in accusations of sabotage, an avenue to distract the people from the losses of the war. Madiebo buttresses this argument when he contends that the sabotage myth was invented “to divert the minds of the people from the realities of the war, and to allow them to stick to their wrong impression that we [Biafran soldiers] were stronger than the enemy but lost battles due entirely to sabotage (170). The result is that the masses misdirect their frustration at the turn of events. Instead of holding their leaders accountable for the war losses, their energies were channeled into harassing innocent and vulnerable people like themselves and the soldiers for sabotaging the war efforts. The long-term implication, of course, is that more lives are lost in the same way that the environmental degradation deepens.

On the other side of the upper-class exploiters are Gowon and his cohorts on the Nigerian Federal side of the war. Apart from his inaction, if not connivance, in the massacre of Ndigbo during the Northern massacres, his actions during war-time Biafra makes him guilty as Ojukwu in the suffering of the Igbo people and their physical environment. Granted that he was fighting for a united Nigeria as has been argued in several quarters, but his actions make it difficult not to believe the views of some critics that he was more interested in oil and other natural resources in the East than in the welfare of Ndigbo. Madiebo, for example, cites an intercepted operational order of the Nigerian Army which states “very clearly that the aim of the Nigeria-Biafra war was purely to capture the entire oil industry in Biafra and place it under the control of Lagos” (255). Besides the operational order, other critics have cited the indiscriminate bombing of civilian locations and the blockade of the Eastern region as acts that did not show any

concern for the Igbo or how else can one explain the intentional bombing and killing of civilians in a civil war? William V.O'Brien, for instance, notes that "the principle of discrimination prohibits direct intentional attacks on noncombatants and non-military targets." O'Brien explains further that direct attack should be restricted to the enemy soldiers in civil wars (502). Unfortunately, the conduct of the Nigerian soldiers, clearly, violates the principle of discrimination. Churches, houses, schools, and other civilian locations were targeted and destroyed alongside people, animals, and other elements of such biotic communities.

Similarly, starvation is another means adopted by the Nigerian leadership to subdue the resilient Biafrans. Unable to comprehend the source of the resilience of the Igbo masses, the Nigerian leadership deprives the war-ravaged region of food and other relief materials. Nigerian soldiers prevented relief agencies from proceeding to Biafra and recalcitrant relief pilots were shot down alongside their plane. Mrs Muokelu laments this situation in the novel when she condemns Gowon for stopping the Red Cross from bringing them food (285). Mary Ezech denounces starvation as a weapon of war and chides the Gowon-led Federal Government for prioritizing the political over the humanitarian in the prosecution of the war (8-14). If the welfare of the Igbo was at the core of Gowon's mission in the war, he would have tried to ensure their survival against all odds. However, his resort to violating the principle of discrimination and deploying starvation as a war tool seems to support the position of those critics who argue that oil politics was at the core of the Nigeria Civil War.

But regardless of the reasons adduced by both sides for the war, one point that is deducible from the foregoing account is that class interest played a prominent role in the

war. That explains why Gowon would spare nothing to subdue Ojukwu and gain control of the oil in the East. It also explains why the family of Ezekia and the Ozobias live in comfort during the war, while the masses like the Odenigbos and other fictional representation of the lower class face the horrors of the war. While the narrator tells us that Ezekia puts on some weight in his new position as Mobilization Director (293), and the Ozobias escape to London to avoid the effects of the war (194), the Odengibos suffer the psychological and physical deterioration occasioned by the war.

Of course, ecofeminist critics are wont to argue that Gowon, Ojukwu, and other members of the national bourgeoisie are predominantly male in order to justify their belief in the male-oriented exploitation they suffer, but it is interesting to add here that Mrs Ozobia and Mrs Ezekia are upper-class women who benefit from the war like their husbands. While Mrs Ozobia leaves for London with her husband, Mrs Ezekia's dialogue with Olanna reveals that she plans to travel overseas soon.

However, the fact that some male characters in the narrative are located among the victims of exploitation, further, problematizes any attempt to distinguish the exploiters as male and the victims of such exploitation as women and the environment. In the novel, Odenigbo moves from being a comfortable lecturer of mathematics to an alcoholic who is radically affected by the war; he takes to drinking and is withdrawn from his family. His transformation is not just psychological; it is physical. He moves from his comfortable Nsukka apartment to a less-befitting one in Umuahia as evident in the novel. Eventually, he ends up in a one-room apartment in an overcrowded house (335). Similarly, the loss of his books and research papers symbolizes his loss on one hand and that of the Igbo academia on the other (431). Apart from these, Okeoma, who is

symbolic of the fine Igbo poet, Chris Okigbo, dies in the Nsukka section of the war (400). As Adichie herself admits, the character of Okeoma was informed by her desire “to pay tribute to Okigbo, who exemplifies the monumental loss of human capital that Biafra represented” (“African” 51). The case of Odenigbo and Okigbo is symbolic of the large number of Igbo men (including soldiers) who were victims of the war. If these are anything to go by, it means that class was a major factor in the exploitation suffered by the people during the war. Reducing the politics of exploitation to gender, as the ecofeminists tend to, is not to fully comprehend the dynamics of oppression in society and during the Biafra war.

As Agarwal and Adichie suggest earlier, race is another factor that the ecofeminists need to account for in their attempt to reduce their exploitation and that of the environment to gender terms. The Nigerian Civil War provides a justification for analyzing the politics of race in relation to the involvement of the British and other members of the international community. Critics like Ezeh have highlighted the partisanship of Britain and other foreign countries that were sympathetic to Nigeria against the weaker Biafran side. Instead of mediating for peace in its former colony, Britain supplied arms and other support to Nigeria. Uzoigwe notes that the British had always loathed the frank and progressive nature of the Igbo (4). As such, he asserts that the British feared that an Igbo victory could jeopardize their investment and control of their priceless construct, Nigeria. Evident from the above is that the British, mindful of their economic interest, supported Nigeria and ignored the humanitarian implication of their action for the Igbo women, children, and the environment.

The other reason that could explain Britain's reluctance to mediate in the war can be found in colonialist discourse. In Abdul R. JanMohammed's "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonial Discourse," he explains that "all the evil characteristics with which the colonialist endows the native are thereby not presented as the products of social and cultural difference but as characteristics inherent in the race – in the 'blood'—of the native" (21). JanMohammed's point here echoes Fanon's description of the colonial gaze. Particularly, JanMohammed speaks to the savage and barbaric image of the African in the eyes of the colonizer. In Adichie's novel, one finds instances where British characters verbalize their exotic imaginative constructs about the African. Susan, for instance, warns Richard to leave for England at the outbreak of the war because the uncivilized Africans were used to long and senseless wars (56). Elsewhere, she reminds Richard to use "rubber" (condoms) in his sexual relationship with Kainene because all Africans are unhealthy regardless of their social status (240). Apart from the economic reasons advanced by Uzoigwe among others, one could argue that the manichean perception was at the core of the British role in the Nigerian civil war. It seems that the war provided an opportunity to justify their long-held notion of the savagery of the African and his/her tendency towards self-annihilation. But whether it was for economic reasons, to justify their colonial perception of the African, or a combination of both, the role of Britain and other members of the international community interrogates the so called claim to human civilization touted by Europe and America.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Kwashiokor is renamed Harold Wilson syndrome as we see in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The renaming of the disease after the then

British Prime Minister underscores his complicity in the starvation of the children in Biafra. Similarly, Mrs Muokelu laments the military assistance being provided to Nigeria by Britain (285). In all of these, gender is not the only factor determining the scope of the exploiters of women and the environment. Instead, race is an essential factor to consider in the politics of exploitation of the Nigerian civil war.

In addition to gender, culture is important in a critique of the ecofeminist stance on establishing a direct link between the exploitation of women and the environment by a male-dominated society. The Igbo setting of the Nigeria civil war and Adichie's novel engender some enduring ethnocentric practices that unsettle the central concern of ecofeminist discourse. As believed by several Igbo societies and also included in Adichie's novel, the girl-child is considered inferior and less important than her male counterpart. This explains why Odenigbo's mother rejects the custody of Baby when she realizes her gender. She had encouraged Amala to seduce a drunk Odenigbo but when the outcome was not a male child as she had expected, she refuses to accept the custody of the baby (256). Elsewhere in the novel, Arize's mother-in-law rebukes her for the delay in conception after her marriage. In fact, the older woman urges Arize to confess to the number of abortions that she has had. For the older woman, the series of abortions committed by Arize were responsible for her inability to conceive immediately after her marriage (133). Add to these the refusal of Odenigbo's mother to see Olanna as his son's betrothed and a clear picture of how culture helps to set women against women emerges. At least, if it is arguable that the participants in the class and racial exploitation are predominantly male, here, women work against themselves to perpetuate an age-long tradition that abhors female children and the education of the girl-child. Unable to

rationalize Olanna's high educational and social standing, Odenigbo's mother labels her a witch (99-00).

It is interesting to comment that where the older women participate in the exploitation of members of their gender, the males are in solidarity with the women in their lives. For instance, Nnakwanze, Arize's husband, stops his mother from visiting his house for embarrassing his wife, while Odenigbo refuse to abandon Olanna against his mother's wishes (133). Here, cultural factors make it difficult to delineate societal exploitation as induced by gender. Instead, as a reading of Adichie's novel demonstrates, gender collaborates with class, race, and culture to perpetuate exploitation in society.

Having said this, there is the need to examine the other kernel on which ecofeminists base their argument. Besides attempting to relate female exploitation to its environmental equivalent, ecofeminists have also argued that women are closer to nature and so are more protective of the environment than men, but the argument does not pass the test of scrutiny in Adichie's novel. Granted that the males fight the war and directly destroy the environment. Granted also that Odenigbo's mother refuses to flee Abba with other members of her family due to her attachment to the land, but there are other scenes in the novel that do not support the argument that women are closer to the environment (200). For example, the case of Auntie Ifeka who performs the ritual of killing a chicken whenever Olanna visits Kano is significant of speciesism and buttresses a lack of sympathy for other members of the biotic community (40). Unlike Mama Adanna whose killing of Bingo is understandable in a period of crisis, Auntie Ifeka's killing of her chickens is a problematic act. Although the need for food could be advanced as a reason for slaughtering the chickens, Donovan's view on the need to consider the feelings of

animals makes it difficult to simply justify Aunty Ifeka's act. If anything, her actions contrast the wishes of the animals and any attempt to justify it speaks to Tadd Ruetnik's view of the speciesism involved in justifying animal exploitation because of human wellbeing (318).

Also, Kainene's effort to improve her farm yield motivates her to use manure but environmental scholars have warned of the consequences of manure and fertilizers to the water tables and aquatic habitat. As such, Kainene's activities could represent a selfish disposition to cater for the needs of humanity without evaluating the implication of such actions on other elements of the ecosystem. Again, as noted earlier, while the work of some women could be interpreted to mean a connection to the environment, that of others is symbolic of environmental abuse in various ways. Similarly, while men fight wars and may be said to be the ultimate destroyers of the environment, the character of Jomo epitomizes a masculine attempt to beautify and care for the environment. At the beginning of the novel, we see the beautiful flowers in the setting description and later in the work, Jomo is introduced as the gardener responsible for maintaining the aesthetics of Odenigbo's house. Later in the novel too, Richard's house benefits from the touch of Jomo's gardening skills (1). Jomo's actions suggest that, beyond participating in warfares that destroy the environment, men also engage in sustainable practices to improve the environment. As such, it becomes difficult to clearly define women as guardians of the environment and men as the destroyers.

Conclusion

This chapter started by highlighting the central issues implicated in the discourse of ecofeminism. Particularly, ecofeminists contend that there is a similarity between the exploitation of women and that of the environment in a patriarchal society, and that women are closer to nature, and are therefore, in a position to nurture it more than men. Adichie's feminist leaning, then, provided a text to assess the theoretical framework of the ecofeminists. At the end, a reading of Adichie's novel from an ecofeminist perspective highlighted the limitations of ecofeminism that has been exposed by critics like Bina Agarwal. As Agarwal suggests and the present study attests to, the politics of exploitation of women and the environment cannot be accounted for by gender alone. Rather, the politics of class, race, culture and ethnicity are also important issues to be considered in relation to gender based oppression. However, the chapter, like the preceding ones, demonstrated that women, the environment, and even men were victims of the exploitation of the Nigeria Civil War. One can conclude therefore that gender, class, race, and culture are various ways by which the layers of oppression were perpetuated in war-time Biafra. The next chapter concludes the present study with a comparative discussion of the novels of Okpewho, Iyayi, and Adichie.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The previous chapters have highlighted the oppression of the masses and the environment during the Nigerian civil war. Chapter I of the study focused on the introduction and literature review of existing scholarship. The chapter highlights the trajectory of African literature, and presents the history of the Nigeria civil war as a way of understanding the context of the war literature. In addition to providing the historical contexts, the chapter reviews existing scholarship on the war and identified a gap in that most studies focused on the effects of the war on people. The gap justifies the present study and provides a background to the discussion of ecocriticism and postcolonial ecocriticism that concludes the chapter.

In Chapter II, characterization in Okpweho's *The Last Duty* was discussed using postcolonial theory, which makes it possible to categorize the characters into the elite/neo-colonial group and the masses. Where Toje and Ali are emblematic of the arrogance and exploitative actions of the elite during the Nigerian civil war, the environment, Aku, Odibo, and Oshevire are discussed as representatives of the masses who are exploited against by the elite. In the end, the reader notices how the fate of the environment and the lower-class people are intertwined in their exploitation by a common group of exploiters: the elite. Of particular significance in the chapter is the categorization of the environment as a character. Such shift from the view of the environment as an object at the mercy of humanity to a character makes it possible to re-interrogate the relationship between people and their environment during the war.

In chapter III Leopold's land ethic theory was applied to a reading of Iyayi's *Heroes* to examine the relationship among the different members of the biotic community, and revealed in the chapter was the absence of an ecological conscience in the relationship between human beings and other members of the biotic community. Generally, a reading of Iyayi's novel demonstrated that war-time Biafra was dominated by an elite-induced exploitation of the environment and the lower class, that include the rank and file of the military who fought the war.

Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* highlighted the strengths and limitations of ecofeminism in chapter four. Whereas the theory posits that the exploitation of women is parallel to that of the environment in patriarchal societies, and that women are better environmental protectors than men, a reading of the novel showed that the politics of class, race, and culture complicate any gendered reading of female and environmental exploitation. Although men are the predominant exploiters in the war and in the novel, chapter four contended that the inclusion of men among the exploited and women among the exploiters problematizes any simplistic classification of men as destroyers and women as protectors. Instead, the chapter demonstrated how class, race, and culture collaborate with gender to exploit the people and the environment in the Nigerian civil war.

But despite their different approaches to representing the Nigerian civil war, the three novels are joined by the similar pattern of thoughts that flows through them, and these include the exploitation of the people: men, women, and children; the abuse of the environment, and the attitude of the elites who benefit from the war.

All three novels expose the exploitation of the lower-class people by the elite. In Okpewho's novel, for instance, we see how Toje, who is representative of the upper-class, exploits the Oshevire's family. His conspiracy led to Oshevire's detention, and while the latter is imprisoned, he lavishes gifts on Aku, Oshevire's wife to enable him have sexual relations with the woman. Odibo, his servant, is also not spared as he becomes Toje's beast of burden. The ordinary soldiers in the novel are also exploited like their civilian counterparts as evident in the case of the executed soldier. Similarly, the rank and file of the military that we find in Iyayi's novel are exploited like those in Okpewho's work. They are sent to the war-front while the officers are least affected by the vagaries of war. While the officers are promoted for frivolous reasons, the ordinary soldiers are either imprisoned or executed for desertion. Apart from the military victims, civilians like Ndudi and her family are also victims of exploitation in the novel. Like Aku who is sexually abused by Toje, Ndudi is also raped by the Federal and Biafran soldiers, but unlike Aku who caves in to Toje's overtures; Ndudi's sexual relation with the soldiers is forced. Anulika also faces similar molestation in *Half of a Yellow Sun* where she is raped by five Federal soldiers on her way to the stream. The children are also exploited in all three novels. Where Oghenovo indirectly participates in the war violence in Okpewho's novels, the works of Iyayi and Adichie portray the violence inflicted on child soldiers like Ugwu and High-Tech.

Similarly, the environment is another victim of environmental abuse in all three novels, and technology is implicated in the degradation of the environment. The air raids destroy houses in Okpewho's novel while forests, the atmosphere, and the waters are polluted or destroyed in the other novels. Whereas the battle for Onitsha in *Heroes*

provides an avenue to see the pollution of the water with bodies of dead soldiers and the toxic materials of the weapons used, the destruction of trees and homes in Adichie's novel speaks to environmental degradation in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Finally, what is implicated in the ongoing conversation is the role of the elites in causing and/or contributing to the war. In *The Last Duty*, the reader notices the arrogance of Toje and Ali, who are representative of the elite on the Federal side of the conflict. In addition to not being affected by the crisis, elites like Toje become military contractors who make profit from supplying food to the military during the war. Likewise, Brigadier Otunshi and General Gowon are examples of an indifferent elite group in Iyayi's novel. Where Otunshi hosts a lavish party that excludes the ordinary soldiers in addition to withholding the benefits of injured and dead soldiers, Gowon's quest for power and the control of the oil in the East emboldened him to fight the war and even sanction the bombing of civilian locations in Biafra. As O'Brien's work showed in chapter four, the principle of discrimination prohibits the bombing of civilian targets during civil wars, but under Gowon's watch, the Federal soldiers bombed civilian locations to break the resilience of the Igbo. Add to the above Gowon's decision to celebrate his wedding during a war when a section of the country faces extermination from starvation, disease, and air raids, and the picture of the culpability of the elite becomes clearer. One finds similar sentiment in Adichie's novel where elites like the Ozobias and the Ezekas are unaffected by the war. While the Ozobias escape to London, Professor Ezeka moved from being a university lecturer to a chauffeured Director of Mobilization who resides comfortably in the Government Residential Area. Besides the Ozobias and the Ezekas, the character of Ojukwu also makes a comment on the elite. He leads the people into a

war they were not prepared for militarily and financially, and instead of acting to stop the spiraling death rate in Biafra, Ojukwu flees to Ivory Coast leaving the people to their fate. In the end, the elite enjoy social advancement during the war, while the masses descend the social ladder at the same time.

In the overall consideration of the novels, therefore, the reader notices that the elite on both sides of the conflict caused and contributed to the conflict that was destructive to the people (especially the masses) and the environment. Instead of protecting the people and the environment, the elites prioritized their interests over that of the other members of the biotic community. But in the light of the demand for change alongside the revolutionary activities sweeping North Africa, and the ongoing climate crisis discussions, it becomes necessary to conclude this work with some recommendations.

One point that is emphasized throughout this work is the absurdity of war and the need to avert conflicts. Fortunately, there have not been any full-blown wars since the end of the Nigerian civil war; however, various conflicts in Nigeria and Africa speak to the need for a people-based leadership whose mission is the welfare of the people. Already, the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt signal the need for change, and the 2011 elections in Nigeria and those of other African countries provide ample opportunities for the people to elect pragmatic leaders that will serve the interests of the masses. Such leadership can also be trusted to reduce conflicts to the barest minimum.

Also, the violation of the fundamental human rights of women and children during African conflicts is another issue that needs to be addressed by governments, non-governmental organizations, policy makers, and other interested parties. Civil war

violence ought to be restricted to combatant soldiers, and so, there is need to eradicate rape and other forms of abuse suffered by women. As the novels demonstrate, Ndudi, Anulika, and the other female victims do not participate in warfare and so should be spared the agony of abuse. Likewise, the abuse of children, that the use of child soldiers represents, is another unfortunate feature of the Nigerian civil war and other African conflicts that need to be addressed. African leaders and diplomats should condemn the act of subjecting the young to violence, especially, because of the negative imprint that it leaves on the mind of the young. Instead, adult soldiers should be employed wherever and whenever conflicts become inevitable.

Finally, there is need for more environmental sustainable practices among Nigerians and Africans, and the need for more interdisciplinary study of the environment in African literature. The need to reduce global warming and avert further climate crisis suggests that people utilize more environmental sustainable practices. African governments can entrench such practices by enacting environmental-friendly legislations to support green living. Environmental issues can also be incorporated into the core curriculum of elementary and high schools to encourage the students to imbibe positive environmental ethics early in their lives. Similarly, creative writers and critics of African literature need to take a further step by focusing more on environmental issues in their work. By producing more works and research that incorporate ecological issues, African writers and critics would be heeding William Slaymaker's call on black writers to accept the echo of the global green crusade. As the present study shows, it is possible to examine ecological issues without neglecting the peculiarities of developing African societies, including Nigeria.

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