

Chapter 27

The Fate of Nigerian Women in Armed Conflict Situations: An Appraisal of Adichie and Agbasimalo's Novels

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ABSTRACT

*Armed conflicts in many parts of the globe have a major detrimental influence on many aspects of life, particularly in the affected areas. The destiny of women in armed conflict scenarios, as well as their survival techniques, was investigated in this research. The chapter employed feminist and psychoanalytical theories to examine the unpleasant experiences of women in conflict zones by analyzing two female novels, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Adichie and *Forest Dames* by Adaokere Agbasimalo. It revealed that the armed conflict had far-reaching and terrible consequences for women and children. The study, therefore, recommends that women are better positioned to write about their life experiences that leave an everlasting mark.*

INTRODUCTION

Literature has evolved into a critical instrument for comprehending and interpreting elements of our evolving society and experiences. These experiences are communicated through media and this can be printed or online. Therefore, literature and media are two sides of the same coin. Hence, literary writing is the writer's soul expressed for the consumption of his audience. The writer, as a speaker, must exhibit an attitude while speaking to other men. He designates, protests, resists, persuades, insinuates, and appeals to the masses. The thoughts he expresses reflect his message to his audience. As a result, there is no better place to seek and comprehend people's reactions to their situations than in the works of their writers. These writers' works especially the novel have three phases of development in African history.

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Palmer (1979) stated that the last of the three phases was the period of post-independence, largely one of re-adjustment in an attempt to rediscover lost values. This phase showed the development of the new political class that was incapable of facing the challenges of nation building and providing moral and civic leadership. This political setup broke down as a result of instability orchestrated by coups and counter-coups with major violence (Obiechina, 1993). The crises later led to the roots of the greatest armed conflict in Nigerian history – The Nigerian Civil War.

The Nigerian Civil War/armed conflict of 1967-1970 formally began on July 6, 1967, when the Eastern Provinces (Biafra) declared their independence and Nigeria launched a relentless military effort to re-establish their independence. Millions of Biafrans were uprooted, malnourished, raped, slain, and pushed to the brink of human agony during this time. Even though the combat officially ended on January 12th, 1970, little attention has been devoted to resolving the war's deep social, political, and psychological wounds (Ademoyega, 1981; Forsyth, 1977; Effiong 2000). The hardship unleashed by the armed conflict brought new inspiration to the writing on war themes. As a result, some committed writers have taken it as their responsibility to confront the 'traumatic conflict' (Jones, 1996). It was revealed that the majority of works on armed conflict are dominated by male voices but now as Ogbazi (2012) averred that women's voices must be heard on crucial historical and national issues; that their voices must complement those of men for any story to be holistic. They have also chosen to convey their ideas from a female perspective, being visible rather than invisible by presenting their narratives. Through their literary output, female authors embrace and participate in the battle for the restoration of an ideal society with social and economic equality. This they achieved by writing about the immense damage and suffering endured by the people throughout the conflict and painting a bleak image of Biafra elites and businessmen/women who abandoned their jobs, families, possessions, and future endeavors to carry out the Civil War. This paper explores the fate of Nigerian women in armed conflict situations using Adichie and Agbasimalo's novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Forest Dames* respectively. They have expressed their feelings from the female stance and their works were assessed to see how effectively they have recreated women's experiences in an armed conflict situation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is based on the theoretical frameworks of Feminism and Psychoanalysis to provide a more accurate assessment of the impacts of the conflict from a female perspective. The feminist theory seeks to analyze gender inequality and is primarily concerned with gender politics, power relations, and sexuality. It criticizes these societal and political reactions and focuses on the advancement of women's rights and interests (Beauvoir, 1949/2009; Hooks, 1994; Friedan, 1963; Walker, 1983). In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft, a philosophical feminist, published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which advocated for female equality, particularly in education. Wollstonecraft rejected the cultivation of conventional feminine characteristics like submission and service, arguing that women could not be competent mothers, spouses, and household administrators unless they were well educated. The book is broken into thirteen chapters in which Wollstonecraft addressed issues such as the significance of educating women equally, treating women with respect, and giving women the necessary training to be decent wives, mothers, and intellectual companions to their husbands.

In general, feminists' critiques investigate how literature promotes or destroys women's economic, political, social, and psychological oppression (Beauvoir, 1949/2009; Showalter, 1977/1999). Their

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