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Declaration of authenticity

I hereby declare that this thesis and the work reported herein was composed by and originated entirely from me. Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and references are given in the bibliography.

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1. Introduction

Between 1967 and 1970 a civil war between Biafra and the Federal Military Government (Falola and Heaton xvi-xvii) that cost the lives of 1 to 3 million Nigerians (Obichiena in Kalu x) split Nigeria. The Nigerian Civil War has become a major theme in Nigerian literature. It has influenced authors who witnessed the war and it continues to be addressed in contemporary literature written by second, third or fourth generation authors (Nwakanma 4). To indicate the size of the body of Nigerian Civil War literature, McLuckie's preliminary checklist can be considered in which he cites about 60 fictional texts including poems, drama, novels and short stories (511-513). It is the aim of this thesis to examine the similarities and differences of fictional texts that treat the topic of the Nigerian Civil War.

Early literary criticism that contributes to this field of interest includes studies by Emenyonu (1973), Feuser (1975) or Amuta (1983). Among the publications that followed are *A Harvest from Tragedy: Critical Perspectives on Nigerian Civil War Literature* (1997) which features studies by McLuckie or Ezeigbo, and Bryce (1991) and Harrow (1998). More recent literary criticism has been produced by Adams (2001), Akingbe (2012) and Akpome (2013), for instance. In this field of literature, authors, such as Achebe or Ekwensi, are praised as "pioneers in post-war Igbo literary activities" (Emenyonu 49) and many critical studies exist on their work. However, as the body of Nigerian literature continues to grow and more and more texts that address the war are being written, there appears to be a lack of comparative studies that deal with early as well as recent Nigerian Civil War fiction.

It is the purpose of this thesis to fill this gap in Nigerian literary criticism through a discussion of texts by the widely studied authors Achebe, Emecheta and Adichie, and Kalu and Abani whose contributions to Nigerian Civil War fiction have not yet been treated in much detail. The texts that will be taken into consideration are Chinua Achebe's "Civil Peace", "Sugar Baby" and "Girls at War" which are featured in *Girls at War and Other Stories* (1972, 1973), Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* (1982), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) by Chimamanda Adichie, all stories with the exception of "Independence" included in Anthonia Kalu's collection *Broken Lives and Other Stories* (2003), and *Song for Night* (2007) by Chris Abani. These narratives will be analysed with regard to their thematic emphases. Due to the limited scope of this thesis, the number of authors discussed had to be reduced to five, and the focus will be set on fictional works only. By means of a close reading, then, similarities and differences of these fictional texts will be highlighted with the aim to point out whether recent publications on the war differ from early writings, thus creating a contribution to the existing body of Nigerian literary criticism.

The following chapter will provide the historical background vital in the understanding of the works of fiction treated in this thesis. Next, the portrayal of tribes will be examined, followed by a chapter dealing with foreign influences in Nigeria. The remaining two sections will illustrate the presentation of Biafra in the texts as well as the depiction of different situations of people at war.

2. Historical Background

This overview of the events that led to and defined the Nigerian Civil War does not strive to give a complete account of all issues concerning the war. The Nigerian Civil War involves very complex matters, such as internal and foreign politics, the role of humanitarian aid organisations or economic relations, which cannot be accounted for in detail here due to the limited scope of this thesis. This section will merely provide the historical background which might be helpful in understanding the works of fiction discussed in the following chapters.

Nigeria is a country of great ethnic diversity. The three major ethnic groups in Nigeria are the Hausa in the North, the Yoruba in the West and the Igbo in the East, but there are numerous other fairly large tribes such as the Fulani or the Ijaw (Falola and Heaton 4). In Nigeria, more than 250 indigenous languages exist, but since 1960 English has been the official language (Falola and Heaton 4). With regard to religion, most Nigerians either belong to the Muslim or the Christian faith (Falola and Heaton 4). Christianity was first introduced by Christian missionaries in the 19th century (Falola and Heaton 5). In the late 19th and early 20th century, Nigeria was colonised by the British and its present-day borders were created in 1914 (Falola and Heaton 6-7). Nigeria gained independence from the UK in 1960 with Tafawa Balewa as its Prime Minister (Falola and Heaton 156). The country's future seemed promising due to the discovery of petroleum in the region of the Niger delta, but the country also faced a number of problematic issues overshadowing the good economic prospects (Falola and Heaton 158).

These problems can be traced back to several factors. First, the region of what is now known as the country of Nigeria, was carved out by the British in 1914 during their colonial administration of Nigeria (Falola and Heaton 158). The indigenous people however, were not greatly affected by the creation of the borders of Nigeria in the sense that their lives remained "centered on local communities that had existed for hundreds and thousands of years" (Falola and Heaton 158). By the 1950s, the idea of a unified national identity had still not infiltrated most people's consciousness and it was not promoted on a constitutional level either, for access to nationwide power could only be achieved through having power in the respective regions. Thus, the three major ethnic groups came into power in their respective regions and then campaigned for power at the federal level. But minority groups were often dissatisfied with the domination of these large ethnic groups, which

contributed to the difficulty the country faced in achieving national unity (Falola and Heaton 159).

In the 1960s then, the question of national identity was more prominent than ever (Falola and Heaton 158). However, the call for unity could now also be felt in Nigeria's culture, as explained by Falola and Heaton: "Artists, writers, scholars and politicians developed many different conceptions of what aesthetics and values best characterized Nigeria, but all were clearly concerned with promoting and analyzing Nigeria's unique traditions and history, and in this way illustrated their desire to forge a stronger national identity" (160).

Another problematic issue the, now independent, Republic of Nigeria faced was building a government. Between 1960 and 1966, Nigeria's political world was largely defined by corruption, which stemmed from a hostility between the North and the South. Each region feared that the other region could dominate the country and thus benefit from economic resources, such as petroleum (Falola and Heaton 165). "These fears clouded any sense of national unity in Nigeria in the 1960s" (Falola and Heaton 165). The 1958 coalition between the "Northern People's Congress" (NPC) and the southern-based "National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons" (NCNC) constructed a government in which the NPC changed military quota systems that would make sure that 50% of the recruits came from the North regardless of their qualifications, and diverted funds to projects in the North, for example (Falola and Heaton 166). In 1962, a parliamentary crisis followed, caused by quarrels between the new and the former premier of the western region. The Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa, was forced to declare a state of emergency.

Another example of the corrupt procedures by Nigeria's politicians is the manipulation of the 1962 census figures by the southern government in order to gain more seats in the House of Representatives (Falola and Heaton 168). The next census in turn saw a manipulation by the northern leadership. In 1964, the federal elections were equally dominated by corruption from all political sides. The two major parties were now the "Nigerian National Alliance" (NNA), which was an alliance between NPC and NNDP, and the "United Progressive Grand Alliance" (UPGA) (Falola and Heaton 168-169). Among other incidences of corruption, the pre-election time involved the NNA's prevention of campaigning and the arrest of UPGA supporters (Falola and Heaton 169). Moreover, although the UPGA party, which could not nominate all its candidates, managed to boycott the election in the East, it failed to do so in the North and the West, and so an election marked by corruption and violence was carried out, declaring the NNA as the winner. With the Western Region election in 1965, the country experienced another case of a "federal debacle" (Falola and Heaton 171) which prompted street protests against the NNDP that had

declared itself winner of the election. The protests of UPGA supporters then escalated in clashes with the police (Falola and Heaton 171). Additionally, the cocoa price was reduced by the NNDP after the election, which further fuelled public anger, resulting in a peasant revolt that together with the protests against the NNDP caused an emergency situation in the western region (Post and Vickers referred to in Falola and Heaton 172). As Falola and Heaton have emphasised, “The Western Region was out of control, bitter over yet another failure of the First Republic to provide democratic governance” (172).

On January 15, 1966, the government was overthrown by members of the military. This military coup was carried out by Nzeogwu, Ifeajuna, Okafor, Anuforo and Ademoyega, who killed the Prime Minister, Balewa, and the two premiers of the Northern and Western region (Falola and Heaton 172). Furthermore, regional premiers were arrested and military officers of the North killed, which was supposed “to bring an end to the tribalism and corruption that had characterized the First Republic” (Falola and Heaton 172).

The coup brought the commanding army officer, Major General Ironsi, to power who assigned five military governors to each of the country’s regions and the city of Lagos. (Smith 68). In the East, power was given to Lieutenant Colonel Ojukwu (Falola and Heaton 173). The coup was received positively at first, especially by southerners, since it put an end to the corruption practiced by political parties affiliated with the North (Falola and Heaton 173). In contrast, northerners considered the military intervention to be an action carried out in favour of the Igbo people (Smith 68). Suspicion arose among northerners that Ironsi “was part of an Igbo conspiracy” (Falola and Heaton 173). The doubts and accusations surrounding Ironsi eventually led to his death in July 1966, when northern army members revolted and murdered him (Smith 68). The leader of the East, Ojukwu, however stayed in power. Three days after the killing of Ironsi, Lieutenant Colonel Gowon was selected as “supreme commander of the armed forces and the new head of state” (Falola and Heaton 174). In the wake of this “counter-coup”, hostilities among the tribes of Nigeria grew. Especially the Igbo people living in the North experienced violence, which escalated in a series of massacres in the fall of 1966. The number of casualties of these massacres, however, differs depending on the source. Smith points out that it can be speculated that in September 1966, 30,000 Igbos who lived in the North were killed (68), while Falola and Heaton claim that this “spate of massacres, many conducted by northern soldiers, took the lives of between 80,000 and 100,000 easterners during this period, the worst occurring in September” (174). Falola and Heaton further explain that revenge killings of northerners living in the East followed and that people were pressed by Ojukwu to return to their homeland to avoid more tribal violence (174). Ojukwu was already

considering a secession of the eastern region at that time, but the Federal Military Government (FMG), led by Gowon, did not approve of this idea (Falola and Heaton 174). A conference that took place in January 1967 in order to settle matters between the two leaders, only led to varying interpretations of the outcome. While Gowon felt positive that the unity of the country was saved, Ojukwu believed that the agreement granted him more control of the East and even the right to break away (Falola and Heaton 174-175). When, in March 1967, Ojukwu declared an independent administration of the East, a blockade of the East followed and economic sanctions were imposed by Gowon (Falola and Heaton 175).

Eventually, the problematic relation between the East and the FMG led to Ojukwu's declaration of secession of the East on May 30, 1967 (Smith 68). The East was then renamed the "Independent Republic of Biafra" by Ojukwu (Falola and Heaton 175). The FMG however, had several reasons to oppose the breakaway of the East. First, Nigerian unity was still considered a general goal worth preserving. Next, by allowing the East to secede, any minority tribe in Nigeria could be animated to follow this example and last, the eastern region was home to 67 percent of Nigeria's petroleum reserves and thus profitable economic resources would have been lost (Falola and Heaton 175). The events that followed the secession of Biafra then are known as the Nigerian Civil War or the Biafra War which lasted until January 12, 1970 (Falola and Heaton 175). The initial reaction of the FMG was a declaration of a state of emergency in Nigeria. Its leader, Gowon, further divided the country into twelve states, which should placate "minority groups across the country that had been clamoring for new states since before independence" (Falola and Heaton 176). The FMG continued blockading the East, which complicated Biafra's imports and exports of goods, but Gowon permitted relief good shipments (Fayola and Heaton 176). In the first months of the war, the mid-western region was invaded by Biafran troops. Nevertheless, they were soon forced to withdraw due to the successful counter attacks of the Nigerian army (Smith 68).

In general, this two and a half-year conflict was defined by Gowon's strategy of isolation (Falola and Heaton 175). In 1968, the Nigerian currency was changed, which made it difficult for Biafra to fund the war with the Nigerian money they had. In addition, high inflation made food unaffordable for Biafrans (Falola and Heaton 176). The FMG soon captured Biafra's first capital, Enugu, and the borders of Biafra were shrinking further. The most problematic issue in what remained of Biafra was the lack of food supplies, and when in May 1968, Port Harcourt was taken over by federal forces the last remaining connection from Biafra to the outside world was shut down (Smith 68).

In 1968, people across Europe increasingly protested about Biafra in public, calling for

political action (Smith 70). The voices of protest grew loud especially in the Scandinavian countries, France, West-Germany, Italy and Ireland. France, the Netherlands and Belgium declared an arms embargo in 1968 (Smith 70). The following years of the Nigerian Civil War were characterised by civilian casualties and starvation, which made the war a very controversial topic in European and African media. Not only many renowned journalists from different newspapers covered the war, but also major television channels documented it, bringing “images of starving children and bomb-shattered noncombatants into the living rooms of prime-time television viewers in distant parts of the world” (Obiechina in Kalu x). The deaths of Igbo civilians and the lack of food that caused many to starve to death prompted “widespread public concern in Europe” (Smith 68).

Within the war, the government of Biafra is often said to have operated a propaganda machine that helped to incite public concern. “Biafrans claimed throughout the war that the ultimate goal of the federal government was the ‘genocide’ of the Igbo people” (Falola and Heaton 175). British newspapers, for example, made use of these accusations and compared the FMG’s actions to the Holocaust (Smith 69). Furthermore, Biafra’s leadership skilfully worked with the fact that the media accused the FMG of genocide in order to receive recognition from other countries. However, only few countries recognised Biafra, among which were Gabon, Ivory Coast, Tanzania, Zambia and Haiti (Smith 69). Ojukwu openly referred to the massacres of 1966 as genocide and compared Gowon to Hitler in a speech to the Organisation of African Unity, which is seen as “a clear attempt to garner diplomatic support” by Smith (69). Smith further addresses the reaction of British Prime Minister Harold Wilson to Biafra’s propaganda. Wilson sharply criticised Biafran propaganda for it “flooded the Western press and Western legislatures with literature, and secured a degree of moral control over Western broadcasting systems, with a success unparalleled in the history of communications in modern democratic societies” (quoted in Smith 70). It is indicated that Wilson’s reaction was prompted by the criticism directed at the British government for supplying the federal side with arms (67).

The level of international involvement in the Nigerian Civil War was high. Humanitarian aid was provided by organisations, such as the International Red Cross or the Catholic Church (Falola and Heaton 178). Moreover, the medical organisation Médecins Sans Frontières was founded as a result of the war and Africa Concern was launched (Smith 67). During the war, both sides received sympathy and material support. While some countries expressed sympathy for Biafra, others stood behind the FMG’s policy against secession. France, for example overtly supported Biafra and showed sympathy, which can be inferred from an opinion poll showing that Biafra was the public

concern number one (Stremlau quoted in Smith 70-71). France thus supplied Biafra with military equipment, which Smith refers to as an “open secret” (71) for France stated that it did not provide arms for the Biafran military. Although this nation supported Biafra materially, its continuing import of Nigerian goods ensured financial support of the federal side (Stremlau quoted in Smith 71). With the exception of France, Portugal was the only other European country that supplied Biafra with arms (Smith 71). Despite the material support or the sympathies for Biafra, no European country recognised the Biafran republic (Smith 71). In general, many countries tended to support the idea of Nigerian unity. Eastern European countries, like Poland, opposed secessionism strongly (Smith 71). Moreover, the USSR supplied the federal side with arms and advisers (Falola and Heaton 178) and it seemed as if “[n]o government was prepared to jeopardise good relations with the Nigerian government, most of Africa, and the British government” (Smith 72).

Among the greatest material supporters of the federal side was the UK. The British government’s policy towards Nigeria, a member of the Commonwealth, was to assist in the prevention of secession. In the wake of the public protests across Europe concerning Biafra however, the UK was heavily criticised for its support of the federal side. The British government then made several justifications for its policy during the war. First, the UK claimed that the export of arms to Nigeria simply continued traditionally with a 15 % export rate. However, figures released by the Nigerian government chronicled an increase in arms import reaching 97,36 % in 1969 (Cronje cited in Smith 72). Second, supporting the FMG guaranteed the British government the protection of economic interests, such as Shell-BP investments in Nigeria (Smith 72). Thus, the federal Nigerian government and the UK had similar reasons for fighting secession. As mentioned earlier, the majority of Nigerian oil reserves were located in the eastern region that seceded under Ojukwu. The federation did not want to lose its lucrative resources to Biafra and similarly, the British government wanted to continue its oil trade with Nigeria. Moreover, the UK claimed that the FMG had to be helped fighting the breakaway of Biafra, as an ex-colony and a member of the Commonwealth (Smith 72). Lastly, Smith explains that in the eyes of the British government, Nigeria was regarded as “potentially a major power in Africa” (72) and therefore secession could not be tolerated since it would weaken the federation. Another reason for the British policy during the war is probably the protection of its influential position in Nigeria. If the secession of Biafra had been permitted, France and its allies that supported Biafra could have become an influential force in the republic and moreover, a trading partner in Biafran oil production (Smith 72). Furthermore, the UK justified its actions by claiming that the support of secession based on tribal matters could result in secessions occurring all over Africa (Smith 73). These justifications made it possible for the

UK's material support of the FMG to be continued, but the public accusations of genocide against the FMG and Britain as its supporter remained despite the British government's efforts to deny them (Smith 73).

In August 1968, a "final push" was planned by the FMG to finally win the war (Smith 73). The announcement of this final attack caused even more public alarm, especially in the UK. A demonstration on Trafalgar Square took place on August 27, 1968, and Biafran students marched down Downing Street lighting a large bonfire with petrol (Smith 73). The pressure on the British government thus increased considerably. Due to this public outcry at the announcement of the "final push", discussions about creating "a Commonwealth peacekeeping or peace force" (Smith 74) resurfaced. These discussions had already begun in 1967 but the idea of a peace force had not been put to practice yet. Smith explains that Nigeria eventually agreed that "Igbos needed reassurances of their safety if they were to surrender, but it was hostile to the idea of a peacekeeping force" (75). However, since the British government was under a lot of strain because of public accusations, the pressure it exercised on Nigeria grew likewise. The UK advised Nigeria to oppose Biafran propaganda by allowing observers to objectively inspect the situation and report it to the public, otherwise the UK would be compelled to change its current policy concerning the arms sale (Smith 75). Shortly after the events of August 27, 1968, Nigeria declared the establishment of the International Observer Team, formally inviting the UK, Canada, the OAU, Poland, Sweden and the UN Secretary-General to participate (Smith 76). One observer from each country or organisation with one assistant each would be allowed to visit the war areas and those controlled by the FMG in order to rid Nigeria of its accusations of genocide (Smith 76). The International Observer Team carried out its work between September 1968 and January 1970 and its first and subsequent reports stated that no evidence of genocide was found in Nigeria (Smith 77)¹. With accusations of genocide thus largely refuted, the British government carried on assisting the FMG (Smith 78). However, the approaching end of the war carried new public accusations of genocide with it. In January 1970, Biafra was finally defeated by federal troops and its leader, Ojukwu, took flight to Ivory Coast. On January 12, 1970, Major General Effiong announced Biafra's surrender to Gowon (Falola and Heaton 178).

In the Nigerian Civil War 1 to 3 million Nigerians lost their lives, many of which died of starvation (Obiechina in Kalu x). Many of the problems the country faced in the early half of the 1960s were still present after the war. The national question continued to trouble Nigeria, but it began immediate "reintegration and reconciliation, buoyed by a rapid and enormous growth in

¹ For detailed references of the reports mentioned, see Smith 77-78.

petroleum production in the 1970s” (Falola and Heaton 180).

3. The Portrayal of Tribes

Among the complex issues concerning the Nigerian Civil War lies a conflict between Nigeria’s tribes. In Nigerian Civil War fiction, the depth of this conflict is explored to a greater or lesser extent by the different authors. Not only the display of the respective tribes, but also tribal traditions and beliefs seem a central topic in some of the narratives. The texts give an insight into rural and urban life in Nigeria in the time before, during and in the aftermath of the war. Nigeria is home to numerous tribes, but the majority of the main characters in the texts have an Igbo background and the focus on Igbo culture is very strong, perhaps because of the emphasis on characters inside Biafra. Ugochukwu remarks that “[t]he blockade imposed on the secessionist region, the relative peace enjoyed by the rest of the Federation throughout the conflict, and the heavy restrictions and distortions affecting information filtering out of Biafra at the time, partly explain why authors of this literature are mostly Igbo insiders” (254). Nevertheless, other tribes, especially the Hausa, are also represented in Nigerian Civil War fiction. The picture of Igbo, Hausa or Yoruba people living in Nigeria is either created by the instalment of characters from the respective tribe, or by the attitudes towards the different tribes as conveyed by the narrative. Considering the five selected texts, it is interesting to analyse the significance of tribal traditions, beliefs or values in the time of war. Moreover, a major theme in most of the texts is the tribal conflict between Hausa and Igbo people that preceded the breakaway of the Eastern region. The following sections will explore the representation of the different tribes and the display of their culture in the context of the Nigerian Civil War, and it will be discussed how the tribal conflict is treated within the narratives.

3.1. Tribal Representation

The majority of characters in the narratives belong to the Igbo tribe and therefore several references to Igbo culture are given. One receives a glimpse of life in a traditional Igbo community in the works of Adichie, Kalu and Abani. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, for example, Ugwu, a thirteen-year-old Igbo houseboy, functions as one of the main characters of the novel. He is also one of the focalisers of the third person narrative. The boy has grown up in Opi, an Igbo village, and his aunt manages to find work for him in Nsukka, as a houseboy for Odenigbo, a university professor. Ugwu’s arrival in the city brings out the contrasts between rural and urban life in Eastern Nigeria. For example, the cement walls of Odenigbo’s house are different from the mud walls and thatch roofs Ugwu was used to in the village. His aunt promises him that he will be able to eat meat every day but Ugwu

cannot imagine that anybody actually does. The “alien furniture” (Adichie 5), the fridge and the sink with running water contribute to Ugwu’s awe and delight of life in a modern household. The boy’s limited knowledge of an urban lifestyle often creates humorous observations, such as “He was wearing something that looked like a woman’s coat” (Adichie 9), when he encounters Odenigbo in a bathrobe.

As the narrative unfolds, Ugwu often remembers his family and life in the village. He makes references to Igbo tales or superstitions he has been told. For example, whenever something goes wrong Ugwu is convinced that evil spirits are the cause. Ugwu irons Odenigbo’s socks and when they stick to the iron he believes that spirits want to do him harm. His memory of his family members and their Igbo beliefs often permeates the narrative, as in “[w]henever he was ill with the fever, or once when he fell from a tree, his mother would rub his body with *okwuma*, all the while muttering, ‘We shall defeat them, they will not win’” (Adichie 14). In the first encounter with an American professor whose eyes are green, Ugwu is frightened “because he had always imagined that only evil spirits had grass-coloured eyes” (Adichie 18). *Half of a Yellow Sun* presents other Igbo characters, like Odenigbo’s mother, who firmly stick to their traditional values and beliefs. The mother is convinced that Olanna is a witch and considers her abnormal because she was not breastfed by her biological mother. The village woman has firm attitudes towards different kinds of women and is against the couple’s marriage because she thinks that too much education “gives a woman a big head and she will start to insult her husband” (Adichie 99). Adichie’s novel predominantly features references to Igbo culture. Akpome mentions examples, such as “Richard’s romanticization of Igbo-Ukwu and the copious use of Igbo words/expressions” (33). Arguing along the lines of Akpome, it can be said that Adichie’s novel “is permeated by undertones of a definitely Igbo perspective on the war” (33).

Broken Lives and other Stories by Kalu also pictures different elements of Igbo culture. The story “Ogbanje Father”, for example, is filled with references to the Igbo people’s belief in spirits. To explain this further, it should be pointed out that Igbo people believe in the duality of things (Chilembwe 222). Hence, a person, as a physical being, always has a “spiritual other” (Chilembwe 222) accompanying them which is known as *chi* in Igbo culture. Chilembwe further explains that “*chi* is the spiritual side of man that par-takes [sic], in some way, of the nature of God and works with its other, physical worldly nature to bring about the fulfillment of a person’s *aka*, or destiny” (222). In “Ogbanje Father”, Akuma has witnessed all his children die before they reached the age of seven. These circumstances lead the people in his community to believe that his children are spirit-children “who, in keeping with promises made to their age-mates in the other world, could

come only as sightseers, tourists to the world of the living” (Kalu 125). One of Akuma’s wives convinces him to see the leader of the church she has joined who claims to be able to help Akuma. When Akuma tells his father’s grandmother about going to church in order to be able to keep his children, she reminds him that it is not his decision to make but his *chi*’s, sounding “like one of those spirits said to inhabit masquerades” (Kalu 133). Yet, the father seems desperate and seeks the leader even though he is afraid of what might happen to his *chi* if the leader tried “to cast out the evil thing” (Kalu 127). He falls for the self-appointed church leader’s tricks because he is afraid of losing any more children. It turns out, however, that the leader is involved in a land-dispute case between his and Akuma’s people.

Furthermore, Kalu’s story “Camwood” captures the importance of maintaining traditions within a community. The story is set during the war and the main character is a seventeen-year-old girl, called Ulomma, who lives with her aunt. The girl’s aunt, who later turns out to be her mother, is preparing her for marriage and takes her out of school because she can no longer afford to pay the fees. This decision upsets Ulomma because she enjoyed school and wanted to continue being educated. Nevertheless, the war disrupts the girl’s plans and future dreams. Her aunt is determined to prepare Ulomma for marriage since she fears something might happen to her before Ulomma is married, in which case the girl would not have anybody to protect her. In this Igbo community, girls perform certain rituals that are part of their “initiation into womanhood” (Kalu 73). During this period they are known as *nzuzu* girls. Kalu includes a glossary explaining *nzuzu* as the “period for training and rest for girls who are about to get married” (183). Within their houses they are moved to single rooms and learn to adopt “soon-to-be-women attitudes” (Kalu 72). Ulomma is frequently visited by relatives or friends who tell her stories about families and their histories, and she quickly learns the history of her village. Moreover, the teenage girl is taught the significance of becoming a woman and how to start one’s own business. Thus, instead of attending school where Ulomma would receive Western education, traditional knowledge is imparted by the women who visit her. One of the traditions carried out by *nzuzu* girls is indicated by the story’s title. It is explained how the girls grind camwood into a smooth powder, which is then used for the dying of *lappas* or to make skin lotions. The *nzuzu* girls have a list of family and age group members to whom they have to carry water gifts during this episode of their lives. In Kalu’s story, the *nzuzu* rituals seem to form the traditional way of preparing girls for marriage “in Akasi’s nineteen villages” (72). Whether this particular tradition is community-specific or practiced across Nigeria remains unclear, but what is interesting for the purpose of this thesis is that Kalu shows how ordinary people uphold their culture’s traditions even though, or rather because, their country is at war and their future prospects

are dimmed by uncertainty. This importance of traditions and beliefs can also be observed in Adichie's novel. Olanna, for example, does not believe in spirits at all. But once her search for her sister Kainene has become more and more hopeless, she consults a *dibia* to foretell the time of Kainene's return. Despair leads her to turn to her tribe's traditional practices.

Another text that explores Igbo beliefs is Abani's *Song for Night*. Its plot is based entirely on Igbo folklore and the narrative also captures the afore-mentioned Igbo belief in a spirit world. My Luck, the narrator, is a teenage soldier who has died in a mine explosion. He is not aware of his death and wanders around, looking for his fellow soldiers. In the text, the boy frequently makes remarks, describing spirits and the spirit world, that could actually be applied to his own condition. He explains, for example, that "when a person dies in a sudden and hard way, their spirit wanders confused looking for its body. Confused because they don't realize they are dead" (Abani 101), or "an explosion blows the spirit miles away from its body. Imagine how confusing that is" (Abani 103-104). My Luck believes in the spirit world and seems to know much about it. Yet, he fails to relate this knowledge to his own situation, until he is united with his deceased family in the spirit world. Although My Luck's father educated him in the Muslim faith, the boy was strongly influenced by his Igbo grandfather, who used to tell him Igbo tales. Throughout the narrative the young soldier recounts these Igbo stories and his dreams are filled with elements of them. One day, he comes across what looks like a battlefield and he sees spirits fighting each other. The sight confuses and scares the lonely boy. One spirit soldier approaches My Luck and then dissolves again and, sympathetic for the spirit's misery, he remembers that "[t]raditionally a shaman would ease such a spirit across to the other world. Now, well, the land is crowded with confused spirits and all the shamans are soldiers" (Abani 101). Another part of Igbo culture which is emphasised in the narrative is a legend concerning a lake. My Luck's grandfather often told him about the legend of the lake and said that "[t]his is the oldest truth of our people. This is the oldest lie" (Abani 62), perhaps indicating that it is an integral part of the Igbo worldview, but at the same time merely a tale passed on for generations. The grandfather further explained that "[i]t is real because it is a tall tale. This lake is the heart of our people. This lake is love. If you find it, and find the pillar, you can climb it into the very heart of God" (Abani 65). In *Song for Night*, the legend of the lake describes the creation of men as follows: Amadioha first created man and woman but their lust for power made his creation flawed and thus God "sent down its essence" (Abani 64) which descended to "a dark lake in the center of the earth" (Abani 64). The lake "is the repository of human souls who are yet to gain access into the world: a source of great power for any *dibia* who enters there. Legend says that the fish in the lake guard the souls, swallowed deep in their bellies" (Abani 65). The tale

becomes more and more significant to My Luck's existence in the course of the narrative. He wonders whose soul he is consuming when he eats fish, and one of the roads he finds himself on "looks like it might lead to the underworld" (Abani 80). On the whole, not only numerous references to this legend but also other passages concerning the beliefs and superstitions of My Luck's people flow into this narrative. Among all texts selected, Abani's work is perhaps the one exploring in most detail Igbo folklore in the context of the Nigerian Civil War.

Unlike the main characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, "Ogbanje Father", "Camwood" and *Song for Night*, who are Igbo, the central character in *Destination Biafra* belongs to a minority tribe, called Itsekiri. Debbie believes in the idea of "One Nigeria" and fights for a unified nation. Her decision to join the army leads her to take part in the harassment of Igbo soldiers which happens before the war. Throughout the narrative, however, Debbie becomes more closely involved with Igbo people and thus an Igbo perspective is also conveyed. In general, the novel depicts the struggle of Igbo people before and during the Civil War. The text shows a great variety of characters with different social and political backgrounds, and aside from its political implications which will be discussed later, it provides an insight into the role of women in Igbo communities, for example. Emecheta describes the situation of Igbo refugees, mostly women and children who are trying to return to their homeland or fleeing from the war front. When Debbie goes on her mission to persuade Abosi, the Biafran leader, into surrendering, she finds herself in the company of these Igbo refugees. At some point Debbie starts carrying the baby of a woman who has died. When the baby dies too because it is too weak to survive the strenuous walk through the bush, Debbie and the other women feel an emotional connection that concerns their womanhood and the Igbo, or in this case African, concept that children belong to the community: "On this issue their common Africanness came to the fore; a child was the child of the community rather than just of the biological parents" (Emecheta 202). Dorothy, another refugee, has given up hope and thinks that the death of the child is symbolic for the death of Biafra. Moreover, the possible loss of her husband and her brothers who are fighting on the front would mean that she would have to take care of her children all by herself and she cannot imagine such a life. Mrs Madako, a mother, slaps Dorothy and confronts her with these accusations: "What type of Igbo woman are you? Which bush community did you come from? What unlucky woman raised you as a daughter? Since when have men helped us look after children? Have you not old people in your cluster of homesteads, to do their job of bringing up the younger ones" (Emecheta 203). Mrs Madako condemns Dorothy's despair and reminds her of the strength of a female community. Besides the political significance of Debbie's mission, she is also confronted with a traditional form of living and traditional values which make

her feel estranged for her behaviour reflects a more modern “anglicised” lifestyle (Debbie’s position as a woman with foreign education in this group of Igbos will be discussed in more detail in chapter four). Concerning the depiction of traditions, it should be noted that *Destination Biafra* presents values that seem traditional but not tribe-specific. These values are then tested in the extreme situation of the war. It is indicated, for example, that in Nigerian culture in general it is elderly people who are most respected. Debbie and the group of refugees witness a cruel attack on civilians by Nigerian soldiers in Asaba, where elderly nuns are also killed. Dorothy’s child gets shot and afterwards she cannot grasp what just happened. She is confused and talks much, “in a vain effort to wash away the sins of the men of her race who wore borrowed army uniforms, promoting an equally borrowed culture. A culture that did not respect the old” (Emecheta 213). The sense of disappointment in one’s own people conveyed here may be indicative of the loss of cultural heritage that the colonial influence of the UK, or Western influence in general, brought with it.

As opposed to *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Broken Lives and other Stories*, *Song for Night* and *Destination Biafra*, Achebe’s short stories “Civil Peace”, “Sugar Baby” and “Girls at War” which address the war, seem not concerned with Igbo traditions as such. Firstly, “Civil Peace” is set in the aftermath of the war. It depicts the life of Jonathan and his family who survived the conflict. The story shows how ordinary people gradually start rebuilding their lives with what little they possess. “Sugar Baby” is also set postwar, but several flashbacks are at the core of the story. Achebe addresses themes, such as greed, the lack of food or wartime trade, and focuses on an urban society. Secondly, “Sugar Baby” does not juxtapose traditional customs and life during war as done by Kalu, for instance, but it rather deals with daily habits or personal “rituals” that cannot be maintained under the conditions the conflict has imposed upon people. Cletus is addicted to sugar and insists on having his sugar and tea daily even though the war has already forced people to live on the scarce quantities of food Biafra receives. The narrator, Mike, describes Cletus’ condition as “a dangerous case of an appetite growing on what it did not feed on” (Achebe 91). Lastly, Achebe’s “Girls at War” focuses on the moral effects of the war and themes like the Biafran ideal, heroism, the lack of food and the change of society during the war. These short stories do not weave community tales, traditions and beliefs into the narrative of the war, as it is done by Adichie, Kalu, Abani and Emecheta. Note that Achebe’s other short stories in *Girls at War and other Stories* include numerous references to Igbo traditions or the spirit world, but since their plot is not set around the Civil War they have been omitted in the analysis conducted for this thesis.

In the selected texts characters belonging to the Igbo tribe seem to be the main focus. It could be assumed that this is because the Igbo people are closely associated with the Eastern region, and

later Biafra, and it is the Biafrans' struggle during the war which forms the core plot of most texts. Nevertheless, Yoruba or Hausa people also receive "a voice" in some of the narratives. Hausa people are mainly encountered in the context of the tribal tensions preceding the war which will be discussed in the following section, while the overall representation of Yoruba people is scarce. Only a few Yoruba characters, like Ms Adebayo in *Half of a Yellow Sun* can be found. The Yoruba woman is one of the intellectuals who meet at Odenigbo's house in Nsukka in the evenings. It should be added that the perspective through which the narrative is told switches from Ugwu to Olanna and to Richard, which makes the presentation of Ms Adebayo subjective. Ugwu dislikes her from the first moment he meets her for she is loud and challenges Odenigbo's attitudes in the philosophical discussions they have. He also resents her for the fact that she seems interested in Odenigbo and pays him much attention. To Olanna, Ms Adebayo appears hostile and arrogant and she feels threatened by her presence. In one of the numerous political discussions of the guests, the Yoruba woman expresses her standpoint on the issue of the secession of Biafra. She is of the opinion that there would have been other ways for the Igbo people to achieve security rather than creating their own republic. Odenigbo criticises her heavily for this statement and accuses her of not having any sympathy for the Igbo people. Odenigbo argues that her Yoruba identity excludes her from the Igbo people's trauma of the North because none of her relatives or friends died in the massacres. Ms Adebayo may not be representative of the entire Yoruba people but what is interesting about her role is that she can be seen as a representative of those who lived on the Nigerian side during the war. This can be inferred from a passage set after the war. Odenigbo, Olanna, Baby and Ugwu have moved back to Nsukka and Ms Adebayo visits them. The Yoruba woman claims she did not know about the crisis in Biafra: "Life went on and women were wearing the latest lace in Lagos. It was not until I went to London for a conference and read a report about the starvation" (Adichie 423). This indicates the lack of knowledge about the severe crisis in Biafra and how little people in the federal part of Nigeria heard about what was happening there.

Emecheta's overall concern with political figures in *Destination Biafra* explains her portrayal of Yoruba politicians rather than civilians. The reader is introduced to Odumosu, leader of the Action Group party, and Durosaro, the assistant party leader. With regard to other references to the Yoruba tribe, *Destination Biafra* shows how Yoruba soldiers are appointed to assassinate the politicians in the Eastern region in the planning of the first coup, and once the war has started the town Ore, located in the Yoruba heartland, is captured by Abosi and his soldiers. Besides the employment of Yoruba characters in these two texts there are hardly any references to Yoruba culture. Achebe mentions the Yoruba trickster God *Esun* in "Sugar Baby" and Abani includes a joke

about the three major tribes. Some indications of prejudice against Nigeria's different tribes can be found in the statements of non-Nigerian characters, which will be discussed later. On the whole, the texts by Adichie, Kalu and Abani foreground an Igbo perspective, while Emecheta offers different perspectives as well. As pointed out earlier Achebe's "Civil Peace", "Sugar Baby" and "Girls at War" lack this strong Igbo focus that permeates the works of Adichie, Kalu and Abani.

3.2. The Treatment of Nigeria's Tribal Conflict

The scarce representation of the Yoruba tribe could be due to the fact that the Yoruba people were not directly involved in the tensions between Igbo and Hausa people which led to the 1966 massacres. The troubles between Hausa and Igbo are at the core of the political crisis in Nigeria and defined the time before the secession of the Eastern region. This episode of Nigerian history is not treated in all of the five texts. Adichie, Emecheta and Abani deal with the tribal troubles, but Kalu and Achebe do not address the conflicts preceding the war. It can be noticed that those authors who include this episode of history have different ways of presenting this issue. While Adichie's characters witness the 1966 massacres, and Emecheta goes into more detail outlining the political chaos of the 1960s, Abani displays the tensions by means of My Luck's memory of his life in the North. It will be explored in this chapter how the authors portray this tribal conflict that represents a central topic in Nigerian history.

First, in Adichie's narrative, a rather detailed image of the conflict between Hausa and Igbo people is painted. Akpome points out that *Half of a Yellow Sun* "relentlessly draws attention to [Nigeria's] tenuous and fragile nature" (34). The tribal tensions are experienced by different characters in this novel. For instance, Olanna travels to Kano, a city in the North, to visit her friend Mohammed and her relatives. The Igbo woman already had to delay her trip because of the chaotic situation ensuing the first military coup. When she arrives in Kano, her Igbo relatives keep laughing about a joke concerning the death of the Sardauna. They do not seem to have any sympathy for those whose "spiritual leader" (Adichie 128) has been killed. Olanna, however, reflects on the situation of the Muslim people and seems to understand their anger at first. Yet, in Lagos, she witnesses how the tribal tensions have started to spread to other parts of Nigeria when she sees an Igbo being beaten up by men who accuse him of being Igbo. Her cousin informs her that she and her people "hear rumours that they have been doing this in Kaduna and Zaria since the coup; they go out in the streets and start to harass Igbo people because they said the coup was an Igbo coup" (Adichie 132). Not only the harassment of Igbo civilians is described but also the killings of Igbo officers, later the killings of Igbo civilians, and the implications of the escalation of these tribal

tensions are illustrated. Madu, an Igbo officer, escapes the massacres in the North and is certain that “Igbo soldiers and Northern soldiers can never live in the same barracks after this” (Adichie 140). On the next trip to Kano, Olanna slowly realises that the situation has become serious when she sees Muslim people calling for Igbos to leave the North. Mohammed takes her to her relatives’ compound to move them out of town, but a cruel sight awaits them there. A group of men with axes and machetes has slaughtered the whole family. One of them calls that “[i]t was Allah’s will!” (Adichie 148) and it becomes clear that the motivation for the massacres is religious. In the context of this tribal conflict, Adichie shows radical Muslims and Northern soldiers, but she also installs characters like Mohammed, who is Muslim but does not agree at all with the harassment of the Igbo people. Furthermore, Richard also becomes a witness of the Igbo massacres when he is at the airport in Kano. In general, Adichie’s novel is concerned with canvassing the ethnic tensions that plagued Nigeria at that time.

In a different way, Emecheta puts into words the Hausa-Igbo conflict that escalated in 1966. As opposed to Adichie’s novel, *Destination Biafra* gives a more detailed introduction to the political chaos that reigned in Nigeria before the outbreak of the war. Emecheta’s first chapters are concerned with the corrupt practices defining the first election of the independent Republic of Nigeria. She sheds light on the policies of the rivaling parties and the influence British diplomats had in the process of the election. The narrative explains how the Hausa infantry forces or bribes people in Lagos to vote, how the Yoruba Action Group party is campaigning intensely, and how Dr. Ozimba, an Igbo, gives food to people in order to gain their sympathies. Nevertheless, it is shown how all parties have to bow to the Hausa-dominated NNP that is declared winner of the election. The first part of Emecheta’s novel is highly political and she gives an insight into the complex political landscape of the 1960s in Nigeria. For instance, the quarrel between two Yoruba politicians of the Western region, which led to the declaration of a state of emergency for the West, is described in all detail. After the first election, Chief Odumosu’s AG is to become the opposition party with Odumosu as its representative in Parliament. However, he is unhappy about the election results and his new position, and asks Durosaro to step down so that he could regain his former position as party leader. What follows is a heavy quarrel between the two Yoruba politicians resulting in clashes between their supporters (Emecheta 49). This is merely one episode of the greater political crisis that ensued. The first part of the novel clearly emphasises the inter-tribal tensions that defined Nigeria at that time and Emecheta often foreshadows the outbreak of the massacres. For example, military members, Momoh and Onyemere “guessed that all was far from well” (Emecheta 34) with regard to the outcome of the election, and Abosi senior feels that “there’s big trouble

looming” (Emecheta 40). Moreover, the background of the first military coup is given much attention. The reader is introduced to the intentions of those planning the overthrow of the government and Emecheta implies the power of the military over others in the passage describing Abosi’s wedding. At the ceremony a lot of wealth is displayed, “[b]ut the ill-paid soldiers and their officers were also watching all this wealth display, and they had what the ordinary people did not have: they had guns” (Emecheta 44). Furthermore, the issue of the discontentment of the Igbo people with the new Hausa-dominated government is broached and the sentiments of all parties involved in the first coup are described in much detail. Igbo demonstrators clash with Muslims in the North, triggering a wave of violence there and police and army have to intervene, “[b]ut the horrible seeds of violence had been sown” (Emecheta 68). The novel then shows how Igbo soldiers and civilians are harassed in the wake of the counter-coup. Apart from the political perspective on the tribal troubles, the Igbo massacres in the North are also presented through the story of Ugoji, a bank clerk in Kano, who witnesses radicals calling for a holy war and hacking “humans to death” (Emecheta 82). The Muslim radicals are killing anyone without tribal marks on their face for they are considered Igbo. Ugoji, who is Igbo too, manages to escape but has to leave his wife behind. He hides in the bush for three weeks and finally gets on a train, where he tells his story to a journalist. *Destination Biafra* thus covers the background of the first military coup and the chaos that followed. On the one hand the reader is introduced to those characters who carry out the coup and other significant political figures, but on the other hand, stories of survivors and their losses are also narrated. Nevertheless, Emecheta’s approach seems much more historical and political in comparison to the other pieces of Nigerian Civil War fiction discussed in this thesis. Morrison emphasises that Emecheta’s narrative “is highly specific in its historical engage-ments [sic] and includes detailed scenes featuring both ordinary Nigerians and powerbrokers, together with explicit mediations on the nature and justice on the Biafran project” (13). In comparison, *Half of a Yellow Sun* seems to be defined much more by its focus on human tragedy, personal struggle and traumatic experiences during the war. Hawley remarks that “one characteristic of *Half of a Yellow Sun* immediately strikes the reader is the strong light that shines on the book’s principal players, rather than on the politics and strategies that shaped the war” (20). Adichie does not appear as concerned as Emecheta to give a full presentation of Nigeria’s political landscape. As Akpome has noted, *Half of a Yellow Sun* does not address the identity of the people behind the first military coup (30) for instance, while Emecheta clearly identifies those behind the coup and gestures towards their motives. In Adichie’s novel, the usual crowd of guests at Odenigbo’s house discuss the accusations that the coup was an Igbo coup but details on this issue remain untold. Hodges has noted that

Adichie's text has a "persuasively and fully realized representation of the real world. What makes that representation persuasive is its human scale" (8). Hodges then compares *Half of a Yellow Sun* to *Destination Biafra* with respect to their approach to significant historical events and facts. Concerning Adichie's novel he argues that

we learn only as much about Nigerian air raids on Umuahia (or the uses of traditional magic in modern Nigeria, or the starvation caused by Nigeria's blockade of Biafra) as we can by observing characters experiencing them. Rarely does Adichie resort to contextualizing historical exposition. This is in sharp contrast to Emecheta's approach in *Destination Biafra*. Emecheta sketches in the historical and political context of an event, for example the massacre of Igbo fleeing Northern Nigeria after Biafran independence, and then stages a scene to illustrate that event. [...] The effect of this approach is to make the individual characters in Emecheta's story insignificant. What really matters are the horror of the statistics - "over two thousand Igbo men died" - and the machinery of national (and international) politics that caused those deaths. (8)

Abani's *Song for Night* also develops an understanding of the tribal conflicts in a rather personal manner, exploring human tragedy rather than political discourse. My Luck's father belonged to the Igbo tribe but moved his family to the North, where he became the local imam and circumciser. My Luck's memory of his father returns when he touches the crosses he cut into his arms, each cross symbolic for the death of someone he loved. He remembers the time with his father "who it was said betrayed his people by becoming a Muslim cleric and moving north to minister; and all this before the hate began" (Abani 29). The narrative displays the situation for Igbo people in the North in a time where the tribal hatred was on the verge of escalating. It is explained how the Northern city is divided. While the old part is built around the Sultan's palace for Fulani people only, the new area is known as "Sabon Garri" or "infidels quarter" (Abani 88), created for the other tribes. My Luck often expresses his fatigue with the war and when he hears a discriminating joke about an Igbo, a Yoruba and a Hausa in a bar he remarks that "Ever since the troubles, and the war, several racist jokes about the enemy have been circulating. This was one of the more famous ones. It is funny, but nonetheless I am tired of all this hate. The joke reminds me of my life in the north before the war" (Abani 83). His recollections of the North reveal his struggle to understand his father's choice to become Muslim. My Luck points out that "[i]t is a terrible thing in this divided nation, even in its infancy, for an Igbo man to be Muslim" (Abani 84). This passage also foreshadows the murder of his father. The imam was despised by many people because of the decision that turned him into "a hybrid" (Abani 84). My Luck is not only confused but also angry about his father's choice to take his family "into the heart of the place that destroyed us" (Abani 102). When the tribal tensions turn into "a frenzy of murder and looting" (Abani 85), the Muslim radicals make people recite sura from the Koran or kill an Igbo person as proof of their non-Igbo identity. This is also the

time when My Luck's mother is murdered. The tribal hatred conveyed in this narrative resembles the descriptions of the massacres in Adichie's and Emecheta's novel to some extent. The young boy escapes these massacres on a train, similar to Olanna in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Ugoji in *Destination Biafra*. He manages to get past mobs by speaking Hausa fluently and singing a Muslim prayer. On the train however, My Luck discovers a gruesome sight: "dead bodies, hundreds of Igbo corpses, the harvest of a few weeks carnage" (Abani 90-91). When the train arrives in Igbo territory, the Fulani train driver is beaten to death by the masses, but My Luck is spared because he is still a child. In Abani's text, the recurring memories of tribal hatred and the massacres in the North show the gravity of these events for those who survived. The recollections of the traumatising situations the young boy experienced permeate his narrative.

To put it in a nutshell, the tribal conflict that preceded the Civil War is a central issue in the texts of Adichie, Emecheta and Abani. Yet, each text has a different way of approaching this topic. While Adichie and Abani rather convey personal, traumatic experiences, Emecheta adds the political side and gives an insight into the minds of those behind the military coups. Kalu and Achebe do not address the tribal tensions of the 1960s in their short stories that deal with the war, perhaps due to the limited scope this format entails.

4. Foreign Influences in Nigeria

The role of foreign powers during the Nigerian Civil War is highly controversial. As pointed out earlier, the UK was openly criticised for its material support of the federal side. It is therefore the aim of this chapter to discuss the position of the UK as described in the narratives and to further analyse the employment of British characters. Moreover, the attitudes towards Western education that prevail in the texts will be discussed and lastly, the role of humanitarian aid organisations will be examined. It should be noted that Emecheta, Adichie, Kalu and Abani all display Western characters or make references to Western education and address relief work. In contrast, Achebe refers to these issues only by means of addressing the work of humanitarian aid organisations.

4.1. The UK and British Characters

In the discussion of the role of the former colonial power, it should be considered that not all texts convey a similarly strong political perspective. The influence the UK continued to have on Nigeria after its independence is clearly interrogated by Emecheta's narrative, but more indirectly addressed by Adichie. It is the purpose of this section to illustrate the policies of the UK towards Nigeria and the war as shown in *Destination Biafra* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

First, as pointed out by Akingbe, Emecheta's novel criticises "[t]he manipulation of the first republic's election in favour of the Hausa-Fulani elements by British colonial authorities" (47). Through the employment of characters like Governor Macdonald, Alan Grey or his father, Sir Fergus, Emecheta shows the UK in an unfavourable light. Sir Fergus is not worried about the manipulation of the first election for he thinks that Nigerians "have no real experience of democracy" (Emecheta 9) and that most of them do not know anything about voting. Moreover, the novel explores the implications of the UK's oil trade with Nigeria. In a discussion between Alan Grey, Sir Fergus and Macdonald, it becomes clear that the British government is concerned about the existing oil contracts and the upcoming election. They agree that the Hausa party should win the election for they are the least ambitious of the three tribes. Sir Fergus cautions that the Igbo "are extremely intelligent. But they are greedy as well, and their arrogance could lead them into trouble. Also, the greater portion of the oil areas are in their region; so one has to be very careful how the country is divided constitutionally" (Emecheta 8). Later in the crisis but before the outbreak of the war, Debbie's friend Babs points out to her the influence of the UK in what looks like a tribal conflict on the surface. While Debbie is of the opinion that a civil war between two peoples is the worst that could happen, Babs seems to notice the economic value of the Eastern region for Nigeria and says:

Wake up, Debbie, my friend! Didn't you see that picture taken at Aburi, and didn't you see that all the faces in the background were white? Since when have we had white Nigerians? And the guns, even your rifle there - are they made in Nigeria? What about the oil - are we going to refine it here, use it here? You know the truth as well as I do; and believe me, I don't like what I think is coming. (Emecheta 105)

The worry expressed in the statement of Babs points towards the influential role the UK is going to play in case of a war. Emecheta's novel seems very much concerned with indicating the foreign influences during the conflict. Several references to the UK's interest in Nigeria's oil are given in the text. The employment of Alan Grey further explains the policies of British oil business with Nigeria. During the war, Alan functions as an advisor to Saka Momoh but his patience is greatly tested for Momoh is reluctant to follow his advice. Yet, Grey remains persistent. "His strict instructions had been to help on the quiet, without any attachment or obvious obstruction in any way. As long as British investment interests were safeguarded" (Emecheta 145). The British soldier is also directly involved in the preparation of the Nigerian army for the war. He inspects and trains young soldiers and eventually leaves for the UK with a list of "everything the Nigerian army would need for a quick kill" (Emecheta 148). It is explained how the Foreign Office is pleased with Alan's achievements in Nigeria. He is given old World War I warfare to deliver to Nigeria because "jungle

warfare” (Emecheta 148) does not require sophisticated weapons according to the British government. Moreover, it is mentioned that the British government fears the threat that sophisticated weapons in the hands of Nigerians might pose to the UK. Yet, they are determined to uphold the military support “now that it looked as if there was more oil in the country than they had imagined” (Emecheta 148). With the arms the federal side thus receives, Emecheta demonstrates how “[a] new trade, in ammunition and human blood, had begun” (149). Although Alan Grey seems thoroughly concerned with upholding the existing oil contracts and thus ensuring that the federal side wins the war, he has doubts when Momoh asks him to hire mercenaries. Alan retorts “I wonder about the morality of your paying white men to come and shoot your own people for you” (Emecheta 191). Nevertheless, he arranges the assignment of mercenaries. Momoh pays him a large deposit that exceeds his actual budget, but Grey is not worried about the payment since the Nigerian army has just defeated Biafran soldiers in the Mid-West “and a British oil company could now go there and pump enough oil to pay for the war” (191). In general, critique of the role of the UK during the conflict is openly and repeatedly voiced in *Destination Biafra* in statements, such as “[t]his war is Britain’s greatest shame. I hope the world never forgets that” (Emecheta 217), or when Debbie slaps Alan and says “[t]hat is for the way you and your country have fallen in the eyes of the black nations. This war is one of your greatest shames” (Emecheta 242). The novel explicitly refers to Alan’s role as a representative of the UK, when Abosi reminds other politicians at a meeting of Biafra’s inner cabinet that Alan Grey “is England in this war. He arranges mercenaries [sic] and arms to be sent to Momoh, then comes to Red Cross our people. He wants to fatten us up for the slaughter” (Emecheta 217). Moreover, the relationship between Debbie and Alan becomes symbolic for the relationship between Nigeria and the UK. When Alan asks Debbie to leave Nigeria with him she loses her temper: “I didn’t mind your being my male concubine, but Africa will never again stoop to being your wife; to meet you on an equal basis, like companions, yes, but never again to be your slave” (Emecheta 245). As Morrison has remarked, the instalment of Grey “enables Emecheta’s text to incorporate an assessment [sic] of British involvement in the civil war, and through him to introduce [sic] one particular implied model of Nigeria, as a puppet state serving British global economic interests” (17). The narrative concludes with Alan’s perspective on Nigeria. Hodges refers to Alan as “Emecheta’s flat stereotype of the British colonialist” (2). Cold, unsympathetic and untouched by the experience of the war, Grey expresses his sentiments that are heavily marked by a feeling of superiority: “That was the trouble with these blacks. Give them some education and they quoted it all back at you, as if the education was made for them in the first place” (Emecheta 246).

Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* also offers perspectives on the role of the UK and British people living in Nigeria, but in a more subtle way than *Destination Biafra*. One of the main characters and focalisers in the novel is British. Richard Churchill is a writer living in Nigeria. What makes his role interesting in consideration of the image the UK receives, is that he may be seen to function as an opposite of the "flat stereotype of the British colonialist" (Hodges 2) that Alan Grey resembles. This contrast can be highlighted by comparisons made to fellow expatriates in the narrative. Unlike these British characters that appear in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Richard does not hold prejudice against black people. To Olanna, he is the only white boyfriend of Kainene's she likes because he does "not have that familiar superiority of English people who thought they understood Africans better than Africans understood themselves" (Adichie 36). Adichie's novel here gives a glimpse into Nigeria's expatriate society and the oil business. Richard observes the white people at the parties Susan takes him to with distaste. They represent precisely the group of white people described above who feel superior towards black people. The shy British writer is forced to listen to the conversations of these expatriates who

were mostly English, ex-colonial administrators and business people from John Holt and Kingsway and GB Ollivant and Shell-BP and United Africa Company. They were reddened from sun and alcohol. They chuckled about how tribal Nigerian politics was, and perhaps these chaps were not quite so ready to rule themselves after all. They discussed cricket, plantations they owned or planned to own, the perfect weather in Jos, business opportunities in Kaduna. (Adichie 53)

Through the depiction of these members of the expatriate society, Adichie also conveys their rather biased or condescending attitude towards Nigeria and its tribes. Susan, another British expatriate, frequently makes remarks reflecting stereotypes and prejudice, such as "the Hausa in the North were a dignified lot, the Igbo were surly and money-loving, and the Yoruba were rather jolly, even if they were first-rate lickspittles" (Adichie 55). Once the tribal killings in the North have started, Susan ponders the situation in Lagos,

There are lots of Igbo people here - well, they are every-where [sic] really, aren't they? Not that they didn't have it coming to them, when you think about it, with their being so clannish and uppity and controlling the markets. Very Jewish, really. And to think they are relatively uncivilized; one couldn't compare them to the Yoruba, for example, who have had contact with Europeans on the coast for years. I remember somebody telling me when I first came to be careful about hiring an Igbo houseboy because, before I knew it, he would own my house and the land it was built on. (Adichie 154)

Biased assumptions such as these annoy Richard. Susan's condescending attitude does not even make hold before his new girlfriend, Kainene. During one of Richard's visits to Susan, she inquires about his use of protection with Kainene and adds that "[o]ne must be careful, even with the most educated of these people" (Adichie 236). When Richard hears about Susan's affair with a married

man he is not in the least surprised. The following passage further illustrates his thoughts on the expatriate society in Nigeria: “All they did, as far as he was concerned, was have sex with one another’s wives and husbands, illicit couplings that were more a way of passing heat-blanced time in the tropics than they were genuine expressions of passion” (Adichie 237). These parts of the narrative contribute to the rather negative, or mocking image the author presents of British expatriates. As opposed to Emecheta, Adichie is not as concerned with the role of politically influential British figures, such as Macdonald or Grey. Recurring British characters in Adichie’s text, like Susan, are not politically involved in Nigeria and their actions and thoughts seem rather laughable. Adichie only mentions British business people but does not go into detail.

Furthermore, *Half of a Yellow Sun* not only addresses racial prejudice exercised by white characters, but the novel also captures biased sentiments towards white people expressed by black characters. This can be inferred from Richard’s encounter with Okeoma, a regular guest at Odenigbo’s house. Okeoma asks Richard about the progress of his book and the Englishman tells him about his fascination with Igbo-Ukwu art and marvels at the way Igbo people have “perfected the complicated art of lost-wax casting during the time of the Viking raids” (Adichie 111). When Okeoma observes that Richard sounds astonished, as if he did not think it possible for Igbo people to create such things, Richard feels offended (Adichie 111). In fact, Okeoma’s remark leaves him pondering about his statements for days, but he concludes that “[i]t was wrong of Okeoma to assume that he was one of those Englishmen who did not give the African the benefit of an equal intelligence” (Adichie 112).

While Emecheta portrays the UK’s role in Nigeria through characters such as Alan Grey, it should be explained that *Half of a Yellow Sun* alludes to the UK’s position and influence on a different level. Through the philosophic discussions that are held at Odenigbo’s house, several attitudes towards Britain are voiced. Odenigbo, who is often called a “tribalist” by his guests, opposes Nigerian unity because the borders of Nigeria were defined by the UK and do not resemble tribal borders. The professor feels very strongly about colonial exploitation and argues for the teaching of African history in order to “decolonize” (Adichie 75) education. Odenigbo further explains to Ugwu that “[t]here are two answers to the things they will teach you about our land: the real answer and the answer you give in school to pass” (Adichie 11). This statement reflects Odenigbo’s assumption that there is a form of “colonized” history which is part of an education system that needs to be “decolonized”. During the war, the guests discuss the BBC’s coverage of it, in which Biafra’s invasion of Lagos is described as an “[a]stonishing move” (Adichie 199). The response of one of the guests goes as follows: “They are surprised because the arms Harold Wilson

gave those Muslim cattle rearers have not killed us off as quickly as they had hoped!” (Adichie 199). The author further expresses the UK’s policies towards Nigeria in the passages describing Ugwu’s book which are positioned at the end of several chapters. As noted by Akpome, this “metatext [...] is one of the key instruments with which Adichie shapes an inventive account of the war and of Nigeria’s political history” (26). The book carries the title “The World Was Silent When We Died” and among other historical and political issues it foregrounds, it also interrogates the UK’s role in the first election, as in “the British had to preserve Nigeria as it was, their prized creation, their large market, their thorn in France’s eye” (Adichie 155).

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, not only the UK is criticised for its treatment of the Biafran crisis but also the position of the US is addressed through the employment of two American journalists. Richard functions as their guide in Biafra and it is his perspective which is offered on this matter. The Americans’ insensitiveness and prejudice upset Richard. One of the journalists asks about the death of an Italian in the war zone. For Richard, the American’s inquiry “was like somebody sprinkling pepper on his wound: Thousands of Biafrans were dead, and this man wanted to know if there was anything new about one dead white man. Richard would write about this, the rule of Western journalism: One hundred dead black people equal one dead white person” (Adichie 369). The visit of the American journalists brings out the issue of foreign news coverage of the war and the Biafran’s despair with gaining outside support. With regard to one of the Americans, it is explained how “[h]e was like President Nixon’s fact finders from Washington or Prime Minister Wilson’s commission members from London who arrived with their firm protein tablets and their firmer conclusions: that Nigeria was not bombing civilians, that the starvation was overflogged, that all was as well as it should be in the war” (Adichie 371). On the whole, Richard’s perspective functions as a voice of criticism of the role of foreign powers, especially the UK, during the war.

Further references to foreign policies towards the Nigerian Civil War can be found in Abani’s text. For instance, My Luck’s narration takes him back to his time at boot camp, where the future soldiers were shown American war documentaries “that looked like they had been shot a hundred years ago” (Abani 111). Emecheta’s writing of the shipping of old WWI warfare material, as discussed earlier, similarly addresses this issue. Thus, a rather critical image of the way the outside world treated the conflict is conveyed in both texts. In *Song for Night*, My Luck considers the information in these outdated films illogical but his fellow soldiers, who are “bush fucks” (111) in his opinion, believe anything, especially if it is sent by the American government. The documentary explains how to hide under a desk in case of a nuclear attack, which amuses My Luck because he has to imagine the soldiers carrying around desks in the war, not to mention that they do not possess

such items. With this rather mocking tone, the passage's function may be to present foreign policies towards Nigerian warfare and to point towards an unquestioning belief in these policies. My Luck further illustrates this by explaining that "[w]ith death as our only option, I guess it is easy to believe anything. Besides, if the American government was telling their children to hide under desks, it must be true. They wouldn't risk the lives of their own children, would they?" (Abani 112). As previously observed in the texts by Emecheta or Adichie, Abani also ascribes a rather condescending attitude towards Nigeria and its people to foreign powers. This can be inferred from a passage involving My Luck's school days, for example, in which he remembers his French textbook that carried the title: "French Afrique Book One: French Even Africans Can Speak" (Abani 38-39). In a subtle way, Abani thus displays racial discrimination in his narrative.

4.2. Perspectives on Western Culture and Education

The instalment of foreign characters and institutions brings with it the creation of an overall image of Western culture and education. Note that the term "Western" will be used here to refer to countries, such as the UK, the US or France. The purpose of this section is to examine which attitudes towards Western culture and education prevail in the narratives.

First, Western education is presented either as valuable or as something standing in opposition to traditional values and thus symbolising something not worth attaining. Kalu's short story collection explores the issue of Western education. Her portrayal of people leading a traditional life contrasted with the lives of people attending Western schools, offers the reader an interesting look into different values concerning education in Nigeria. In general, Kalu's focus is the collision of the war with people's hopes, dreams or future plans. She shows how the war disrupts ordinary people's lives and changes their values. The story "Angelus" deals with a young girl attending a Roman Catholic mission school, called "Our Lady of Peace Secondary School" (Kalu 21). The school is for girls only and it is located in the eastern part of Obodo. The narrative is set in a time when a State of Emergency has already been declared for the region. At this school, girls are trained to become the "leaders of tomorrow" (Kalu 20). Their daily schedule involves "strong doses of religion, mathematics, English language and literature, and other excit-ing [sic] subjects" (Kalu 22). Due to the political crisis, the girls are being prepared for air-raids too. Frequently, the story indicates the inappropriateness of Western education in the times of war. The young students become excited but at the same time scared about their country's situation and therefore they search their history books for information about the role of girls during a war. They fail to relate their knowledge about topics, such as the legend of King Arthur or the plundering of castles and forts in the Middle Ages, to their

African nation and the looming perils of the approaching war front. This passage may indicate how inappropriate or useless Western education, or history in particular, seems in such a crisis. Moreover, the story displays the imbalance of the education at this school. It is mentioned how the girls receive a thorough education in subjects, such as maths, religion or English literature, but the narrator also explains how the teachers “forgot to tell us that African independence was a consequence of the sweat, tears, and blood of our younger and educated elders and was still under discussion” (Kalu 25). Allusions like these that refer to the one-sided nature of the education these girls are given appear several times in this story.

Furthermore, it should be noted that “Angelus” is written in retrospect from Nwanyieze’s perspective. As the narrator, she often comments on her own naivety. The girls’ education makes them feel comfortable to talk about other peoples’ struggles and conflicts but it becomes difficult to relate the concept of war to their homelands. Nwanyieze explains, “[w]e did not know that our country had already been raped and that our parents sent us to Our Lady of Peace to learn how to help them help us deal with the pain which that knowledge was sure to bring” (Kalu 25). On the one hand, Kalu shows how the students are hopeful and confident about becoming those “to lead [their] nation into a star-studded future” (25), but on the other hand the story also indicates that they gradually forget their local history and the traditional values of their people. The talk of becoming a future leader reminds Nwanyieze of her aunt who refused Western education and decided to continue life in a traditional community. The aunt took up work on the market and earned enough money to provide the financial background for Nwanyieze’s father’s education. To Nwanyieze, Mother H., who is the school’s principal, resembles her aunt because they both represent leaders of women. While Mother H. is a Catholic nun teaching in a foreign country, Nwanyieze’s aunt “is a leader of the women in [her] village” (Kalu 27-28). “Her place was in the village, close to the ancestors [sic] and the people” (Kalu 28). “Angelus” not only gives a glimpse of Western education of young women in Nigeria, but the story also compares Christianity to Igbo religion. When Nwanyieze and the girls are assembled in the yard, awaiting an air-raid lesson, Mother H.’s white clothes bring back memories of masquerades in Nwanyieze’s hometown, “[a] strikingly different kind of masquerade, [Mother H.] had taught us to stand in place with an unnamed fear of a ritual that evoked it-self [sic] in stationary symbols whose unblending solid colors si-lenced [sic] the flamboyance of our tropical homeland” (Kalu 33). It is interesting to observe which attributes are ascribed here to the two different kinds of religion. An image of Christianity as something solid and powerful, which replaced Nwanyieze’s vivid, traditional religion, is evoked. With this imagery, Kalu manages to emphasise how Western religion has become a dominant force in Nigeria. The

issue of religion in the times of war is also addressed in the story “Ogbanje Father”. Here, it is explained how many religious sects appeared during the war. Kalu indicates that desperate people “began to develop a new belief in the power of certain individuals who were said to be holy” (126) throughout the crisis, which illustrates the use of religion as a means to exploit people in despair.

Moreover, “Angelus” also reflects how Western education in Nigeria is regarded as progress and therefore becomes something to strive for. Nevertheless, this idea is not shared by all groups of people represented in the text. When Nwanyieze remembers the bombing of the school she says, “[a]s I fell, I heard my grandmother and my aunt telling me over many years of schooling to be careful. ‘Don’t learn more than we need,’ they cautioned. As I fell, I saw myself smiling at their lack of under-standing [sic]. I heard myself telling them that we were only joining the rest of the world as it progressed to better things” (Kalu 42). This association of Western education with progress is reinforced in “Ogbanje Father”. In this story, speaking English is considered “knowledge of the new times” (Kalu 136). However, not only positive reactions towards this kind of education are shown. Kalu’s “Relief Duty”, for example, captures the people’s disregard for education. The main protagonist, Money, works in relief distribution and her employer, Dr. Eze, is a former chemistry teacher. During the distribution of relief goods, Money asks Dr. Eze for help opening a sack. As a response to her repeated pleas, she is slapped in public by her boss. One woman of the crowd present then comments that “[i]f education brings only war and disrespect, may I never be seen anywhere near your book houses” (Kalu 154).

Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* conveys a positive attitude towards Western education largely through the portrayal of Ugwu. The uneducated houseboy is impressed by the beauty of Odenigbo’s and Olanna’s British accent that even flows into their native tongue, which can be observed in passages, such as “[i]t was Igbo coloured by the sliding sounds of English, the Igbo of one who spoke English often” (Adichie 4), or “Master’s English was music, but what Ugwu was hearing now, from this woman, was magic” (Adichie 22). Ugwu is eager to learn the English language and feels proud to be sent to a school usually attended only by the children of staff members. Hence, his position towards foreign education is rather clear. It is not only a craving for knowledge that Ugwu feels, but also a sense of pride that comes with Western education and his new lifestyle. He often imagines returning to his village, impressing the girl he is in love with and his family “with his English accent, his new shirt, his knowledge of sandwiches and running tap water, his scented powder” (Adichie 86). *Half of a Yellow Sun* conveys this strong sense of value pinned to Western education in several passages. For instance, Olanna meets a family at the airport awaiting their son’s return from overseas. The young man is the first one in his village ever to study abroad. To honour

this, the village people have prepared a special dance for him. Adichie further speaks of a “comically con-trived [sic] ‘white accent’ that uneducated people liked to put on” (29). Furthermore, on a visit to the North, Olanna is introduced to a vendor, as a woman with a Master in Sociology, which results in the man’s “expression of people who marvelled at education with the calm certainty that it would never be theirs” (Adichie 40). Nevertheless, not only a positive attitude towards Western education is exerted. The anglicised behaviour of Nigerians that British education may entail is also addressed in Adichie’s novel. One passage that illustrates this negative attitude describes the hostility with which Ms Adebayo acts towards Olanna. The situation is described as follows, “it was as if Miss Adebayo thought her to be unworthy of competition, with her *unintellectual* ways and her too-pretty face and her mimicking-the-oppressor English accent” (Adichie 51). Note that it is not Miss Adebayo who voices these thoughts. As Olanna functions as the focaliser in this chapter, the choice of words here reflects that she is well aware of the reactions her British education might cause. Although this kind of criticism is something Olanna does not really experience in the intellectual circles she finds herself in, the narrative emphasises the significance of her education most in encounters with traditional or even poor people. In the novel, the anglicised ways are frequently put in contrast to the traditional ways of people living in Nigeria. For example, the interaction of Olanna and her relatives in the North creates such a contrast: Olanna “wished she were fluent in Hausa and Yoruba, like her uncle and aunt and cousin were, something she would gladly exchange her French and Latin for” (Adichie 40-41). On the issue of marriage, the encounters with the Northern relatives also indicate the different values or practices in Western and Nigerian culture. Arize inquires of Olanna whether she is going to marry Odenigbo, but Olanna retorts she does not know yet. Her cousin then remarks that “[i]t is only women that know too much Book like you who can say that, Sister. If people like me who don’t know Book wait too long, we will expire” (Adichie 41). Arize here refers to her situation as an uneducated woman in a traditional community, which makes her dependent on the income of a husband. Therefore, unlike Olanna, she cannot afford to postpone marriage.

Similarly, Emecheta glosses over the controversiality of Western education in Nigeria through her depiction of Debbie who studied overseas like Olanna. In *Destination Biafra*, the image of an educated woman produces various responses among different groups of society. In the “upper-class” circles, Debbie is mostly admired for her education, but among “ordinary” people she becomes an outsider figure. This is illustrated by her encounters with the Igbo women on her way to the East. Mrs Madako seems questioning about Debbie’s education and suspicious of the nature of her journey when she says “[y]ou over-educated people. Who knows why you do anything?” (Emecheta

182). In the company of Igbo women Debbie struggles to fit in: “It was at moments like this that Debbie felt lonely, surrounded as she was by other women. Her education, the imported division of class, still stood in the way. She was trying so hard to shake it off, to belong, but at times like this she knew that achieving complete acceptance was indeed a formidable task (Emecheta 201-202). It may be said that Western education thus becomes something extracting people from the masses and at the same time estranging them from the traditional lifestyle of their homeland. Similarly, this effect can be observed in the character of Abosi, the Biafran leader. He is criticised for his education by Momoh’s wife, Elizabeth, when she observes that Igbo people are following Abosi blindly, while he does not even seem to belong to their world, as in “[h]e is too rich, has too much education and belongs to too many exclusive international clubs” (Emecheta 189). It should be added that the negative attitude towards Western education and the effect it has on the life of characters having received it, is at times also a form of criticism of the corrupt practices of high-ranking people and their wealth. In this case Western education is associated with Nigeria’s “elite” and it is therefore not merely the form of education that is being scorned. Hence, one has to pay attention to the context in which criticism of this kind of education is uttered and what this context signifies.

While Kalu, Emecheta and Adichie provide numerous indications of the significance of Western education in Nigeria, Abani’s text features only scarce references. What can be drawn from the narrative is that My Luck feels superior to some of his fellow soldiers in terms of his education. Nevertheless, the knowledge he received at school does not alleviate the struggle he finds himself in. When My Luck has found shelter between two rocks he recalls the concept of a leader’s bunker which is not something concrete, but “a talisman at its most ethereal, a mobile Camelot at its most concrete. Camelot: one of those things we learned in school that is useless to us now” (Abani 111). Abani’s reference to Western education can be compared to Kalu’s “Angelus”, in which the narrator does not know how to make sense of her knowledge of English history in the midst of the crisis the country is in.

In sum, Western education in Nigeria is presented as a controversial topic in the texts by Kalu, Emecheta, Adichie and Abani. On the one hand, education in general may signify progress and it is sometimes portrayed as something people wish to attain. Especially for people in traditional communities, attending Western educational institutions may represent a kind of exclusiveness that creates a sense of pride. On the other hand, having received Western education may also entail a variety of qualities that produce a negative echo. Paradoxically, it is also among people leading a traditional lifestyle, that a negative response can be felt. In the different war narratives, the various negative aspects of Western education that can be identified are the inappropriateness of such

knowledge in the struggle for survival, the estrangement of characters returning to or encountering traditional communities, or the association of it with Nigeria's corrupt political leaders.

4.3. Humanitarian Aid

The dependence of Biafrans on the work of missionaries or relief organisations, such as the Red Cross or the Caritas, is captured in all the texts discussed in this thesis. As Ugochukwu has noted with respect to Achebe, Adichie and another author she analyses, "the texts reveal the key role played by the few expatriates still on the ground, as refugees rely on them more and more for help and support: relief pilots, charity workers, journalists, priests, and nuns running hospitals and orphanages, foreign pilots bringing in relief and ammunition" (267-268).

The selected narratives canvass different aspects of relief work. Emecheta's *Destination Biafra*, for example, introduces the role of nuns during the Nigerian Civil War. The image of the nuns here is rather controversial. While the women are taking care of orphans and sick people, hence providing necessary aid in the war, Debbie questions the reasons behind their devotion, alluding to the nuns' affiliation with former colonial powers. In Asaba, she seeks the mission house for help while the rest of the refugee group remains hiding in the forest. Asaba has been taken over by Nigerian soldiers who have claimed it to be an action to liberate the civilians from the Biafran soldiers. A nun notices Debbie's accent, and the fact that she is not Igbo makes her inquire about Debbie's background. Debbie's anger and confusion are then captured as follows,

How could a foreigner ask her what she was doing in her own country? Because she was well-educated these do-gooders obviously did not expect her to soil her fingers helping her own people. What hypocrisy, what sham! [...] did these women sincerely believe in what they were doing, or did they still subscribe to the old idea of helping the savages? [...] The Nigerian soldiers were on one side of the road with their Russian-made armoured cars and British tanks, and here were these women on the other side, nursing the dying and saying Mass. It was impossible to make sense of it, but in times as desperate as this any help was better than none. (Emecheta 208)

Debbie struggles to understand this situation in which she has to justify her helping civilians in her home country. Later, the description of a rather tragic scenario follows, when Nigerian soldiers kill the people of Asaba. Debbie then hears the cries of "the nuns who felt they were doing God's work and that that would give [sic] them immunity from the soldiers" (Emecheta 212). Instead of condemning the nuns for what Debbie thought was hypocrisy, she now feels sorry for them and it is indicated that the faith they exhibited in their work was naive rather than hypocritical.

Considering the other war narratives, Abani's *Song for Night* includes a brief description of the presence of nuns in Nigeria when My Luck comes across a familiar place and remembers the

first time he found himself there. His troop was still complete then and there was a group of refugees and nuns, “probably Irish, it seemed like all the Catholics here were - and they all wore that tight-lipped look that years of enduring Catholicism bestows on the pious” (Abani 130). One cannot help but notice the hint of mockery of Catholicism Abani installs here. Additionally, Kalu’s “Angelus” (which has been dealt with in detail in the previous section) portrays an elite missionary school run by nuns, in which girls are trained to become future leaders.

Not only the aid offered by nuns is described in Nigerian Civil War fiction, but also the role of humanitarian aid organisations, such as the Red Cross and the Caritas, is depicted. With regard to the works of Achebe, Adichie and Kalu, the reader receives an insight into relief work and the conditions at relief centres. It can be noticed that the authors not only present the situation of those seeking relief, but also portray the circumstances of those behind the distribution of relief goods. Consider, for example, Achebe’s “Girls at War”. During the war, Reginald Nwankwo has moved to Owerri, where he obtains relief goods from the Caritas, but the “few heads of stockfish, some tinned meat, and the dreadful American stuff called Formula Two which he felt certain was some kind of animal feed” (Achebe 104) hardly satisfy his needs. Reginald thinks that as a non-Catholic you are at a disadvantage with the Caritas, and thus seeks relief elsewhere. In Nkwerrri, a friend of his runs the WCC depot where Reginald receives more exclusive food stuffs, like rice, beans or Gabon gari which makes an “excellent cereal” (Achebe 104). Amidst a crowd of starving Biafrans, Reginald’s driver packs large quantities into his car, which results in accusations of the crowd. It is explained how Reginald sends food to his wife and four children living in a distant village, and gives some of the food to his driver. However, Reginald reasons that he can only try and help some people and thus leaves the still hungry “scarecrow crowd of rags and floating ribs” (Achebe 105). Ogede has remarked that “Nwankwo’s own experience tends to lend support to the hypothesis that people are not doing bad things because they are evil, but rather because they have to do what they need to survive” (76). Achebe thus captures the shortage of food in the Biafran crisis and points towards an imbalance in relief distribution.

Achebe’s “Sugar Baby” further addresses the food crisis during the war. Father Doherty is a priest who is in control of the Caritas’ relief store. He is portrayed as a slightly unpredictable but hard-working person. Mike and Cletus visit him in order to obtain antihistamine tablets for Mike and sugar for Cletus. Father Doherty offers his visitors coffee, but expecting that “in this very home and citadel of Caritas whose very air reeked solid relief one could be sure that coffee would mean with sugar and milk” (Achebe 94), they are appalled by the tasteless liquid they are served. The shortage of food during the war and the change of values attached to different food stuffs this lack

creates, is further illustrated in the following situation. Cletus asks for a little sugar, which results in Father Doherty's losing his temper. He is outraged by the fact that Cletus even considered receiving sugar in times "when thousands of God's innocents perished daily for the lack of a glass of milk!" (Achebe 96).

Achebe's "Sugar Baby" and "Girls at War" also show the effort behind the distribution of relief goods. It is described, for instance, how Father Doherty has "just spent six nights running at the airport unloading relief planes in pitch darkness under fairly constant air bombardment and getting home at seven every morning to sleep for two hours" (Achebe 94). Passages such as this indicate the danger relief pilots or those on the ground put themselves in. The depiction of this kind of effort certainly contributes to the rather heroic image relief workers may have. The work of humanitarian aid organisations is further outlined in "Girls at War". Here, the reader is presented with relief pilots flying Red Cross planes. The pilots are introduced at a party Reginald and Gladys attend. Their arrival is received with cheer by the party guests for they bring a bottle of Courvoisier and Scotch, a rare commodity during the war. However, one of the Red Cross pilots is in a bad state of mind because his friend died in a plane crash flying a relief plane in terrible weather. The emotions then overwhelm him and he starts to rant, "[w]hy should a man, a decent man, throw away his life. For nothing! Charlie didn't need to die. Not for this stinking place. Yes, everything stinks here." (Achebe 113). Here, Achebe stresses again the risk taken by humanitarian aid workers, which is further implied by Reginald's thoughts: "When I think of somebody like that pilot who got killed last night. And he had no hand whatever in the quarrel. All his concern was to bring us food . . ." (Achebe 115). Reginald continues, explaining that he does not feel like celebrating in a time when people, like the relief pilot, lose their life, or while their own people are fighting on the front. One might say that these kinds of passages enable the infliction of a heroic image upon relief workers. The position of these workers in the conflict becomes almost similar to that of the soldiers "suffering and dying at the war fronts" (Achebe 115).

Kalu's "Relief Duty" also investigates work in the field of relief distribution. The story is set in the area of Akasi and it is already late in the war. The main protagonist, Money, has a job at a relief office which has been set up by the army and the churches. A part of Money's work is to pack the food which is then taken to the village square to be distributed to the people. Cornmeal, rice and stockfish are the primary food stuffs the relief office gives away. Aside from the general shortage of food, another problem that is presented is the reluctance of people to come to the relief distribution. Kalu's narrative illustrates that many people are afraid of mass gatherings because of air raids and thus do not leave their homes. It is also shown how the years of war have made the people

particular about their tastes. Therefore, “[t]his late in the crisis, Money and the other workers made sure they kept everybody satisfied, because people’s morale was low” (Kalu 147). Moreover, the story glosses over the inappropriateness of certain goods that are sent to Biafra during the war. It is explained how the office receives old clothes or even winter clothes that cannot be used in the West-African climate. Money is a dedicated relief worker but her time at the relief office is overshadowed by her constant search for her family. After the incident with Dr. Eze, Money’s new obligations include trips to the relief headquarters in the area. When the town is expecting an attack on one of these centres, Money and others are hiding in the forest. A relief plane arrives and her curiosity leads her to walk towards it. Because she is being harassed by a drunk soldier who even shoots at her, she runs towards the plane and climbs into it. It turns out that it is flown by American pilots who know Money’s family because they airlifted them to Gabon. With respect to the American pilot, it is added in a rather humorous tone, “[w]ho would have thought that working for Uncle Sam would get him into this many close brushes with death and accidental acts of kindness” (Kalu 159), which sums up the perils and rewards of relief work. Thus, in a similar fashion, Achebe and Kalu allude to the effort of those behind relief operations.

Additionally, Adichie’s narrative presents situations in which the work of members of relief organisations is described. When Richard escorts the American journalists to the airstrip at Uli where they are supposed to leave on a relief plane, they witness the unloading of goods. Although the airstrip is under attack, three planes land and trucks without any lights on arrive immediately to unload, which impresses Richard (Adichie 373). Everything seems to happen fast and rehearsed and despite the looming dangers above the people carry out their work.

Moreover, *Half of a Yellow Sun* captures the practices at relief centres. In the middle of the war, Olanna, Odenigbo, Ugwu and Baby have settled in Umuahia. Baby’s condition has started to deteriorate due to the lack of food. Olanna visits the relief centre in hope of receiving dried egg yolk for Baby. Her emotions are mixed and she feels “as if she were doing something improper, unethical: expecting to get food in exchange for nothing” (Adichie 267-268). The narrative also shows the desperation of people trying to be the first at the distribution tables. Militia men are carrying whips to keep the hungry masses in order. Olanna panics as she learns that the dried egg yolk has already run out, but the relief supervisor recognises her and promises to organise some egg yolk for her. This relieves her mind, but it also amplifies her feeling of guilt. The novel frequently addresses the people’s desperation for food. For example, Olanna receives a tin of corned beef from the supervisor but it is stolen from her outside the centre by a group of hungry men. Ugwu’s perspective, however, adds another layer of significance to relief work. He is not satisfied at all with

the kinds of food the Red Cross sends to Biafra and does not like the powdered milk, the cornmeal or the dried egg yolk. The uselessness of certain goods, as indicated by Kalu, is also captured in this narrative: “The Red Cross irritated Ugwu; the least they could to was ask Biafrans their preferred foods rather than sending so much bland flour” (Adichie 283). Olanna, however, has managed to bake pastry with all the flour they get. Nevertheless, a feeling of bitter resignation that resides in Ugwu’s thoughts is evoked in the references to relief organisations that the novel features.

Furthermore, Adichie alludes to certain Caritas policies, which are similarly expressed in Achebe’s “Girls at War”. Considering Ugwu’s perspective, it says that “[w]hen the new relief centre opened, the one Olanna went to wearing a rosary around her neck because Mrs Muoleku said the Caritas people were more generous to Catholics, Ugwu hoped the food would be better” (Adichie 283). This statement closely resembles Reginald Nwankwo’s thoughts on the Caritas’ unequal distribution of food and their preference of Catholics, as described earlier in this chapter. As these passages show, the work of relief organisations is not always received positively. This argument can further be illustrated by Emecheta’s text. Late in the war, Debbie travels to London to appeal to the public about the crisis in Biafra. She meets with leaders of the Igbo community there and organises demonstrations to stop the British support of the federal side. Yet, at this stage Debbie also acts as a mediator between the federal side and Abosi. Debbie is angry about the two leaders’ arrogance which has led the war to continue. She agrees with Alan that if “all failed” (Emecheta 230) Abosi should be killed and Momoh should be confronted about murdering civilians. In addition, Debbie should see to it that Abosi agrees to any ceasefire arrangement. Abosi then contacts Debbie to inform her that two thousand Ibuza people have died. He orders her to obtain specific arms he has arranged to be produced in England, which are then to be sent in via the next Red Cross supply plane (Emecheta 232). Apparently, it was possible for Abosi to plan such a delivery in accordance with the Red Cross. Although the details behind this arrangement remain unclear, the fact that the Red Cross is connected to this kind of corruption here, contributes to a negative attitude towards the relief organisation one might draw from the subtext of this novel. As mentioned earlier with respect to Achebe, Kalu and Adichie, besides the effort of humanitarian aid organisations and the welcome reception of the people, unfavourable aspects concerning the practices of these organisations are also chronicled.

In retrospect, there are different ways in which humanitarian aid is presented in the texts. On the one hand, the dependence of people on organisations, such as the Red Cross, during the crisis is illustrated and the value of their at times dangerous work is acknowledged, but on the other hand, matters such as unequal distribution, uselessness of certain goods or corruption are also addressed

by the authors. It should be noted that aside from mentioning the presence of Catholic nuns, Abani's *Song for Night* does not depict relief work.

5. Biafra

The texts selected for this thesis show different approaches to the topic of Biafra and the war. While Emecheta, Adichie and Achebe to some extent, canvass the secession of the East, display the people's expectations and chronicle the deteriorating situation in Biafra, Kalu and Abani make only scarce or more subtle references to actual historical events, politics or places, and depict the republic's downfall by means of their central characters' worsening living conditions. In some narratives, one can identify a "Biafran ideal" that is conveyed largely through the characters' anticipations and beliefs.

5.1. The Birth of Biafra, the Biafran Ideal and the Republic's Demise in Adichie, Emecheta and Achebe

The secession of the eastern region signifies a major historical event in Nigeria. Most of the authors discussed in this thesis go into detail describing the people's sentiments towards the creation of Biafra. Ranging from the description of public celebrations to the illustration of personal hopes, these authors show that the establishment of the independent Republic of Biafra moved people. With the introduction of economic sanctions and later military action, however, the significance of Biafra soon changed and the nation hardly represented a land of hope and dreams for most people anymore. It is the purpose of this section to examine the texts' treatments of the emergence of Biafra, the presentation of a "Biafran ideal", and the demise of the republic.

Half of a Yellow Sun provides the reader with an insight into the feelings of people concerning the first military coup and its aftermath. It is explained how people are celebrating the overthrow of the government and furthermore a speech by Major Nzeogwu is given in which he refers to the "political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand ten per cent" (Adichie 123) as the enemies of the "Revolutionary Council" that replaced the government. These news certainly worries Olanna for her father is a wealthy business man who profits much from his own deals. Moreover, Okonji, the finance minister, an acquaintance of Olanna's, was killed in the wake of the coup. Ugwu, for instance, has difficulty sympathising with the murdered politicians. He seems to agree with the masses that politicians are corrupt people who "paid thugs to beat opponents" and "bought land and houses with government money" (Adichie 126).

Subsequently, Adichie illustrates how the initial excitement involved in the overthrow of the government soon wears off when the harassment and the massacres of the Igbo people begin. These events and the people's feelings surrounding the change of the nation can be seen as a means of providing a context for the joy experienced once the eastern region secedes and Biafra is established. Akpome has noted that *Half of a Yellow Sun* carries "the subtextual argument that the formation of Biafra was imperative, and more importantly, that the new nation represented a realistic promise of socio-political fulfilment to its people" (30). It is further explained how this argument is reinforced on "various narrative fronts" (Akpome 30), by which Akpome refers to meta-textual elements, such as Ugwu's book or Richard's journalistic article (see Adichie 166-167). Adichie's narrative demonstrates how people who lost hope in safety find new confidence in their identity as Biafrans. In Nsukka, people are celebrating independence, and the feeling of belonging to a new nation is both exciting and overwhelming. The celebrations are described as follows: "Olanna watched them and realized with a sweet surge that they all felt what she felt, what Odenigbo felt, as though it were liquid steel instead of blood that flowed through their veins, as though they could stand barefoot over red-hot embers" (Adichie 163). Passages like this seem to indicate that Biafra becomes a symbol of strength for the masses. Moreover, Richard, who is not Nigerian, enjoys the experience of being present at the creation of this nation, which is explained when Adichie writes that "[h]e would be Biafran in a way he could never have been Nigerian - he was here at the beginning; he had shared in the birth. He would belong" (168). By pointing out that non-Nigerians, such as Richard, share the excitement of the native population Adichie highlights the gravity of this historic event.

Furthermore, Adichie's novel develops an understanding of a certain ideal Biafra comes to represent. Once the new nation has been established people build up expectations and hopes towards Biafra, which can be comprised in what may be referred to as the "Biafran ideal". It should be noted that the meaning of this ideal is on the one hand created by the leaders of Biafra and the media who spread certain promises concerning life in the republic, and on the other hand it is informed by the Biafrans themselves who voice their anticipations. The text features several references to the "Biafran ideal" nourished by the governing body of the secessionist region. Consider, for instance, the national anthem in which Biafra is referred to as the "*Land of the rising sun, we love and cherish, Beloved homeland of our brave heroes; We must defend our lives or we shall perish*" (Adichie 277). Another part in the establishment of this moral concept is played by the Biafran flag. The significance of its colours is explained in the narrative: "green was for the prosperity Biafra would have, and, finally, the half of a yellow sun stood for the glorious

future” (Adichie 281). Akpome has observed that the “novel’s account alternates between exposition and interpretation, serving to recall the romantic promise which - as the narrative portrays - Biafra held for many Igbo people, and to place the profound loss and disappointment of defeat in a philosophical and historical perspective” (25). In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the characters frequently remind each other of this “romantic promise”. For example, after several air-raids in Umuahia, Odenigbo tries to appease Olanna recalling the promised success of the Biafran project, as in “[w]e’ll get our life back soon in a free Biafra” (Adichie 261).

In her novel, Adichie further conveys the people’s readiness to defend their idealised nation, but she also depicts how rumours of a war are met with expressions of incredulity among many Biafrans. Consider, for example, a passage set shortly after the secession of the eastern region. Richard attends a seminar in Nsukka where people are being prepared for a possible war. Biafra’s leader, Ojukwu, arrives and holds a speech in which he asks people whether they are ready for “[a] long-drawn-out war” (Adichie 171). The crowd reacts with affirmative shouting and the people are calling for guns. The image conveyed here is that Biafrans are eager to defend their new nation by all means. Nevertheless, hardly any of the main characters seem convinced that there will be a war. It is explained that the Englishman cannot imagine a war for “[t]he Nigerians would let Biafra be; they would never fight a people already battered by the massacres. They would be pleased to be rid of the Igbo anyway. Richard was certain about this” (Adichie 169). Although Gowon has already imposed economic sanctions, and many people have left Nsukka for the safety of their removed villages, Odenigbo also does not believe that war is coming (Adichie 173). In contrast, Kainene seems to sense that there will be a war when she tells Richard that “Port Harcourt is going crazy” (Adichie 171), alluding to people’s panicking behaviour. Kainene’s suspicions are confirmed when the news of Nigeria’s embarkment on a police action against Biafra arrives. It is shown through Richard’s eyes how Kainene “made it seem normal, that war was the inevitable outcome of events” (Adichie 180). At this point, Kainene also makes reference to economic reasons behind the conflict when she says that the federation “can’t let us go easily with all that oil” (Adichie 180). It should be noted that Kainene’s thoughts may be informed by the insider knowledge she receives via Madu. As a member of the military, Madu knows about the poor conditions of the Biafran army. Kainene is aware that the army does not possess the arms that Ojukwu promised the people. She dislikes the glorification of Ojukwu that is going on because his leadership resembles a “cause of benign extortion” (Adichie 182) to her, in which soldiers are not charged for taxis anymore and women from villages give all the food they have to the army barracks. Kainene’s position towards Biafra is much more questioning and less hopeful than that of Richard or Olanna, for example. With

regard to the outcome of the conflict, some characters appear to convince themselves that the fighting will be over soon, while others, like Susan, are certain that “this war will drag on for years” (Adichie 182).

The three focalisers of the novel are all Biafran and they appear to share a strong belief in Biafra and its win over the federal forces. The reaction of Olanna and Ugwu to the announcement of the police action shows this. Olanna is sure that Biafran troops will withstand the Nigerian army and Ugwu agrees. When suddenly Nsukka is bombed and they have to leave in a hurry, they drive past Biafran soldiers. Despite the bombing and the hurried escape, Ugwu seems reassured that life in Nsukka will resume soon because “[t]he war would last just long enough for the Biafran army to gas the Nigerians to kingdom come” (Adichie 179). Although statements like this point towards a certainty over Biafra’s win, they also signify the increasing skepticism towards the republic’s success, because these utterances function as a means of calming and reassuring oneself. It can be observed, for example, how Olanna struggles to see Biafra’s future late in the crisis, which is illustrated in several passages. For example, Mrs Muoleku warns Olanna about the fall of Umuahia. For a moment then, Olanna “allow[s] her faith to slip from her fingers” (Adichie 379). This moment of doubt is however countered in the following passage: “Biafra would win, Olanna knew, because Biafra had to win” (Adichie 379-380). Adichie repeatedly exhibits the attempts of characters to restore their faith in Biafra. For instance, towards the end of the war when Ojukwu has left the country to seek outside help, Olanna’s situation is described as follows: “She believed, as firmly and as quietly as she believed that Kainene would come home soon, that His Excellency’s journey would be a success. He would come back with a signed document that would declare the war over, that would proclaim a free Biafra. He would come back with justice and salt” (Adichie 409). Richard experiences similar emotions and people’s doubts about the republic’s success make him angry and uncomfortable. The writer is excited to play a part in the newly established nation and he rejects any talk about its failure. However, the fall of Umuahia also leaves him with doubts. In addition to the focalisers there are numerous other characters who support Biafra, such as Odenigbo. For instance, in the second half of the novel, he expresses his belief in the strength of Biafrans when he questions the hiring of white mercenaries while “[t]here are many of us who can truly fight because we are willing to give ourselves for Biafra” (Adichie 323).

Half of a Yellow Sun is concerned with the Biafrans’ struggle to survive in the war and it gives an insight into various kinds of efforts undertaken by the characters to support the new nation. These endeavours are part of the “win-the-war effort” (Adichie 185). Olanna, for example, joins a group of women in Abba who sew “singlets and towels for the soldiers” (Adichie 185). In Umuahia,

Olanna, Ugwu and Mrs Muoleku set up a school outside to teach “the young ones the ideals of the Biafran cause” (Adichie 296) since the former school has been turned into a refugee camp. Before that, Ugwu was desperate to “join the Civil Defence League or the militia” (Adichie 198). It is further explained how he “longed to play a role, to act. Win the war” (Adichie 199). Odenigbo starts working for the Manpower Directorate and later becomes a part of the “Agitator Corps” which educates people in the villages (Adichie 262). There is a mention of Prof. Ekwenugo and the “Science Group” (Adichie 198) he belongs to, which develops weapons like the “high-impact landmines called *ogbunigwe*” (Adichie 198). All these actions that are part of the “win-the-war effort” can be seen as an expression of a belief in the Biafran cause. With the portrayal of these efforts, Adichie conveys a sense of willingness of the Biafrans to support their nation in whatever possible manner.

Adichie not only chronicles the establishment of Biafra and depicts the life of the main characters in their new identity as Biafrans, but she also interrogates the fate that befell the republic. As observed earlier in this thesis, Adichie’s approach to the topic of the war is much less political or historical than Emecheta’s. This can also be noticed in her depiction of the Biafran crisis in particular. The demise of the republic is largely experienced through the portrayal of the worsening conditions the main protagonists find themselves in. As Hodges has noted, “[t]he more the Biafran War becomes a moment in political history, the less important either politics or history become to Odenigbo, Olanna, Ugwu and the other Biafrans whose lives have been reduced to the permanent present of mere survival” (9). Hodges exemplifies this by referring to the surrender of Biafra which “signifies to Olanna, whose sister has disappeared behind enemy lines only one thing: she can go and find her sister” (9). Once Umuahia falls, Odenigbo and Olanna move to Orlu to live with Kainene and Richard. The ongoing war is making life in Orlu harder each day, as food becomes scarce. Baby has started to lose her hair and to Olanna it seems as if the children in the refugee camp are beginning to lose their memory. The two sisters put a lot of effort into work at the refugee centre. Olanna teaches the children for she is “determined to keep their minds alert; they were Biafra’s future” (Adichie 389), while Kainene organises the planting of food. Nevertheless, the harmattan season makes it almost impossible to grow food. Moreover, the doctor is not visiting any longer due to the general lack of petrol. On the whole, Adichie’s description of the conditions at the refugee camp is very detailed and the reader is given much insight into the deteriorating circumstances. The fate of those characters presented appears to be symbolic for the misery of the whole people of Biafra. By dealing with the growing impact of the war on the lives of the different characters, the narrative shows how Biafra’s fall seemed imminent. Themes, such as the loss of

family and loved ones, starvation and the disruption of life are prominent in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Rather by giving accounts of individual experiences than by evoking politics, Adichie manages to paint the picture of Biafra's fate and thus points towards its seemingly inevitable surrender.

Emecheta's narrative also chronicles the whole period in which the war took place. In contrast to *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Destination Biafra* provides a different context for the emergence of Biafra. The first references to the concept of a new nation are made during the planning of the first military coup. The plotters, who include Momoh and Abosi, are angry at the government's passiveness and they agree that a new set of people should rule the country. The ideals this newly formed country should represent are also described here. Momoh calls for "[a] new Nigeria, where there would be no corruption, no fighting in the streets, where traders need not fear being waylaid by gangs of armed robbers and there would be jobs for everybody" (Emecheta 57). Furthermore, one of the army members proposes to name the new nation "after one of the old lost kingdoms of West Africa" (Emecheta 57), and Nwokolo adds that the overthrow of the government would then happen "in the name of a new and happy country called Biafra" (57). Abosi, however, remains cautious for he does not see the nation as independent. Therefore, he suggests that their "destination is 'Biafra'" (Emecheta 57). Here, Emecheta illustrates how the idea of a new nation is born. It is clearly stated which values and living conditions this new country should hold for the people. Adams sums this up as follows: "Biafra, a theorized ideal, represents a country where all peoples, regardless of their tribal affiliations or ethnic heritage, can benefit from the wealth of their nation without being subject to the corruption of a national bourgeoisie" (292). In the course of the narrative, it is shown that Abosi applies this concept of "Biafra" to the eastern region of Nigeria because he is of the opinion that the rest of the federation does not guarantee safety for the Igbo people. In this way, he promises the Igbos what he would have liked to achieve in the whole country by means of the first military coup.

The secession of the East then is not only presented as a move to liberate the Igbo people, but a rather skeptical perspective is added, indicating the problems the emergence of Biafra might entail. *Destination Biafra* depicts the strategy of the military leaders, Momoh and Abosi, throughout the conflict. Abosi's declaration of independence of Biafra is a reaction to Momoh's division of the country into twelve states. Briefly, it is explained how "[t]he Igbo leaders could hardly restrain the joy and celebration of the people of Eastern Nigeria when the state of Biafra was declared" (Emecheta 99). Skepticism is then uttered in the following paragraph, where it is stated that the breakaway is "a major move against the first republic of Nigeria" (99). Hence, the portrayal of those celebrating the independence of Biafra is immediately followed by another instance of the

narrative's cautioning and at times foreshadowing voice. Moreover, Emecheta's description of the creation of Biafra differs considerably from Adichie's if one considers the involvement of personal experience. While in *Destination Biafra* it is merely "the people of Eastern Nigeria" (Emecheta 99) who are celebrating the secession, Adichie's text depicts the excitement and joy experienced by individuals, such as Olanna or Richard. Hodges has pointed out with regard to Emecheta's passage describing independence that "[t]he tone is documentary, and designed to impress upon the reader its neutral factuality" (6) Emecheta's account of the war becomes more personal, however, in the chapters dealing with Debbie's struggle to achieve her mission.

Considering the attitude towards Biafra that prevails in Emecheta's novel, it should be noted that unlike the clearly pro-Biafran sentiments of Olanna or Richard, Debbie's position is much more ambivalent. The reader is introduced to her feelings when rumours about a possible breakaway have spread but the Republic of Biafra has not yet been declared. On the one hand, Debbie understood people's discontentment with the corrupt government and she hoped that the military coup would bring change. On the other hand, now that civilians are being killed, she sees the reasons behind a possible breakaway of the East. Once Abosi's secession is confirmed, Debbie is appointed to function as a peace-ambassador between the two leaders. As indicated above, the difficulties this newly established nation might have, are repeatedly addressed. Debbie explains, for instance, how Biafra is at a disadvantage because it is only a quarter of Nigeria. She does not understand why the UK cannot support Biafra in case of a war. Alan, who functions on behalf of the British government, then stresses that this "would be against our national policy. How can we want to maintain a United Kingdom, with the hope of joining a united Europe, and then come to Africa and disunite another kingdom?" (Emecheta 110). Further pessimistic utterances towards the future of Biafra are voiced by other characters in the novel. Stella Ogedembge, for instance, refers to the breakaway as "[a] stupid and very, very irresponsible move" (Emecheta 115) and Mr. Teteku points out that no Western country would grant Biafra recognition because it was "born out of mere revolution" (Emecheta 116). It can be noticed that there are repeated indications of Biafra's possible downfall. What is more, these pessimistic attitudes are hardly ever countered by the firm positions of those believing in the Biafran cause, like Olanna or Richard in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Despite these hints towards the demise of Biafra, a kind of an idealistic vision of the enclave can be inferred from *Destination Biafra* too. While there is the ideal the plotters of the first coup address, different characters also express their ideas concerning the promises Biafra holds throughout the novel. On her journey to Abosi in the East, Debbie experiences many cruelties. She is raped by soldiers from the federal side and has to watch innocent civilians get killed by the

Nigerian army. No doubt that these events make her question her identity as a Nigerian soldier. Debbie joined the army to fight against corruption, but now that innocent civilians are being killed it becomes hard for her to identify with the federal side. On the one hand, Debbie appears to believe in the concept of a corruption-free nation in which the different tribes could live peacefully side by side. Thus, she is of the opinion that Abosi needs to be persuaded into reunion because Momoh's ambition would lead him to continue the conquering which in turn would lead to more and more casualties. On the other hand, Debbie sides with the Biafran population. Her sympathy for the Biafrans, however, is not an expression of desire for an independent Biafra because she knows about its inferiority and its over-ambitious leader who would continue the war despite the doomed outlook. It is rather an incidence of a common sense of humanity towards an innocent group of people caught in the midst of a power-struggle. In the narrative, the physical and psychological wounds of Debbie's journey to Biafra lead her to seek recovery in her father's compound in Sapele in the company of her mother. The two women then hold a philosophical discussion about the cause of the war and Abosi's reasons behind continuing the fighting. Debbie is convinced that the war is not just "something between two ambitious soldiers" (Emecheta 153). She explains to her mother:

This is our war. It is the people's war. Our very first war of freedom. Momoh and Abosi started the purge, to wash the country of corruption and exploitation. Now there is a danger of the two men putting their self-interest foremost. If that is the case, the war will be taken out of their control and put into the hands of responsible leaders who will see the purge through and restore to us a new clean Nigeria. (Emecheta 153)

Adams has noted that "[a]s a person who is not a member of any of the major tribes, Debbie is removed from the calls of ethnic nationalism that have split the country. Debbie's desire to see Biafra brought to fruition is thus not a desire to see the rise of an Igbo hegemony, but to have a non-tribalized homeland united in its own interest against imperial domination" (292). Stella Ogedemgbe, however, appears much less naive. She warns her daughter about believing in the good nature of humans: "Go to the Biafra of your dreams, and when you get there you'll find ordinary people. Not angels, just people. And where there are people there will be corruption and exploitation. [...] But maybe we all need our Biafras to keep us going. I only hope you don't get too disappointed with yours when you find it" (Emecheta 153). Stella's wise remarks leave Debbie doubtful. She struggles to give up her hope in a better future, free of corruption as it were. Moreover, she has difficulties thinking of Abosi as one of the corrupt leaders. The confrontation of her mother serves as an interrogation of Debbie's idealistic vision. The Biafran ideal is greatly questioned in this part of the novel. In fact, Stella's observations already point towards the demise of the republic. Nevertheless, other characters still express anticipations concerning life in Biafra.

Among the group of refugees travelling east, is the five-year old Ogo. The strain of the journey leaves Ogo hoping for a better future in the East: “When we get to Biafra, the land will be dry, my mother will be there and my father, and my mother will cook us fried plantain and chicken stew” (Emecheta 200). This idea of Biafra as a land of hope is reinforced in a passage describing Debbie’s feelings after the massacre in Asaba and the death of the refugee boys. Debbie thinks about her manuscript and tells herself that she has to survive the war in order to pass on her memories: “She must try to live, not just for the women but for the memories of boys like Ngbechi” (Emecheta 213). Moreover, she appears more determined than ever to reach Biafra: “She would see that Biafra, that idyllic land of hope which had cost the black race so dear” (Emecheta 213). Morrison has observed that “the novel develops an understanding of “Biafra” not as a stronghold of tribalism or regionalism, but as an alternate paradigm of Nigerian-ness [sic] itself. [...] Debbie’s Biafra comes to represent a rejection of Nigeria’s merely nominal decolonization, and a projection of a more thorough-going ideal of gender, ethnic and class liberation” (17).

The novel also provides an insight into the work of the Biafran leadership which is responsible for creating and spreading the Biafran ideal. Dr. Ozimba, for example, is part of this group. Ozimba wrote the national anthem that is played repeatedly on “Radio Biafra”. It is explained how this anthem has “become a symbol of unity and hope” (Emecheta 214) for the population. Yet, Mrs Ozimba is well aware that her family’s affiliation with the Biafran national anthem renders them an immediate target for the Nigerian army (214). When Mrs Ozimba gets tired of the radio announcer’s “high voice full of buoyancy” (Emecheta 214) talking about great victories of Biafran troops, she confronts her husband about the misleading facts of these news reports. Ozimba then reminds her that “[e]ven if our news is biased, it is our duty to try to believe it and make others believe” (Emecheta 215). The narrative further explores the demise of the republic and the destruction of the Biafran ideal. References to the daily struggle for survival of civilians or the depiction of the fate of people show how disbelief in the success of Biafra has spread and how the Biafran ideal has turned into an illusion even. When Abosi has to admit to members of the cabinet that Biafra cannot hold its promises to the people anymore, it becomes clear that the fall of the enclave is imminent. The boundaries of the republic are shrinking fast and more and more refugees arrive daily, which worries Abosi. He is unsure how to deal with the situation: “Abosi wanted to know what to advise people whose villages had been taken over. Should he tell them to remain there and die of gunshot wounds, or advise them to come to what was left of Biafra and die of hunger?” (Emecheta 217). Nevertheless, he announces that Biafra will continue fighting on “Radio Biafra”. The demise of the republic is further illustrated by an encounter of Biafran soldiers, who

are sent to the Mid-West to conscript young men, and women living in the bush. These women are armed and ready to kill anyone, but the Biafran soldiers try to explain their cause. One of the women then confronts them and asks:

Biafra, Biafra, what is Biafra? You killed our man from this part, Nwokolo; the Nigerian soldiers came and killed what your soldiers left. We are Ibuza people, but we now live in the bush, thanks to your Abosi and your Biafra. [...] And when we needed you, where were you? Where was your Abosi when our girls were being raped in the market places and our grandmothers shot? Please go back to your Biafra. (Emecheta 218)

Emecheta thus chronicles the downfall of Biafra and illustrates the people's disillusionment with the promises the republic held.

In his short story "Girls at War", Achebe also captures the people's reaction towards the establishment of Biafra and its war against the federal side. In fact, he shows different stages of the war and the people's struggle in the changing conditions of life in Biafra. The shared sentiment in the beginning of the war can be identified as overall excitement. Ugochukwu has observed that the texts by Adichie, Achebe and the third author she discusses, "echo the enthusiasm of Biafra's early days" (267). Achebe's narrative describes how men and women are eager to enlist for the army, "burning with readiness to bear arms in defence of the exciting new nation" (101). As an example of this eagerness serves the portrayal of Gladys. The two main protagonists, Gladys and Reginald, first meet when Gladys leaves school in order to become a member of the militia. Having been refused by the militia, the young woman joins Civil Defence. Reginald is impressed by the precision and seriousness with which she carries out her job at the Awka check-point where he comes across her for the second time. Moreover, it is indicated that many girls have taken up demonstrating and marching which used to be ridiculed by Reginald and his friends. After the incident with Gladys, however, "he simply could not sneer at the girls again, nor at the talk of revolution, for he had seen it in action in that young woman whose devotion had simply and without self-righteousness convicted him of gross levity" (Achebe 103). Ugochukwu has referred to this twist in Reginald's mind as "a progressive male change of attitude towards women" (258).

"Girls at War" thus illustrates how women took part in the Biafran cause. Achebe then contrasts the excitement of Biafrans with the horrors of the ongoing war. The third encounter of the two main protagonists is sketched against the background of the final days of the crisis, when "[d]eath and starvation having long chased out the headiness of the early days, now left in some places blank resignation [sic], in others a rock-like, even suicidal, defiance" (Achebe 104). The story is not only concerned with depicting the demise of Biafra in general, but it also interrogates the transformation of society in the crisis, which is indicated in the descriptions surrounding

Gladys. Ugochukwu sums up the transformation Gladys undergoes, which ranges from a change in hairstyle to an alteration in behaviour (257). These changes then reflect the deterioration of society. At first, Gladys was part of the Civil Defence unit, fighting for an ideal and supporting her homeland. Late in the crisis, her appearance leads Reginald to believe that “she had to be in keep of some well-placed gentleman, one of those piling up money out of the war” (Achebe 106). In another passage, it is explained how some people were trying “to enjoy themselves to the limit” (Achebe 104). Hence, the narrative illustrates how the war creates desperation which leads people to profit from it in whichever possible way. It remains unclear whether Gladys really had a relationship with a wealthy man, but nevertheless it is indicated that this is a way of surviving in the conflict for women². Reginald notices these changes in society, and even though he is ashamed of it, he is a part of this transformed world. He takes Gladys “to a real swinging party” in Owerri to impress her, but he immediately regrets his decision. Reginald feels shameful about his own exploitative behaviour towards Gladys, “who had once had such beautiful faith in the struggle and was betrayed (no doubt about it) by some man like him out for a good time” (Achebe 108). Although he notices and resents the transformed society, he has to acknowledge that he is not much different from those he criticises. On a different occasion, it is pointed out that the change of behaviour in the war includes the readiness of girls to yield to a man’s affection, as in “[t]oo many girls were simply too easy those days. War sickness, some called it” (Achebe 109). This development is further explored in the story in exclamations, such as “[w]hat a terrible fate to befall a whole generation! The mothers of tomorrow!” (Achebe 116), which reflect Reginald’s thoughts. Despite his pessimistic outlook on society, he feels that he could save Gladys from completely being absorbed by the decaying world, because she “was just a mirror reflecting a society that had gone completely rotten and maggoty at the centre. The mirror itself was intact; a lot of smudge but no more” (Achebe 116). Achebe’s concern with the change of morale during the war seems to stem from his beliefs regarding the profession of writing. In an interview conducted during the war, in 1968, Achebe himself explains that “the role of the writer depends to some extent on the state of health of his society. In other words, if a society is ill he has a responsibility to point it out. If the society is healthy - I do not know of any one - his job is limited” (36).

5.2. Biafra in Kalu’s and Abani’s writing

Kalu’s short story collection does not feature any references to the establishment of Biafra and the political significance of the move, but since its focus is set on ordinary people living inside

² Ways of survival will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6.2.

the secessionist region, one can draw conclusions about their position towards Biafra from the descriptions of their thoughts and beliefs. For instance, “Broken Lives” tells the story of Nneoma and her family who leave their town for the safety of the distant farmlands after having received news that federal troops will soon take control of all remaining Biafran towns. The narrative then shows the chaotic and insecure situation of the immediate aftermath of the war. Peace troops have been sent to restore order, but they seem to represent anything but help for the civilians of the area for they rape the women and harass the men. Considering the portrayal of Biafra, Kalu sheds light on people’s emotions following the fall of the republic. A scenery description illustrates the proximity of despair and hope among Biafrans as follows: “Dusty, bullet-ridden buildings, a bomb crater in front of the Seventh Day Adventist church, the empty soccer field with its dry red earth and brown grass nursed the left-over fear about tomorrow that Biafrans had acquired during the war. But these were also the signs of their survival, rea-sons [sic] for continuing” (Kalu 90).

In a different story by Kalu, called “Children’s Day”, a reference to the significance of Biafra for the community can be found. This story deals with a family that has been torn apart temporarily. At the centre of the narrative are the children, Uzo, Nnenna, Iheoma and Ofor, whose mother left them without an explanation. Awaiting their mother’s return, the children soon get tired of their favourite games and since they lost the key to the fridge the food is scarce. The former housegirl, Ngozi, then arrives and takes care of the children. Since Ngozi does not know where their mother is either and because an air-raid strikes the village, she decides to look for the mother herself and leave with the children. They manage to secure a ride on a mammy wagon heading for Umuahia. The vehicle breaks down on the way, however, and the passengers are forced to wait for a mechanic for hours. Soon, the women begin singing wartime songs and the men tell stories of the war. When the women want to share their food with the younger ones, Uzo asks one of them to keep it for her own children. The mother then points out that “Biafra’s children are all from one mother. When we understand that, we will win this war” (Kalu 119). “Children’s Day” echoes Emecheta’s indications in *Destination Biafra*, where it is explained that a child belongs to the community as well as to the biological parents. Kalu here shows a thorough generosity exhibited by the Biafran community which stands in stark contrast to the corruption and greed of the country’s leaders that is highlighted in Emecheta’s narrative for example. The meaning of being a child in Nigeria is further investigated by Kalu in the last story of her collection, called “The Gift”. As indicated by Obiechina, this narrative “links the life of the narrator, the gift-child Onyinye, to the essence of motherhood, community, home, and, ultimately, the motherland or the wider community of the nation-state” (xix). In the story, Onyinye explains how her mother desperately craved a child.

Thus, Onyinye's birth fulfils the mother and makes her call the child "Gift". Yet, the young girl struggles to understand the meaning of her being a gift. It is mentioned how her mother informs her about ancestral wisdom, including the concept of "Nneka" or "Nne" which "refers to all that you come from. It is all your kinship, the land, our people" (Kalu 175). Spiritually, the girl then travels to all the places that feel like home to her, but still she does not fully grasp the concept until one day when she finally realises that "Nneka is Nigeria" (Kalu 176). Her mother and her grandmother frequently quarrel, but her father calms Onyinye by explaining that "[i]t's the quarrel between kinsfolk. It doesn't reach the bone" (Kalu 176). The narrative then shifts to the issue of the war by giving an allegorical reference to the conflict between Nigeria and Biafra, in which Biafra is the child of Nigeria: "When Nigeria quarreled with her children, people died. Unlike the quarrels between Nenne and Mama, the one between Nigeria and her children shook the earth and rent the sky in pieces" (Kalu 176). Kalu here exhibits a subtle method of addressing the civil war. She does not explicitly mention Biafra or politics in this story, but she shows the disillusion of a child, that believed in the idea of a unified country, in the face of war.

Abani approaches the subject of Biafra and the war in his novel in a unique way. *Song for Night* is perhaps the text least referential to historical events or places, yet it provides an insight into the position of young men towards the conflict. There are references to the tensions between Muslim and Igbo people, indications of foreign influence in the war, and the mentioning of "three years of a civil war" (Abani 21), which all point towards an identification of the Nigerian Civil War as the narrative's background. My Luck refers to the troops he belongs to as "the rebels" (Abani 13), while the opponents are called "the enemy" or "federal troops" (Abani 13). Thus, the narrator places himself on the side of Biafra. It is then his position towards the war which the reader receives throughout the narrative. Although the specifics of the political background remain untold, Abani conveys in a few sentences the consciousness of those affected by the massacres in the North that among other things eventually led to the secession of the East in the opening chapter of the text:

It has been three years of a senseless war, and though the reasons for it are clear, and though we will continue to fight until we are ordered to stop - and probably for a while after that - none of us can remember the hate that led us there. We are simply fighting to survive the war. [...] I joined up at twelve. We all wanted to join then: to fight. There was a clear enemy, and having lost loved ones to them, we all wanted revenge. (9)

Here, the narrator alludes to the absurdity of the conflict in which the participants have long since forgotten the initial reason for the fighting, but at the same time he recalls the cause for their own willingness to kill, which is revenge. In this short paragraph, it seems as if Abani sums up many of the aspects that are featured in the other texts. First, there is the excitement of people in the early

days of the war, which is illustrated in Emecheta, Adichie and Achebe. Second, Abani indicates that even if the war is over, there will be trouble, which is depicted in Kalu's "Broken Lives" where "[e]veryone was busy staying alive in this restless peace" (96). *Song for Night* does not include many details on politics or history, but it gives a vivid account of a soldier's life in the war. Numerous descriptions of battle tactics and the cruelties of the war are featured in this text, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

6. People at War

A significant element common to all texts is the portrayal of different kinds of people whose lives have been disrupted by the Nigerian Civil War. The focus in this chapter will be placed on the major war situations that can be identified in the narratives. First, accounts of soldiers fighting on the front are given in the texts. The soldiers are not only presented in battles but their behaviour is indicated, such as the harassment of civilians and rape. Second, much weight seems to be placed on the display of civilians fighting for survival. Here, the most common threats to civilians as presented in the texts will be examined as well as their endeavours to survive the crisis. Moreover, some authors emphasise the role women played in the war in their writing, which will be the last aspect discussed in this chapter.

6.1. Fighting on the Front

All of the works analysed in this thesis feature references to the army and sometimes also stories of individual soldiers are described. One of the texts that canvasses a soldier's life in the war is Abani's *Song for Night*. The first-person narrative provides a shocking insight into the conditions of Biafran child soldiers. The narrator, My Luck, explains that he belongs to a troop of mine defusers whose vocal chords have been cut at the last day of their training in boot camp in order to prevent them from screaming at the sight of fellow soldiers who are hit by mine explosions. However, My Luck adds that "[w]hat [their leaders] couldn't know was that in the silence of our heads, the screams of those dying around us were louder than if they still had their voices" (Abani 25). The boys were chosen to become mine defusers because of their light weight which would not set off a mine. However, My Luck soon discovered that this is not true (Abani 11). It is explained that his platoon defuses mines on access routes and carries rifles and machetes. The young boy often refers to his existence as a soldier as his "job" which makes him "concentrate on every second of [his] life as though it were the last" (Abani 11). Moreover, he says that "[i]t is a strange place to be at fifteen, bereft of hope and very nearly of your humanity" (Abani 9). It is a change in character that My Luck experienced when the tribal conflict started that leads him to speak of a near loss of humanity.

He indicates that he enjoys killing because it represents revenge for his mother who was murdered by Northerners. Yet, the recollections of the soldier's wartime experiences illustrate that My Luck is anything but bereft of humanity. For instance, an incident in a small village leaves him restless and terrified. His troop comes across a group of women roasting meat and My Luck asks them to share it with them, but he realises that the women are eating a small child. The boys open fire on the women and the child's head rolls towards My Luck's feet. He appears traumatised by this experience, unlike his fellow soldiers who "cheered at the snapping of old bones and the sigh of tired flesh" (Abani 19). As he explains, "[i]t is that little face, maybe a few months old, that keeps me from rest" (Abani 19). Furthermore, there is an officer, nicknamed John Wayne, who appears to be the epitome of inhumanity. He is described as "the officer who enlisted and trained us and supervised our throat-cutting and our first three months in the field, the man who was determined to turn us into animals - until I shot him" (Abani 29). One of the instances that points towards the scale of John Wayne's atrocities is his attempt to rape a seven-year-old girl. Yet, this is also the moment when My Luck reaches the limit of his patience with Wayne and shoots him. In the novel, the narrator remembers another incident involving the cruelties of Wayne. My Luck was forced by Wayne to shoot the rebel minister, but his pregnant wife threw herself in front of him and died. Here even My Luck's comrades seem affected by the atrocities committed in the name of Biafra. He observes that the soldiers were all shocked at the display of such love:

That kind of love we had only seen in the movies, never in real life and certainly not in this war. It was a very strange moment for us. We had seen fathers shoot their children on our orders, sons rape their mothers, children forced to hack their parents to death - the worst atrocities - all of which we witnessed impassively. But this was different. We all cried when that woman died, except John Wayne, who was well lost. It wasn't dramatic really, just silent tears and a shame that kept us from meeting each other's eyes. (Abani 95)

On the whole, a significant part of My Luck's existence as a mine defuser is defined by the witnessing of war cruelties first hand or seeing manifestations thereof in places he comes across. Throughout the story, the narrator then shares his experiences and emotions.

Additionally, the reader receives an insight into the ways of the war in *Song for Night*. The narrator frequently describes and evaluates wartime practices, such as his explanation of how an ambush by the enemy works (Abani 37). Mines are set up in the bush near a road and the federal soldiers await the approach of the Biafran troops. Once they are in sight, shots are fired in order to make the Biafrans run for the bush to hide. As My Luck puts it, "we scatter for cover, stumbling onto the mines, blowing up ourselves and our friends" (Abani 37). At boot camp the group of soldiers My Luck belongs to was taught the content of a "military manual" by Wayne (Abani 23). Through recollections of the training and the exercising of formations and moves, Abani's narrative

gives the reader an impression of war strategies. For instance, the text makes reference to a particular formation, called “funnel” (Abani 38), developed by the leaders of the Biafran army. In this formation, the scouts with radios and satellites, and kamikazes form the head of the troop, followed by mine defusers trying to clear the road for the rest of the soldiers (Abani 38). My Luck also mentions the clean-up crew who is responsible for counting casualties. He reflects on the crew’s job more closely and explains that it is difficult to count bodies when they have been torn into pieces by a mine explosion (Abani 40). Furthermore, My Luck evaluates the “[p]ros and cons of being at the front of every battle” (Abani 39) in the narrative. A list of bullet points here serves to emphasise his outlook on frontline fighting. Among others, the advantages include pillaging chances, a quick death or the fact that the kamikazes die first, while under the category disadvantages “Death” is listed three times (Abani 39). It could be argued that the way in which My Luck mediates on this topic and in general the manner in which he recounts wartime experiences seems matter-of-fact and unemotional at first. Yet, the narrative is frequently permeated by his thoughts on the Biafran or the federal army’s practices, which provides a more personal touch. Consider for example the subsequent excerpt in which My Luck speaks about the effects of using landmines in the war:

This is the enemy’s cruelty - that much of the generation who survive this war will not be able to rebuild their communities. Even now it is not uncommon to run across groups of these half-people holding onto life in distant parts of the forest. Even the enemy soldiers spare these pitiful creatures when they come across them. [...] Children without arms or legs or both, men with only half a face, women with shrapnel-chewed scars for breasts - all of them holding onto life and hope with a fire that burned feverishly in their eyes. If any light comes from this war, it will come from eyes such as those. (Abani 40)

My Luck appears to admit that the experiences during the war have emotionally hardened him and the others. Nevertheless, the sight of a girl who has only one leg left and dances to radio music leaves him touched and impressed, because as he explains: “I have never seen anything like it before or since - a small sprite shaking the world and reducing grown war-hardened onlookers to tears” (Abani 41). Passages such as this illustrate how the young soldier appears both hardened but at the same time deeply moved by the cruelties of the war.

Furthermore, the thoughts and beliefs of these Biafran soldiers towards the war are explored in *Song for Night*. My Luck describes, for instance, the intensive bombing of territory occupied by Biafran soldiers. He reminisces about this time in which his troop hid in the forest, tired of the front: “We didn’t want to move on, didn’t want to press on to the front. We weren’t stupid and we were certainly no longer idealistic. It was the systematic strafing campaign aimed at flushing out rebel soldiers hiding in the forest, a campaign that rained bombs on us, turning the forest into an

inferno that made us leave” (Abani 48). Concerning the soldiers’ position towards the war, it is indicated here that a transformation has taken place among them, in which idealism has been replaced with the knowledge of reality which leads them to flee from the federal forces acknowledging their strength and admitting the failure of the Biafran republic.

Abani’s narrative not only illustrates military strategies employed by Nigeria or Biafra, but it also highlights other practices of Biafran soldiers besides fighting on the front. My Luck’s position is largely defined by defusing mines. Nevertheless, a lot of time is spent on looting villages. In this way, the boy has come into possession of goods, such as watches, electronic devices, designer clothes or expensive shoes. It is explained that both federal and Biafran soldiers plundered villages during the war (Abani 44). My Luck believes that he and his troop “will be well off after the war” (Abani 44) considering the value of their possessions. They have made stashes on their way since the looted goods have become too heavy to carry around. The text indicates that the practice of looting often involves the killing of civilians. My Luck remembers a day where a whole village was destroyed, its people were killed and their goods were stolen (Abani 77). However, it is not only part of the soldiers’ lives to take whatever valuables they find into their possession, but also civilians seem to revert to these desperate practices. For instance, on the journey to find his platoon My Luck comes across a woman carrying a bag of looted goods (Abani 75-76). As she has a pole with a hook at the top he figures that she pulls bodies out of the water and searches them for valuable things. The young soldier is appalled by this discovery and feels that it is “despicable” (Abani 76) to steal from the dead. Moreover, towards the end of the narrative, he crosses a town in which only children can be seen playing in the streets, which leads him to say: “I assume that most of the adults are either hiding or at work scavenging old farms or battlefields, trying to eke out a living. Life has to go on, war regardless” (Abani 94).

On the whole, Abani’s *Song for Night* gives an account of the war mediated through the story of the dead My Luck, who as a teenage soldier experienced and committed atrocities and remembers these in his narrative. The events of his past deeply affect him for the memory of cruelties and losses haunts him. To conclude, Abani seems to point towards the fate of other child soldiers in the Nigerian Civil War through disclosing My Luck’s experiences in boot camp and during the war.

Another text that canvasses the life of a Biafran soldier in the Nigerian Civil War is Kalu’s “Osondu”. Osondu is a Biafran soldier who is “part of an emergency rescue operation” (Kalu 161). At the beginning of the story, the two warring sides have agreed to a cease-fire, which leaves Osondu waiting in the trenches, plagued by lice and hunger, for the medical team to arrive. Aside

from interrogating the soldier's condition in the war, Kalu's story goes into detail describing the difficulties of the landscape in which the battles take place. The trenches Osondu finds himself in are muddy since they are close to the river and, in general, the conditions both in the rainy and the dry season make it problematic to continue the fighting. Concerning Osondu's position towards the war, it is stated that "[h]e loved the ambushes, the attacks" (Kalu 162). However, the harsh circumstances have made him exhausted: "But today Osondu was tired of the filth and the unforgiving hunger that squeezed his stomach" (Kalu 162). When the medical team arrives, Osondu recognises a former classmate, named Mike among them. With the portrayal of Mike, a strongly contrasting image is created. While Osondu's clothes are torn and dirty, Mike "[is] impeccably dressed; the creases on his uni-form [sic] [are] razor sharp" (Kalu 162). After the treatment of Osondu's rashes, the men shake hands to say goodbye. However, there is a sudden explosion and Mike's head is torn off. Kalu's story then dives into narrating the battle that follows (163-164). Osondu hurries back to his position in the trenches but after an hour of firing the Biafran captain orders a retreat. At first, the soldiers are retreating in line but soon their bullets run out and they start running for cover. Kalu describes the impact of the attack and the panic of the retreat as follows: "Another ex-plosion [sic] caught a group of men, including the captain, sending more shrapnel and body parts flying. Dust and smoke bil-lowed [sic]. More men fell. Others ran. It was everyone for himself" (Kalu 164). The more chaotic and turbulent the events become the more fragmented the sentences in this passage are. Thus, the short sentences in the passage above serve to illustrate the hurried escape of Osondu and his fellow soldiers and the panic that breaks out. Osondu then finds himself in the company of Chidi. Together, the two soldiers manage to flee from the federal attack. The rest of the story deals with their arrival at a farm where people have been massacred. Osondu and Chidi start burying the corpses of the villagers but they are confronted by women who think they are enemy soldiers. Chidi manages to bring the women to listen to him and he is recognised by one of them who is his sister. The women inform the soldiers that the war is over which comes to them as a shock. Although Kalu's story starts with an account of a soldier's condition in the war, its focus then shifts to a portrayal of ordinary women who have found a way to survive the war (the significance of these female characters will be explored in chapter 6.3).

Another story by Kalu which explores the existence of Biafran soldiers is "Broken Lives". Although it is set in the aftermath of the war and there are no passages describing battles, it features characters, who fought in the war, and flashbacks to the weeks preceding its end. One of the soldiers presented in the story is Orji, Nneoma's husband. It is explained that Orji joined the emergency forces during the war, but since he was shot in the side he had to return home for

recovery (Kalu 91). “For the re-mainder [sic] of the war he carried a wounded-in-action pass in the pockets of his fatigue trousers, which had become his badge of honor” (Kalu 91). The fact that these items symbolise a badge of honour could indicate that his efforts for Biafra will never be properly honoured. Furthermore, the story introduces another soldier, called Okoro, who also joined the Emergency Army. Following his recruitment, his father, a rather superstitious man, bribed the recruiting officers to protect Okoro since he was told by a *dibia* that Okoro would not live long (Kalu 89). Therefore, Okoro has never fought on the front. In the position he holds, “he [is] used as every officer’s batman. Working mostly as a civilian patrol officer in Akasi, part of his job [is] to organise women and children to fetch firewood and water for the army camp on the hill” (Kalu 89). Okoro behaves nicely towards the civilians, which distinguishes him from the other soldiers. “Broken Lives” makes only a few references to the conditions of Biafran soldiers, but it stresses the uncertainty that the end of the war brought with it. Through the portrayal of Orji, whose wife is abducted by peace soldiers, it becomes clear that in the aftermath of the war Biafrans could hardly rebuild their lives in peace. As Kalu points out, for instance, “[t]he only sure thing was the brutality of the enemy troops, who had brought soldiers from other countries to help restore peace and unity” (92) or “this thing that had come with the end of the war was great indeed. It was carrying something on its head and hiding more in its armpit” (92). In general, Kalu’s portrayal of soldiers is often mixed with or incorporated into narratives dealing with ordinary civilians. Consider, for instance, the story “The Last Push” which deals with a family, who lives in a Biafran town, and tries to escape the increasing air bombardment of the federal forces. Chika’s husband, Uche, has joined the emergency troops and thus she is alone with her three children. The story does not focus on a soldier’s life in the war, but at the end of it Uche returns to the village and the image that is created of the soldier seems like an indication of what life on the front must have been like: “The thin, hungry-looking man in the Biafran army uniform looked familiar. [...] His unsure embrace, the pain hiding in his voice, his lost right arm” (Kalu 63). In this manner “The Last Push” touches upon the aspect of fighting on the front although it is primarily concerned with a family’s escape from the federal side’s final attack and the return to the village.

Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* also broaches the issue of soldiers in the Nigerian Civil War through the portrayal of Ugwu. During the war the teenager moves to Umuahia with Odenigbo’s family. Olanna is worried about the boy’s possible conscription and warns him to be careful outside in the streets. Once Ugwu is caught by two soldiers who are forcing men and boys to enlist but Olanna manages to bribe them to release Ugwu. On a different occasion, however, he is captured again but this time there is no chance to escape recruitment. Above all, the young man experiences

fear and pride during this period of his life. For instance, in the van Ugwu tries to “show nothing of the fear that was crawling all over him” (Adichie 358). Additionally, following the description of a training camp that involves parading and rope climbing it is stated that “the casual cruelty of this new world in which he had no say grew a hard clot of fear inside him” (Adichie 359). Nevertheless, Adichie also illustrates how the teenager enjoys the idea of defending his homeland, when she writes that “Ugwu’s fear mixed with excitement at the thought that he was a soldier fighting for Biafra” (359). Furthermore, although he ponders escaping, it is explained that “he would not even try, he knew, because part of him wanted to be here (Adichie 361).

Half of a Yellow Sun further depicts the young soldier’s first time on the war front. At this stage, a description of the conditions in the trenches at night is given (Adichie 361-362). After burying an “*ogbunigwe*” Ugwu awaits the advance of the “vandals” to trigger its detonation. In this novel *ogbunigwe* is described as a “high-impact landmine” (Adichie 359). Ugwu was first told about this ingenious Biafran invention by Professor Ekwenugo. Now, however, he feels the disillusionment at the sight of this weapon:

How glamorous it sounded, this Biafran-made mine, this Ojukwu Bucket, this wonder that was so perplexing to the vandals that they were said to send cattle herds ahead to understand just how the *ogbunigwe* killed so many. But when he went to the first training session, he stared at what was before him: a dull metal container full of scrap metal. (Adichie 359)

The inconspicuous appearance of this Biafran weapon is misleading however, for Ugwu detonates his *ogbunigwe* and kills many of the advancing Nigerian soldiers with it. Through this action the teenager becomes a hero in the camp and “[s]uccess hauled him up above the ground” (Adichie 363). In her novel, Adichie continues to describe Ugwu’s sensations during and after battles and it becomes clear that the boy feels fear above all. In the trenches “[h]e unwrapped his mind from his body” (Adichie 365) which is a protective mechanism for him to block out the haunting images of half-dead men. Yet, in the camp he cannot uphold this separation and the memories of battles become vivid again. In his last operation, the young soldier lies in the trenches next to Captain Ohaeto, who “was a captain he admired, a solitary and disciplined man” (Adichie 366). The men are hit by an explosion, however, which kills Ohaeto and leaves Ugwu severely injured.

The novel not only provides an insight into this soldier’s mind but it also gives an account of the Biafran soldiers’ daily lives in-between fighting. For example, the young men spend their free time playing cards and drinking gin (Adichie 359, 363). Ugwu has started smoking and it is explained that following the Biafran recovery of Owerri, the rules in the camp have become more relaxed and the soldiers are allowed to go out (Adichie 363). Hence, they make their way to a bar by forcing civilians to hand over their car. Moreover, a young boy referred to as High-Tech reveals

to Ugwu the practices of the Nigerian army. He claims that they consume meat and had a cease-fire at Easter where they shared their food with the enemy (361). As High-Tech informs Ugwu on their way to training camp that he belongs to a battalion of field engineers and that he has to detect the enemy, one is perhaps reminded of Abani's *Song for Night* in which the issue of child soldiers working as spies or mine-defusers is also addressed.

Among other Biafran soldier characters depicted in Adichie's narrative are Okeoma and Inatimi. Concerning Okeoma, it is indicated through Ugwu's perspective that the war has changed his appearance much, "the untidy hair and rumpled shirt of the poet were gone. His smart-fitting army uniform made him look straighter, leaner, and the sleeve had a skull-and-bones image next to the half of a yellow sun" (Adichie 201). Inatimi is introduced as man who belongs to the "Biafran Organization of Freedom Fighters" (Adichie 319) and teaches the refugees at the camp about the Biafran cause. It is implied that Inatimi, who lost his family in the massacres, holds a strong belief in Biafra's success. In Richard's view, "Inatimi's god was Biafra. His was a fervent faith in the cause" (Adichie 319). Unlike other men who had to be conscripted to fight for Biafra, Inatimi appears to have a strong desire to defend the republic.

The main soldier characters in the texts by Adichie, Abani and Kalu are all Biafran. By comparison, *Destination Biafra* portrays a wider range of army characters. Emecheta's main character, Debbie, belongs to the Nigerian army but she is not depicted in battles on the war front. This might simply be due to the fact that Debbie has been appointed with a different task which in turn very well leads her to encounter battle zones, such as the city of Asaba. Yet, there are other characters who are involved in battles, such as Salihu Lawal, who is first introduced as a sergeant in the Nigerian army (Emecheta 120). Lawal, who is later promoted to Colonel, is presented as a cruel man who kills civilians in the military operations he carries out. In fact, from a Biafran point of view Lawal seems even more dangerous and intimidating than Momoh, the head of the Nigerian army, as he is fighting on the front and is directly responsible for civilian casualties, as opposed to Momoh who does not go into battle. The danger Lawal represents is illustrated in a passage towards the end of the novel where Debbie tries to stop Abosi from leaving Biafra. Here, it is stated that "[h]e must not be allowed to escape and leave all the believers of his dream to face Lawal and his crazy Operation Mosquito campaign" (Emecheta 244). Thus, Debbie identifies Lawal as the feared enemy rather than Momoh.

In *Destination Biafra* not much weight is put on telling the story of soldiers fighting in the trenches, as it is done in "Osondu" or in *Half of a Yellow Sun* to some extent. Yet, Emecheta addresses another issue concerning the lives of soldiers in the war, which is the power of guns. On

several occasions the novel conveys that young men who joined the army in the early 1960s enjoy the power that comes with the weapons they are given. The text demonstrates how young soldiers feel a sense of empowerment through the increasing influence of the military in the country in the mid-1960s. Consider, for example, a passage describing the deaths of civilians in the streets of Ibadan caused by a quarrel between the two politicians, Odumosu and Durosaro (Emecheta 47). In the wake of this power struggle “[o]ver thirty people had been killed . . . thugs had been employed by both sides and innocent people were being killed in the streets” (Emecheta 47). Therefore, the army intervenes to restore order. Soldiers are marching through Ibadan and when Emecheta writes that “[t]o them it was like a game; they had never had so much power, they had never felt so important. These young people were almost unsupervised for the dayshift” (51), she points towards the danger these young soldiers pose to the civilian population. While Adichie’s approach provides Ugwu’s perspective on his recruitment, Emecheta hardly shares individual sentiments and sticks to descriptions valid for the masses, with the exception of an insight into Debbie’s reason behind joining the army: “For her, joining the army was not a matter of going into action to shoot. She would be trained in military familiarization, but what she really hoped to achieve was to be a lecturer in one of the military academies” (54). A further passage that illustrates the general sentiments of the members of the federal army states that “the soldiers were enjoying their new-found power” (Emecheta 54). Since these passages occur in chapters dealing with the heated times leading up to the first military coup, their function could be to indicate a possible escalation of the situation involving the overthrow of the government. Yet, once the country has been plunged into a war, Emecheta continues to depict the immaturity and naivety of Nigerian soldiers and the danger these armed men on the loose pose. For instance, when Alan Grey is appointed to train Nigerian soldiers to prepare them for military operations to retake cities, it is pointed out that most of the recruits are merely boys and lack discipline and that “[t]he rank and file in the Nigerian military were still those who had failed to get employ-ment [sic] elsewhere; at least in the army they were fed. However, most of them were simply cannon fodder” (Emecheta 148). Moreover, alluding to the soldiers’ naive approach to fighting, it is explained that “Alan did his best to encourage the excited young men who thought Biafra was child’s play, involving only a handful of Igbos” (Emecheta 148). Debbie then encounters the Nigerian soldiers who have retaken the city of Benin from where she is trying to reach Aba. She is shocked to see that Benin looks like “a playground that had been taken over by rough boys. [...] The false jubilation which Debbie and her mother had witnessed only a few weeks before had given way to the mad joy of revenge, killing and acquisition” (Emecheta 155). On the way to Asaba the lorry Debbie has managed to get on is

stopped by the Nigerian army and Igbo soldiers are ordered to step out. Indicating the immensely cruel nature of the behaviour of the Nigerian soldiers, Emecheta then writes that “it was time for the threatened holocaust” (162). The Igbo men are separated from the women and those who try to flee are shot. The women are forced to strip down in front of the soldiers and later Debbie is raped by Salihu Lawal who commands the troop. It should be considered that in contrast to the image the federal soldiers receive here, the Biafran army is shown in a much better light. Biafran soldiers attack the lorry in which Debbie and the refugees are travelling, and after having overwhelmed the drivers and capturing a Nigerian soldier, “the gentle voice of an Igbo soldier” (Emecheta 178) asks them to step out. The Biafrans seem helpful and try to lead the women and children safely to the East. As opposed to the portrayal of the powerful federal soldiers, the Biafrans wear “tattered uniforms with leaves tied on their cloth hats” (Emecheta 178). Furthermore, Debbie is aware that “[t]he token soldiers along this border would not be able to defend and hold this place long, against the heavy armoured cars she had seen hidden in the bush” (Emecheta 179). Inevitably, sympathy for the weaker Biafran soldiers is thus being created in the novel.

In *Destination Biafra* Emecheta also addresses military moves when she writes about “Operation Mosquito” for instance. In this mission Lawal is appointed by Momoh to retake the cities of Ore and Benin. It is called “Operation Mosquito” because Momoh regards “the Igbos as Nigeria’s symbolic mosquitoes” (Emecheta 147). Concerning action taken by the Biafran military, there are references to *ogbunigwe*. In contrast to the employment of this term in Adichie’s novel, where it refers to a landmine, Emecheta uses it in a different context. It is explained that scientists have developed a biological weapon and that “hundreds of Nigerian soldiers were trapped and killed by the biological method known locally as ‘Ogbu-nigwe’ [sic], killer of the crowd” (Emecheta 218). In another chapter, it is described in more detail how over five hundred Nigerian soldiers under the command of Lawal are killed in their sleep. Even the war-hardened Lawal seems puzzled when he says to the remaining soldiers: “All of you get into your uniforms. I can face the bullet, but not this deadly biological thing. I don’t understand it” (Emecheta 238).

Achebe’s short story collection offers only scarce references to soldiers and battles. In the three stories that deal with the Nigerian Civil War, however, a certain image of the Biafran army is created. First, “Civil Peace” deals with Jonathan and his family who are survivors of the war. In the opening paragraphs it is explained that Jonathan is lucky to still have his wife, three out of four children and his bicycle. A description of an officer Jonathan lent the bicycle to then follows:

Hard as its loss would have been to him he would still have let it go without a thought had he not had some doubts about the genuineness [sic] of the officer. It wasn’t his disreputable rags, nor the toes peeping out of one blue and one brown canvas shoes, nor yet the two stars

of his rank done obviously in a hurry in biro, that troubled Jonathan; many good and heroic soldiers looked the same or worse. It was rather a certain lack of grip and firmness in his manner. (Achebe 82-83)

Achebe indicates that the appearance of officers or soldiers is far from glorious or heroic. Although it is not explicitly stated the officer, genuine or not, appears to be Biafran for it is later explained that the main protagonist made “Biafran money ferrying camp officials and their families across the four-mile stretch to the nearest tarred road” (Achebe 83). In “Girls at War”, a soldier character is introduced when Reginald and his driver take Gladys home in his car. They encounter him on the roadside and stop to pick him up. He is described as follows: “The soldier, a mere boy, in filthy khaki drenched in sweat lacked his right leg from the knee down. He seemed not only grateful that a car should stop for him but greatly surprised” (Achebe 118). Achebe here addresses the issue of soldiers who were wounded in action. As it is indicated, this soldier hardly encounters any support in his condition and he is not treated as a hero. Nevertheless, “Girls at War” suggests that the war front is a place of heroes. Achebe defines heroism in Biafra when he writes that “heroism [...] happened most times far, far below the eye-level of the people in this story — in out-of-the-way refugee camps, in the damp tatters, in the hungry and bare-handed courage of the first line of fire” (104)³. In fact, the narrator points out here that the story’s characters are not involved in heroic acts which occur in other places inside Biafra and at the war front. Hence, “Girls at War” offers a perspective from which soldiers who are fighting on the front are regarded as heroes. Nevertheless, Gladys turns out to be a heroine herself when she tries to save the soldier from the car in the middle of an air raid.

On the whole, Achebe’s focus does not lie in the presentation of soldiers as such. In his war stories, the reader’s attention is drawn towards civilians who have survived the war, as in “Civil Peace” or “Sugar Baby”, or towards Biafrans trying to make it through the war, as in “Girls at War”. Ugochukwu emphasises this when she writes with respect to Achebe’s choice of main characters in “Girls at War” that “[f]ar from the heroism of the first days and the courage of the war front, they are ordinary people desperate to live” (255).

Lastly, the stories of rape are also part of soldier narratives. It is noticeable that rape is not always told from the victim’s perspective but sometimes also presented as an unsettling experience from the soldier’s point of view. Consider, for example, *Song for Night* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Both texts feature descriptions of rape providing the male perspective. In Abani’s work, John Wayne forces My Luck to rape a woman in a village his troop has destroyed. It is a cruel scene in

³ Ugochukwu has written about this passage pointing out other issues Achebe focuses on, such as “food shortage and starving populations” (266).

which Wayne points a gun at My Luck's head ordering him to "[r]ape or die" (Abani 77). The woman is comforting the young soldier during the rape which makes him cry. It is an experience that seems disturbing and traumatising but My Luck admits that "[s]ome part of [him] was enjoying it and that perhaps hurt [him] the most" (Abani 77). He is also aware of the implications of the rape, which becomes clear when he explains: "I was thirteen, armed and lost in a war with the taste for rape" (Abani 78). My Luck despises himself for committing such a crime and yet it is likely to recur, as his statements indicate. The young soldier continues to relate, however, that Ijeoma saved him from further atrocities because she became his girlfriend, and "while the others were raping the women and sometimes the men" (Abani 78) Ijeoma and My Luck made love "to make sure that amongst all that horror, there was still love" (78).

Adichie's novel also shares the experience of rape from the rapist's perspective through the portrayal of Ugwu. After his success in a military operation, Ugwu, now also known as "Target Destroyer" (Adichie 365), becomes a hero in his troop. At a bar the boys are celebrating and drinking and they start to rape the bar tender one by one. As they call on Ugwu to take his turn he initially objects, but when the group provokes and teases him he starts to rape her. Adichie then describes his climax as "a self-loathing release" (365). The choice of words here signifies Ugwu's contradicting emotions. Like My Luck, a part of him enjoys the experience. Yet, in the following chapters it becomes evident that the teenage soldier is haunted by the memory of the rape and feels hate for himself (Adichie 397). His image of the incident is blurred and "he could not remember [sic] her features, but the look in her eyes stayed with him, as did the tense, dryness between her legs, the way he had done what he had not wanted to do" (Adichie 397). In retrospect, texts like *Song for Night* or *Half of a Yellow Sun* provide the reader with another side of the story of rape. If those other texts that narrate rape as the victim's experience are then also taken into consideration, one receives a combined picture of this war crime. The overall portrayal of characters, such as My Luck or Ugwu, evokes sympathy among the readers. Thus, it becomes a contradictory experience for the reader when, through their acts of rape, they are put on the same level with a mass of cruel soldiers.

6.2. Fighting for Survival

In the texts selected for this thesis, much weight seems to be placed on the portrayal of ordinary people living inside Biafra during the war. Ugochuckwu has observed in her analysis of Adichie, Achebe and Ofoegbu that "all three texts share a common sympathy for ordinary people dragged into a conflict that leaves them destitute, fragile, and hungry; they provide a multi-faceted approach and insiders' points of view on the impact of the conflict on daily life and relationships, work, and

leisure” (256). In the war narratives, it is shown how Biafrans have found a way to live in a fast shrinking region in which food became scarce and the constant threat of air raids and enemy soldiers existed. This chapter will thus provide an overview of the threats the civilian population has to face and it will outline the different efforts for survival that can be identified in the war narratives.

In consideration of the living conditions of civilians close to the war zone, one particular element of war receives attention in all the texts, which is the air raid. All works analysed in this thesis convey the experience of the victims of an air raid to some extent. These military attacks seem to have formed one of the greatest threats to Biafrans during the war.

In “Sugar Baby”, for instance, Achebe speaks of “the withering heat and fear of midday air raid” (96) and in “Girls at War” he goes into detail showing Reginald and Gladys caught in the midst of a federal air attack on Biafra. The protagonists are on their way out of town and they pick up a soldier who lost one leg. As it becomes clear that an air attack has reached them they flee from “the shattering of the sky overhead” (Achebe 119) for the safety of the bush. What accompanies the noise of the planes itself is the powerful sound of the bombing. The impact of these air assaults is described by Achebe as follows: “Then a high whistle descended like a spear through the chaos and exploded in a vast noise and motion that smashed up every-thing [sic]” or “[t]hen another terrible whistle starting high up and ending again in a monumental crash of the world” (119). Through these descriptions “Girls at War” conveys the enormously destructive impact of the federal air raids during the war. Additionally, it addresses the human tragedy involved when it is revealed in the end of the story that Gladys returns to the car to rescue the handicapped soldier and both are killed in the attack.

Kalu offers several descriptions of air attacks on Biafra. Her characters often find themselves seeking cover from bombs and gunfire. “Angelus” shows how news of the war front produces growing fear among the girls in the school. Their worries are confirmed when a bomber jet reaches their sacred place. At first it only flies past the buildings and some of the girls are even “laughing at [their] unfounded fears” (Kalu 41), but when it returns bombs explode and two of the buildings are destroyed. Nwanyieze loses her friend, Velvet, and there are other casualties. Kalu stresses the deep emotional impact an attack like this has on its victims. The main character, Nwanyieze, is haunted by the sounds of the air raid and the panic it caused, which is implied in statements, such as “[i]t was as if the screaming would never stop. It still hasn’t” (Kalu 42) or “[t]here was a blinding flash and a noise so loud I can still hear it today” (42). Moreover, Kalu alludes to the transformation an experience like this entails when she depicts the school girls’ changed appearance from Nwanyieze’s perspective: “I realized that I couldn’t recognize anyone

among the sad, unfriendly faces of my schoolmates. It was not that I didn't know their names. I did. But, I did not know them" (Kalu 43). The story "The Last Push" also addresses the issue of air raids on civilian towns. The setting is already late in the war in a Biafran town called Akasi. It is explained that in the beginning of the war people cheered pilots on as they skilfully flew past their town, but "[b]ack then they dropped most of their bombs in nearby bushes and uninhabited forests" (Kalu 44). Now the civilian population lives in fear of approaching planes for the pilots have developed a more precise aim. Although the standards of living are low Chika wants to stay alive by all means: "From the day of the first air raid she had lived in constant fear. The days were filled with spine-tingling dread of skies torn apart by frenzied aircraft loaded with death. Each morn-ing [sic] she woke poised to take cover, protecting a flavorless wartime life" (Kalu 46). Kalu points out that Chika and her neighbours have endured many air raids since the war has started and they all wish for it to end (44-45). When a bomb hits the church in town and many people are killed in the assault, Chika is reluctant to flee to the forest like everyone else. She is tired of running away and stays inside the house with one of her daughters. It turns out that the attack the town is under is part of Nigeria's final mission to destroy Biafra. This is implied in the story's title and later explained by Chika's son, Uchenna, who heard on the radio that the federal forces are supported by UN troops in their attempt to end the war (Kalu 49). In a similar fashion to "Angelus", Kalu points towards the immense sensations an air raid leaves with its victims in this story when she writes that

[t]here was a blinding flash. Screams and pleas for life mixed with the receding thunder of the fighter jets. [...] This time, neither woman nor child moved as the noise outside reached that peak where sound and silence merge and the liv-ing [sic] can hear eternity. The deathlike quiet that followed cut the Sunday afternoon like a knife. (47)

From the descriptions in this story it can be inferred that, simply put, bomber and fighter jets signify death to the people of Biafra. Moreover, the narrative features thoughts on the position of Biafrans from rural areas to the politics involved in the conflict. It was announced on the radio that Biafra was recognised by France⁴ and Gabon (Kalu 49). Even though the people of Akasi, including Chika, celebrated this and created a special dance, it did not mean anything to them because "[i]f you came from a place like Akasi, you knew you were there no matter who or what did not recognize you" (Kalu 49). Kalu thus stresses the meaninglessness of political "recognition" for people from villages. Chika appears to belong to those Biafrans who simply want to resume a peaceful life and who are "merely" fighting for survival in this war and not for a political ideal. When Chika hears about peace soldiers who are causing casualties in order to restore peace she seems more determined to live through this conflict to "survive their peaceful bullets and their

⁴ Note that France did not officially recognise Biafra (Smith 71).

peace soldiers” (Kalu 50). Kalu further implies the anger produced by the countless promises for a better future from the government. For instance, concerning the official recognition of Biafra it is stated that “it turned out to be the begin-ning [sic] of months of fear, uncertainty, hunger, and, always, death” (Kalu 49). “The Last Push” thus brings into focus how the hopes of ordinary people, who have no knowledge of the complex political situation in the Nigerian Civil War and who trusted their government, are gradually destroyed.

Adichie places great importance on the portrayal of civilians fighting to survive in the war. To be more precise, the Biafran characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are shown as constantly facing the threat of air raids. Early in the conflict Olanna and Odenigbo have to make a haunting experience when during their wedding Umuahia is bombed (Adichie 202). Here, Ugwu functions as the focaliser and it is narrated that bullets and bombs hit the town. By means of a simile Adichie describes the enemy planes as “gliding low beneath the blue sky like two birds of prey. They spurted hundreds of scattered bullets before dark balls rolled out from underneath, as if the planes were laying large eggs.” (202) As it has been indicated earlier considering Kalu’s descriptions of air attacks, also Adichie appeals to the reader’s auditive and physical experience when she writes that “[t]he first explosion was so loud that Ugwu’s ear popped and his body shivered alongside the vibrating ground” (202). The air raid leaves Umuahia with destruction and the realisation that Nigeria’s police action has turned into a war. The people are then determined to be prepared in case of another attack and build a bunker. Olanna seems much distressed by the experience of the first air assault for she “jumped each time she heard the thunder” (Adichie 261). She hardly trusts the safety of the bunker and imagines it crashing down with her family and Ugwu buried inside. One evening when another air raid hits the town, the young woman panics when she discovers that Odenigbo is not inside the bunker. Instead he has gone to help a wounded man in the street. Adichie then emphasises the terrifying possibility of sudden death by articulating Olanna’s thoughts at the possible loss of Odenigbo: “sud-denly [sic] his mortality – their mortality – struck her with a clutch at her throat, a squeeze of alarm” (276). In another air raid on Umuahia the full force of these deadly attacks is shown as the primary school is completely destroyed and people are carrying away a corpse from the building (Adichie 279). The scale of Nigeria’s military attack on Biafra can be felt when the invasion of Port Harcourt is depicted. In this city road blocks have already been established to stop people from leaving in order to avoid panic. Richard tries to convince himself that Port Harcourt is safe but a few days later the city is under attack. Adichie here presents a very tragic experience for the protagonists when an enemy plane opens fire on the city. Richard, Kainene and Harrison have taken cover in the orchard but Ikejide keeps running around in panic. An

explosion then sends a piece of shrapnel flying through the air cutting off Ikejide's head (Adichie 317). This air raid leaves the main characters with haunting images. Kainene, for instance, sees the "running headless body" (Adichie 318) in her dreams. In her novel, Adichie makes it clear that the survivors of air raids have to continue their lives in constant fear. Ugochukwu has pointed out in a chapter entitled "Surviving Together" that "[t]he presence of death was potent and ominous, in the circling of planes and vultures, in the devastation experienced and re-told [sic] in daily conversations" (262). *Half of a Yellow Sun* frequently draws attention to the individual experience of death and the struggle with its omnipresent threat.

In comparison to the texts by Achebe, Kalu and Adichie, Emecheta's mention of an air raid happens in a different context because she does not place an individual at the core of the experience. The reader is informed about an air strike in a passage towards the end of the novel. Debbie is determined that killing Abosi would save many lives. On her way to the Biafran leader's home a sudden air assault hits the town (Emecheta 242). Emecheta then alludes to the resolution of the Nigerian army to finally win the war when she writes that "[t]he quiet town was suddenly startled by the resumption of bombs falling, raining on to Biafra. People were screaming everywhere in pain and terror. The way the bombs and grenades were exploding, it seemed the Nigerian soldiers had determined finally to wipe out whatever remained of Biafra" (242). Emecheta rather generalises the victim's response to the attack, as in "[p]eople were screaming everywhere in pain and terror" (242). Debbie, who is also in town at the time of the attack, carries on her mission to find Abosi. Despite this rather general description, the reader gets an insight into her feelings revealing that she is frightened "in case any flying grenade should fall on the explosives they were carrying, and blow them to bits" (Emecheta 243). Yet, Emecheta's depiction of this particular threat to the people of Biafra rather differs from the texts discussed above. This is due to the fact that in *Destination Biafra* the portrayal of civilians fighting for survival is constructed largely through Debbie's experience with the group of refugees going East. Their struggle to stay alive takes place on the road to Biafra where they have to face the brutality of the Nigerian soldiers. The description of their strains ends when they reach the alleged safety of Biafra and for the remainder of the narrative they seem to become part of a blurred background of "starving refugees" (Emecheta 243). The rest of the novel then focuses on Debbie's final mission to save the Biafrans from Abosi's megalomania.

To conclude the discussion of air raids it should be added that Abani's *Song for Night* only makes few references to air attacks. For instance, the main character mentions them in his narrative

when he remembers the troop's hideout place in the forest. My Luck explains that none of them wanted to go back to the war front and so they stayed in the forest as long as possible until the federal side started attacking the area. It is stated that it was "a campaign that rained bombs on us, turning the forest into an inferno that made us leave" (Abani 48). Further references to air strikes include the description of a town My Luck crosses where "children, naked, many sporting sores attended by tomb flies, run through the narrow alleys screaming in play, unafraid of bombing raids" (Abani 94). Although the depiction of air raids is not at the core of this text these attacks appear to have had a lasting effect on My Luck for even flies remind him of bomber planes: "There are flies everywhere, huge bluebottles that hum and dive like enemy planes on a bombing mission" (Abani 126).

On the whole, the war narratives have the depiction of panic and destruction in common. The fact that the texts share the mentioning of air raids points towards the emotional, physical and material impact these kinds of attacks had on the people of Biafra. Finally, the presentation of air attacks on civilian areas also implies the cruelty of the federal side and stresses the Biafrans' position as the victims in the war.

Considering the dangers civilians were exposed to during the war, the works illustrate that rape posed an enormous threat, mostly to women. Among the authors who address this issue in their war narratives are Kalu, Emecheta, Adichie and Abani. In Kalu's "The Last Push" Chika returns to Akasi from hiding in the forest because the war is over. The town is full of peace soldiers who are supposed to restore order. Chika discovers that her house has been looted and when she leaves one of the peace soldiers approaches her offering help: "I friend to all. Me, your friend. Anybody steal your thing, I kill him" (Kalu 62). He then pushes her back into the house and rapes her, which is described as follows: "His eyes smiled, showing no sign of war or death. His hand over her mouth was gentle; his hold sure and firm. Although she heard him leave, she lay on the bed for a long time, not daring to open her eyes" (Kalu 62). The soldier leaves Chika with forty pounds which is a large amount of money in Biafra considering the living conditions during the war. Although there is no mention of violence here, Chika is obviously deeply affected by this event. She has to cry when she sees the money and shivers when she remembers the soldier (Kalu 62-63).

Another instance of rape is depicted in Kalu's "Camwood". Okwudiri, who later turns out to be Ulomma's brother, is a teacher at a win-the-war school for boys (Kalu 71). The young man frequently visits Ulomma and she seems to fancy him. One day Okwudiri unexpectedly comes to see her and she discovers him sitting in the front room, "legs outstretched, self-assured" (Kalu 83). Ulomma feels uncomfortable as she is only wearing a lappa and has not put on any pomade as she usually does. However, that does not stop the teacher from trying to pull her towards him. He tells her he wants to marry her but Ulomma flees into her room asking for a moment to get properly

dressed. Okwudiri boldly follows her and tells her he loves her. When Ulomma tries to move away her lappa comes undone (Kalu 83-84). In a similar manner “The Last Push” and “Camwood” omit the depiction of the act of rape itself. Following a narrative gap indicating Ulomma’s rape, it is explained that “[a]fter he left, she finished rubbing the pomade into her skin. Tears blurred her eyes. There was blood on the mat on her bed. He had not looked back when he left” (Kalu 84). By deliberately omitting the description of rape, Kalu leaves the reader to fill in the gap. Yet, it can be drawn from the passage that follows that Ulomma has been physically and emotionally hurt. In her short stories, Kalu appears to desist from overdramatising rape. This kind of depiction could indicate that rape was the fate for many girls and women in the war and simply one of its many cruelties. The fact that Ulomma then dies because of an abortion, in turn, alludes to the further consequences of rape.

In Emecheta’s novel, the main character is raped twice. Although Debbie is a member of the Nigerian army herself she has to experience the cruelties of its male members, as pointed out by Adams (295). Debbie is raped once in the field by Nigerian soldiers and later by Salihu Lawal. After the first incident Debbie loses consciousness. Thus she does not know whether her mother was abused too and feels guilty for not having been able to protect her. The author points towards the humiliation rape signifies, when she writes “[h]ad she been a man, they would have killed her outright; instead they humiliated her and left her to die slowly” (Emecheta 128). The event leaves Debby numb, both physically and emotionally. The novel outlines the high rate of rape during the war when a soldier at a checkpoint responds to Debbie’s mother’s complaints, “[g]ive her hot water to wash herself. Hundreds of women have been raped - so what? It’s war. She’s lucky to even be alive” (Emecheta 129). The chapter entitled “The Tainted Woman” indicates Debbie’s loss of status as a woman in society and thus shows the implications of rape for an African woman. Debbie has difficulty coping with this loss, but she rejects her mother’s advice to marry in order to restore her reputation. Instead she is determined to persuade Abosi into reunion with Nigeria and plans on leaving the safety of Sapele and the company of her mother. This decision is only partly motivated by her political beliefs, which becomes clear when one reads that “[s]he must get out of this place, she must do something to make her forget that now, in the eyes of the world, and through no fault of her own, she was a tarnished woman” (Emecheta 152). The second incident of rape occurs when Debbie is singled out in a group of refugees caught by Nigerian soldiers and taken to Lawal’s tent. This occurrence has been interpreted by Machiko with regard to the dynamics of gender relations. Machiko argues that in the first rape, “Debbie is treated as an anonymous woman” (64) but “in this second rape, the rapist has known her personally and rapes her with clear recognition of her social

position in order to divest her of her superiority and position her as a proper woman” (64). When Lawal, however, cannot finish his attempt and curses Debbie’s dryness, she informs him that she has been abused by soldiers. Lawal’s initial motive is thus destroyed. “Now that Debbie proves to be a contaminated woman gang-raped by African soldiers, raping her would in turn mark him as being as vulgar as soldiers of the lowest rank” (Machiko 65). Considering the general significance of Emecheta’s depiction of rape, it has been emphasised by Adams that “rape is not used as a metaphor to depict how one side / interest / country is harming another; rather, it is seen as a horrifying yet common occurrence in warfare. Both Federal and Biafran sources are guilty. In this way, the real violence against the female body is not occluded by the rape’s signification of a ‘more political’ agenda / position” (295).

Adichie approaches the issue of rape on the one hand through the portrayal of Ugwu, as analysed earlier, and on the other hand through the story of an experience his sister, Anulika, made. Against a postwar setting Ugwu returns to his home village. In a conversation with Nnesinachi he has to find out that his sister was brutally raped by five soldiers. Nnesinachi continues as follows: “They said the first one that climbed on top of her, she bit him on the arm and drew blood. They nearly beat her to death. One of her eyes has refused to open well since” (Adichie 421). Adichie has an ingenious way of unfolding the story of Anulika’s rape because Ugwu sits and talks with his sister noticing her changed appearance before he is told what happened. The experience seems to have had a lasting effect on Anulika. With sequences, such as, “[s]he didn’t answer any of his other questions in the way that he had expected, there were no energetic gestures, no sharp wit in her answers” (Adichie 421), it is indicated that she appears numb.

As established earlier, the focus in many narratives lies in the depiction of civilians trying to live through the war with air raids and the brutality of soldiers being among the greatest threats to them. Additionally, the war narratives frequently address the issue of starvation. The shortage of food during the war represented perhaps the greatest challenge for civilians. Among the 1 to 3 million people who died in the war, many starved to death (Falola and Heaton 180). It has been indicated earlier in chapter 3.1. that many authors depict relief distribution in their work. Considering starvation, it is often highlighted that children suffer most from the lack of food. First, Kalu, for instance, writes in “Children’s Day” that “Anytown, Biafra, was a war front in its own right as Biafra’s children died from starvation, illnesses without names, and just plain desperation about vio-lated [sic] or lost childhoods” (118). Next, Abani’s *Song for Night* also features a description of starved children when My Luck encounters them in a town: “Children: bulbous heads pendulous over hunger-distended bellies with eyes washed out like the earth here” (82). In

Adichie's novel, the reader is informed that malnutrition is known as "kwashiorkor" (338) in Nigeria. During the war then it is also referred to as "Harold Wilson Syndrome" (337) by Olanna's neighbours. It becomes a dreaded disease in the narrative, which can be felt in Olanna's responses to Baby's loss of hair and weight (Adichie 266). Moreover, *Half of a Yellow Sun* also implies through Ugwu's book that starvation aroused international attention and that the rest of the world profited from starvation in the sense that it nourished news reports and became a political agenda in the US: "Starvation made the people of the world take notice and sparked protests and demonstrations in London and Moscow and Czechoslovakia. [...] starvation brought Africa into Nixon's American campaign and made parents all over the world tell their children to eat up. [...] Starvation aided the careers of photographers" (Adichie 237). These are merely a number of instances of emphasis on starvation that can be identified in the texts. Some of the narratives put into focus people's struggle to survive the food crisis and depict trading behind enemy lines. Due to the lack of food inside Biafra, women have started to cross over into Nigerian territory in order to trade. This practice is referred to as *afia attack* (293) in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* for example. Here, the portrayal of Mrs Muoleku serves to illustrate the desperation of Biafran women who have to provide food for a large family and thus turn to the dangerous business of crossing over to the federal side. The woman explains to Olanna that she has "twelve people to feed" and that her "husband [sic] has returned to from the war front with one leg" (Adichie 293). Mrs Muoleku then describes the endeavour she is going to undertake. A woman she knows delivers *garri* to soldiers and therefore her lorry is provided with military escort. In this way, Mrs Muoleku will be able to reach the border where a walk that is "[a]bout fifteen to twenty miles, nothing a determined person can-not [sic] do" (293), awaits her. She then plans to purchase *garri* and salt with the Nigerian money she owns. Olanna pleads her to be careful but Mrs Muoleku retorts that "[m]any are doing it and nothing has happened to them" (Adichie 293). Another reference to this kind of trading is made later in the novel when it is already late in the war. In fact, Kainene's choice to leave Orlu in order to buy goods on the federal side represents a major turning point in the narrative because she never returns from her journey. Kainene has received Nigerian money from Inatimi and she seems determined when she says, "I want to go to Ninth Mile and see what I can buy, and if that goes well, I will sell some of the things our people at the camp have made" (Adichie 403). Odenigbo reminds her that "[t]hat's trading with the enemy" (Adichie 403) but Kainene downplays it by explaining that "[i]t's trading with illiterate Nigerian women who have what we need" (Adichie 403). Moreover, Odenigbo cautions her and points out the danger of this territory but Olanna interjects that the area is not occupied. The weight of Kainene's decision is perhaps felt only much later when

weeks have passed and her family still desperately awaits her return. Moreover, the danger of trading with the “enemy” seems proved by Kainene’s disappearance. Yet, *afia attack* also signifies hope in this time of starvation which Adichie illustrates when she writes that Richard dreams about Kainene’s return “with a basket full of chicken boiled in herbs, spicy *jollof* rice, soup thick with fish” (403).

Kalu also addresses the issue of ordinary people who have taken up trading behind the border in order to survive in the war. In her short story “Relief Duty”, she explains what “Affia-attack” (148) refers to. In a flashback it is explained that Money lost her fiancé early in the war. She then took up the business of “Affia-attack” to support her parents who only made little money with a farm they ran (Kalu 148). At this point the story gives an explanation of this particular way people use to guarantee the survival of their families: “Affia-attack was risky business. The traders crossed enemy lines and went to the market on the Federal side. In the markets where things were still normal, they bought essential items that were no longer available in Biafra as a result of embargoes. Sometimes the traders would be gone for weeks and nobody knew if they were alive or dead” (Kalu 148). It is indicated here that life on the Nigerian side continued normally while the living conditions in Biafra deteriorated rapidly. Kalu also alludes to the danger of these trading trips and the uncertainty of those desperately waiting for the traders to return.

Furthermore, this form of survival is mentioned in Kalu’s story “Children’s Day” in a passage that depicts the Okafor children in the company of Ngozi and the other passengers of the lorry that broke down. The story shows how this group of people passes the time, waiting for a mechanic, relying on traditional customs such as singing songs and telling stories. It is explained that “[t]heir stories were about Affia-attack — those risky trading trips across firing lines. They told stories about the luxury-padded lives of people on the Nigerian side. About families subsisting on next to nothing until the women returned from their trips with much-needed onions, salt, dried fish, and aspirin” (Kalu 118-119). Like *Half of a Yellow Sun*, “Children’s Day” points towards the danger that women are prepared to face in this kind of trading. Moreover, Kalu once more creates a contrasting image of life in Biafra and Nigeria when she writes about starvation in Biafra (118) and the “luxury-padded lives” (119) of those on the federal side.

In addition, the war narratives display the market’s function as one of the most important means of survival for the Biafran population. In general, the marketplace appears to hold great significance for the people of Nigeria. Consider, for instance, Abani’s *Song for Night*. The text reveals that Biafrans carried on organising markets during the war. Abani illustrates this when My Luck passes a town during his quest and comes across a night market: “The market, built around a

central square, is alive even this late. People move back and forth. Night markets are a common feature of this war - there is no night-time bombing or strafing" (81). Furthermore, Emecheta writes about marketplaces during the war. For instance, one learns about a "makeshift market in the bush" (Emecheta 218) organised by women from the Midwest, an area whose inhabitants are troubled by the shifting war fronts. The women now live in the bush, "all armed with clubs, prepared to kill a soldier before being killed themselves" (Emecheta 2018). Another reference to a Biafran market can be found when Debbie and the group of refugees are given shelter by a widow in a village on the road to Agbor. The gunfire of the Nigerian Army can already be heard and it is clear that they are advancing fast. Yet, the widow offers to buy them "yams, fish and garri" (Emecheta 186) at the village market. It seems remarkable that the Biafran market has this kind of food to offer in the middle of the war, if one considers references to other Biafran markets. Adichie, for example, indicates that the food to be obtained there is hardly desirable. Olanna attends a forest market near Umuahia and finds herself standing "before a table with greying pieces of raw chicken" (Adichie 329) and small snails "piled high in baskets" (Adichie 329). Unable to regard the small snails as food, Olanna decides to buy four larger ones. *Half of a Yellow Sun* then shares the post-war experience of Olanna at a market, as follows: "[...] she gaped at the rice and beans displayed in the basins in the shape of moun-tains [sic], the deliciously foul-smelling fish, the bloodied meat that drew flies. They seemed to have fallen from the sky, they seemed filled with a wonder that was almost perverse" (Adichie 414).

Kalu adds another layer of significance to the market by providing a child's perspective on the experience of attending a market in "Children's Day" which is set during the war. The young Uzo has been appointed for the trip to buy food for his siblings since their mother has left them. The boy is anxious about the safety of his sister, Iheoma, who joined him, and thus buys garri from hawkers outside the market even though they charge a higher price. His memory takes him back to market trips with his mother or Ngozi which he enjoyed. Kalu here gives a rather vivid description of the market mentioning "colourfully dressed market women" (Kalu 107) who used to joke and chatter with Uzo's mother. It is explained that the young boy "loved the smell of spices and how the distant humming of the market drew him into its center" (Kalu 107). Through this childhood memory "Children's Day" also provides an impression of the market women. Uzo remembers their competitive nature which led to quarrels over customers and even physical fights where "there would be retyings of headties and *lappas*" (Kalu 108). This digression to pre-war markets can be seen to function as a means of stressing the market's significance for the Igbo population. The

descriptions in the texts propose that during the crisis then, organising markets represented an essential means for the Biafran population to survive.

One last aspect that should be mentioned concerning survival in the war is prostitution. In her analysis of *Destination Biafra* Adams talks about “certain types of ‘licenses’ or ‘freedoms’” (294-295) in the chaotic situation during the war. These “freedoms” mean that “women can join in the fighting somewhat; prostitution is not as roundly con-demned [sic] (Adams 295). In “Girls at War” Achebe addresses the issue of prostitution through the depiction of Gladys’ transformation. Although it is not explicitly stated that Gladys is a prostitute it is indicated in several passages. Reginald seems convinced “that she [is] kept by some army officer” (Achebe 116) judging from her changed looks and behaviour. As Ugochukwu has noted, “Gladys [...] once cherished a ‘beautiful faith’ in the struggle; now betrayed by the very men she trusted to lead people in the war, she is reduced to ‘number six’ and turned into a prostitute” (257). When Reginald laments the girl’s transformation she reminds him that she cannot return to her former lifestyle: “That time done pass. Now everybody want sur-vival. They call it number six. You put your number six; I put my number six. Everything all right” (Achebe 112). Hence, it is implied that the war requires a different sort of lifestyle for some women in order to survive which in this case is prostitution.

6.3. The Significance of Women

As the texts discussed here focus on civilian life and the struggle to survive the war, great emphasis seems to be placed on the portrayal of women. The authors show in their narratives that most Biafran men joined or were conscripted for the army and women stayed behind. Hence, a wide range of responsibilities and tasks for women are displayed. Amadiume addresses the importance of women during the war when he writes that

[w]omen fed and sustained the economy of Biafra through ‘attack’ trade, which involved market trips through enemy front lines. Women mobilised Biafrans for all public occasions. Women formed a strong core of the militia, task forces, etc., while mothers cooked for and fed the whole Biafran nation. Women became the cohesive force in a shifting, diminishing people who were slowly losing what they saw as a war of survival. (quoted in Bryce 33)

The significance of women in Biafra has been partly indicated earlier in the discussion of ways of survival, such as trading behind enemy lines or the upkeep of the market which are practices mostly carried out by female characters. The emphasis on the issue of women in the war manifests itself in a portrayal of “strong” female characters which can be identified in several texts. By using the term “strong”, qualities such as fearlessness, determination, authority, emotional but also physical strength, intelligence and influence are intended to be implied here.

Among the texts that evoke the image of a strong woman are Kalu's short stories. This author's narratives feature a wide range of characters among which one can observe recurring figures representing strong females. Consider, for example, "The Last Push". Besides the main character, Chika, who exhibits great strength and determination in the last days of the war, a character, called Mama Stella, is introduced. Not much information on this woman's life in the war, whose husband and son are with the emergency troops, is provided, but Kalu indicates that Mama Stella had a difficult time when it is stated that "[h]ardworking and friendly, Mama Stella bore her wartime experiences with dig-nity [sic]" (51). Moreover, it is pointed out that women fought their own war against the brutality of soldiers in the aftermath of the war, as in "[e]specially trying for everyone was the war of the women, which made cowards of local ex-soldiers. The peace soldiers harassed and raped women, threatening the shaky peace with-out [sic] firing any bullets" (62). In her story "Broken Lives", Kalu continues to evoke this issue through her portrayal of a town threatened by the post-war presence of peace soldiers. At the core of this story are Nneoma and her husband, Orji. Orji's family is worried about the safety of Nneoma since another woman has already been abducted and raped by soldiers. Hence, Nneoma is taken to the back of the house by her mother-in-law each night when peace soldiers are searching houses (Kalu 95). Orji's wife is frustrated with life in this uncertain peace, but her mother-in-law urges her to "[t]ake heart" (Kalu 95) for "[t]his is the war of the women" (95). Another story that explores the significance of women in the war and alludes to the dangers they were exposed to is "Osondu". The narrative exhibits women who have continued to work in their farmlands during the conflict even though this meant crossing two war fronts (Kalu 171). Osondu and Chidi, who encounter these women on their farm, are surprised at their determination and fearlessness. Yet, as Kalu stresses, "[t]he women were matter-of-fact in their acceptance of their wartime responsibilities" (171). Furthermore, it is indicated that women are smarter than men in the struggle for survival. Despite a thorough search, the two young soldiers could not find the goods that the women now produce for them. It is then stated that "[t]he women just laughed at their surprise, joking about men who didn't know where to look for things that make life worth living" (Kalu 173). "Osondu" alludes to the aforementioned observation by Bryce that women "fed the whole Biafran nation" (33). Kalu shows how these Biafran women continued to attend to their farms in the crisis and thus played an essential part in the starving republic. Another aspect Kalu touches upon is the situation for unmarried girls during the war. In "Camwood", it is explained that it was difficult for girls to prove themselves as soldiers: "Even in the middle of this war in which all died equally from bullets and bombs, girls in uniform were perceived as potential harlots while young men in uniform were potential heroes" (Kalu 75).

On the whole, Kalu not only emphasises the danger and fear women lived with during and after the war but she also addresses their strength and determination in the fight for survival in her short story collection.

Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* puts into focus the struggle of an educated woman in a patriarchal society. Arguing along the lines of Adams, the novel creates a strong patriarchal image of Nigeria (294). The men in the text behave degradingly towards women, they exclude them from decision making processes and women are hardly granted any responsibility. For instance, "[j]ust as Samuel Ogedemgbe never asked his wife's opinion nor utilized her intelligence, so Abosi and Momoh refuse to see Debbie as anything but a 'woman' (in its most narrow and 'traditional' sense), a refusal that allows them to style her as a sexual pawn" (Adams 294). The presentation of this patriarchal ideology then provides the context for the emergence of strong female characters in the novel, women trying to prove themselves in a war-torn country dominated by men, as it were. For example, that after the death of her husband, Stella Ogedemgbe appears transformed. Debbie has never thought her mother capable of independent thinking, especially not about political matters, which can be noticed in statements, such as "I don't think Mama ever had an opinion about anything except her wardrobe" (Emecheta 106). Thus, Debbie is all the more surprised when Stella utters her thoughts on Abosi's secession (Emecheta 115). Moreover, Stella shows great courage when armed Nigerian soldiers harass her, Debbie, Ignatius and a couple they picked up on their way to Benin. She bravely orders the soldiers to leave the pregnant woman alone. Nevertheless, the leader commands the women to undress and Ignatius is shot dead. Stella begs the soldiers not to harm her daughter and tells them again to stop harassing the pregnant woman, for which she is slapped by one of the men. Debbie has to watch all of it and her mother's behaviour seems to impress her: "[i]n her distress, she could not fail to admire her mother's courage" (Emecheta 127). It is through an insight into Debbie's thoughts after her rape, indicating her newly found admiration for her mother, that the reader experiences Stella's changed behaviour. The passage goes as follows:

Her mother had nursed, talked, prayed, then bullied, telling her daughter to put it all behind her, that she could still lead a perfectly normal life - this from a woman who for years had pretended to be so frail and dependent that tying her own headscarf was a big task. All that show of dependence just to keep alive her marriage and to feed her husband's ego [...]. (Emecheta 150)

Another female character who appears to thrive in the absence of her husband is Uzoma Madako. She is part of the group of refugees Debbie has joined. It is shown how Uzoma seemed passive in the presence of her husband but acts as an authoritative woman during the days filled with tragedy: "Debbie had seen the way she lifted her eyes as if they were so weighty, had heard the way she

spoke in a whisper. And now look at the same woman, a few days after the death of her husband, she had the courage to slap another woman, to tell another woman to stop indulging in self-pity” (Emecheta 203). Furthermore, Emecheta’s narrative features the depiction of a fearless, elderly woman. This woman is first introduced in a passage where a lorry, taking Igbos and other civilians to the East, is attacked by Nigerian soldiers. The women are forced to undress and they follow the commands “because they sensed from the impatience and urgency in the voices of these wild and inhuman men that they were looking for an excuse to shoot to death anyone who went against their evil wishes” (Emecheta 163). After a while, a “bold old woman” (Emecheta 164) helps herself to a lappa to cover herself. A soldier immediately threatens to shoot her but she explains to him “as patiently as one would to a mentally sick child” (Emecheta 164) that “[t]he night is cold and this mother of yours is shivering” (164). This fearless old woman sets an example to the other women who start dressing too. As the refugees’ journey eastwards goes on “[t]he bold old woman, who because of her age and fearlessness was becoming their leader,” (Emecheta 179) continues to show courage and authority. In *Destination Biafra*, another strong female character is presented through the depiction of an elderly nun in Asaba. Debbie manages to secure the nun’s help with the sick refugee children who are hiding in the forest outside the town. Nigerian soldiers, carrying loaded guns, accompany them to aid the others. One of the soldiers warns them to tell the “refugees not to play any hanky-panky by trying to run away. Because if this machine coughs once, it’s death” (Emecheta 209). At the end of a brief conversation between the old nun and the soldier, “[t]he old nun looked him straight in the eye [...]. Her look was so fierce that the officer at once lowered his gun and began to shuffle his feet aimlessly” (Emecheta 209). This nun represents a woman who is perhaps respected by the soldier because of her age and status as a humanitarian aid worker. In a nutshell, through these depictions of strong female characters, Emecheta implies that women are not completely oppressed by the marionettes of the patriarchal regime that she shows, and that they do possess authority in some situations. As Adams has observed, however, “the war itself has done nothing to destabilize the patriarchal ideologies behind the construction of the ‘fatherland’: the very fact that female soldiers would be ostracized within the cause or that they would be given ‘delicate’ missions with sexual overtones clearly demonstrates how ‘traditional’ notions of gender remain in operation through the political turmoil” (294). The context of the war in which the female characters in *Destination Biafra* are introduced is the trigger to their emergence as strong women because the war requires them to become fearless in the face of violence and to find a way to survive under the deteriorating living conditions in Biafra.

In consideration of the significance of women in the war, Achebe's "Girls at War" shows how women actively took part in what can be referred to as a win-the-war-effort, in his depiction of Gladys working at a road check-point (102-103). Furthermore, it has been proposed by Amuta that "Girls at War" tackles "the moral predicament of the Nigerian womenfolk in the war situation" (quoted in Ugochukwu 257). When Reginald hears about Augusta's shopping trips to Libreville sponsored by her wealthy boyfriend, he cannot help remarking that "[s]he will come back on an arms plane loaded with shoes, wigs, pants, bras, cosmetics and what have you, which she will then sell and make thousands of pounds. You girls are really at war" (Achebe 111)⁵. As indicated earlier, Achebe points out that some women turned to prostitution in order to survive in the war. Although Gladys also undergoes this transformation, she actually proves to be a heroine in the end when she saves the handicapped soldier from the car in the middle of an air raid, "knowing full well that it might cost her life - as indeed it does - while Nwan-kwo [sic] runs to safety. Here, women are shown as holding the key to societal improvement and men's salvation or damnation - a huge responsibility" (Ugochukwu 258).

Concerning Adichie's novel, it has been established by Ugochukwu that aside from the two heroines, it "presents a great number of other women: aged mothers keeping to the village, wealthy traders, hawkers [sic], female lecturers, quiet housewives, chatty neighbours" (259). Among these female characters is, as mentioned earlier, Mrs Muoleku, who takes up the business of trading behind enemy lines because she has to provide food for a large family (Adichie 293). A female character who acts authoritatively is Mama Oji. She is introduced as Olanna's neighbour in Umuahia. She warns Olanna about the greed and theft happening in the compound. Mama Oji frequently shouts at the other tenants and they obey her orders. Moreover, the mother does not show any respect for her husband, calling him a "castrated sheep" (Adichie 327) for deserting the army but telling everybody that he was wounded. In an analysis of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, "Girls at War" and Ofoegbu's *Blow the Fire*, it has been observed that the narratives "reveal a shift in values, changing attitudes to life and the presence of women at the heart of the war zone, central to the preservation of life" (Ugochukwu 256).

At the core of Abani's *Song for Night* lies the memory of a female character, called Ijeoma. She was My Luck's girlfriend. In his narrative he often remembers the girl who died in a mine explosion. Ijeoma is presented as an intelligent, fearless young woman, who stands in contrast to the male soldiers in My Luck's troop because she is "smarter than all of [them] combined" (Abani 23). My Luck's mind frequently takes him back to his time with Ijeoma. He is impressed by her

⁵ see Ugochukwu (257)

skills as a soldier, when for example “[s]he would draw a circle in the dirt with a stick, and picking a star from the sky, she would chart the direction to follow. Even in the middle of the day, she could tell from the shadows what time it was, and she was the only one of us who understood the arcane markings on maps” (Abani 122). According to *My Luck*, this impressive female character is more intelligent than all the others and better at her job than the boys. Thus she holds some kind of leadership in the group. Abani’s portrayal of this girl, who excels as a soldier, stands against the image of mocked women in uniform that is created in Kalu’s “Camwood” and developed further in Emecheta’s novel, for instance.

7. Conclusion

The complex topic of the Nigerian Civil War serves as the backdrop for the creation of texts by first generation authors, like Achebe, Emecheta, Kalu and Abani, and by second generation writers, such as Adichie. Although the narratives analysed here share many common elements, they sometimes differ significantly in their depiction of the war. By means of a conclusion, the detected similarities and differences will be summed up.

First, regarding the portrayal of tribes, there is a strong focus on Igbo culture in the texts by Adichie, Abani, and Kalu. Hence, the reader receives an Igbo perspective on the war. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the Igbos are largely presented as a harassed people who have to flee the North due to the 1966 massacres. In her novel, Adichie illustrates that both people who are used to a traditional life and Igbos living in a modern household share the knowledge of their common Igbo culture. Although the belief in Igbo religion is exercised much more by people from a traditional background, it is indicated that despair leads modernised people to turn to their Igbo roots. Kalu’s *Broken Lives and Other Stories* also exhibits an Igbo focus which manifests itself in the portrayal of cultural beliefs and traditions. Moreover, most of Kalu’s characters come from rural areas and she delineates that people in Igbo villages live a traditional life. Her stories are interwoven by Igbo phrases and the narrative frequently alludes to specific customs and beliefs shared in this tribe. The author also demonstrates the dynamics of an Igbo community and shows how cultural heritage is passed on from generation to generation. On the whole, the strongest emphasis on Igbo culture can be found in *Song for Night* as the narrative arises from the Igbo belief in a spirit world. Abani’s instalment of a spirit as a narrator provides a profound insight into the Igbo worldview because the narrator remembers cultural tales, explains Igbo beliefs and reflects on his past in the Igbo-hostile North of 1966 throughout the story.

Second, Adichie and Abani exhibit a similar approach in their treatment of Nigeria’s tribal conflict that preceded the civil war. Both texts share the experience of the Hausa-Igbo conflict from

an individual's perspective. For instance, Richard witnesses the massacre of Igbos at an airport and Olanna discovers that her northern relatives have been brutally killed. Similarly, My Luck experiences the loss of his parents who are both murdered in the wake of the tribal clashes. The hostility towards Igbos is further illustrated as My Luck manages to flee the North only by pretending to be Hausa. In contrast to Adichie and Abani, Emecheta focuses on outlining the political power struggle of the different tribes in the 1960s and provides an insight into the minds of those responsible for carrying out the first and second military coup. Yet, *Destination Biafra* recounts an Igbo's flight from the North and thus also features an individual's experience of the tribal conflict. As opposed to these texts, the short stories by Kalu and Achebe do not address the violence between Hausa and Igbo.

Next, with regard to the depiction of foreign influences in Nigeria, Emecheta's novel strongly criticises the role of the UK on several occasions. Firstly, *Destination Biafra* highlights the manipulation of Nigeria's first election by the British. Secondly, it emphasises the economic interest of the UK in Nigeria's eastern region. The civil war appears to be a tribal conflict on the surface but Emecheta reveals the background of the UK's involvement and support of the federal side, which is the protection of the oil trade of British companies with Nigeria. Thirdly, the novel shows the UK in an unfavourable light as it depicts British characters who behave degradingly towards Nigerians insisting on their former colonial superiority. Indicative of this is the relationship between Alan and Debbie which is symbolic for the relationship between the UK and Nigeria. Adichie's novel also points out a feeling of superiority among expatriates in Nigeria and demonstrates their racial prejudice. Yet, a British character, who entirely lacks this attitude, is installed as one of the main protagonists. In contrast to Emecheta's text, *Half of a Yellow Sun* does not portray influential British characters but only mentions them. While Emecheta goes into detail presenting politics and power struggles, Adichie desists from a thorough depiction of these matters. Nevertheless, philosophic discussions allude to Nigeria's chaotic political landscape, and criticism of the UK's involvement in the war is uttered in Ugwu's book. Unlike *Destination Biafra*, Abani's narrative is not concerned with the exposure of foreign influences during the war. Yet, it mentions the treatment of the crisis by foreign powers when it is shown how Biafran soldiers have been sent American war documentaries that are outdated and inappropriate for the war in Nigeria. The text mockingly describes an unquestioning belief by people in this American material. With the exception of Abani's narrative, all texts illustrate the work of humanitarian aid organisations. In sum, the food shortage in Biafra is highlighted and people are shown seeking relief goods. While the effort and courage of relief workers is depicted and sometimes even praised, unjust distribution of relief goods, corruption and the inappropriateness of certain items are issues also addressed in the war narratives.

Considering further similarities, Adichie, Emecheta and Achebe all chronicle the establishment of Biafra and display the republic's demise. While Adichie is concerned with the depiction of the significance of the emergence of Biafra for individuals, Emecheta's focus lies in the presentation of the political implications of this move. Both authors illustrate people's hopes and expectations of Biafra and point towards its status as an idealised nation. Adichie and Achebe similarly emphasise the people's excitement involved in the creation of Biafra and show their readiness to defend the new nation. The demise of the republic is also dealt with in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Destination Biafra* and "Girls at War". Adichie largely portrays the crisis through the deteriorating living conditions of her characters, Emecheta shows the disillusionment of people encountering the idealised Biafra, and Achebe canvasses the downfall of the republic with a specific concern in the transformation of society. Kalu's short story collection presents characters living inside Biafra, struggling under the harsh conditions during and after the civil war. She does not depict the secession of the eastern region and only mentions the joy felt by Biafrans when the republic was recognised. In general, Kalu's emphasis is not placed on political matters. Her stories point towards the disruption of life by the war and the difficulties of resuming a peaceful life in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. Abani's narrative hardly features any references to politics or historical events. The reader receives an Igbo's perspective on the war, whose reason for fighting is to revenge the murder of his parents by Northerners.

Lastly, regarding the display of people at war, the authors discussed in this thesis exhibit a clear tendency towards the presentation of human tragedy through their portrayal of civilians in the war. Soldiers' stories take up a part of these fictionalised accounts of the war as they are often incorporated into the narrative, as in *Half of a Yellow Sun* or *Destination Biafra*. Yet, authors such as Kalu, Adichie or Achebe clearly put emphasis on the display of civilians. Abani, whose narrator is a Biafran soldier, shows a soldier's life in most detail. Nevertheless, he does not merely explore the depths of soldiery in the war but also addresses the difficulty of surviving in the conflict for Biafrans.

To conclude, the fictionalised accounts of the Nigerian Civil War imply the gravity of this historical event on a political and human scale. The corpus of Nigerian Civil War literature continues to expand which indicates that the past still influences the consciousnesses of Nigerians. The end of the civil war did not bring peace and stability to Nigeria as the country saw another 29 years of military coups, assassinations, overthrown governments and corruption before civilian rule was organised and President Obasanjo assumed his office in 1999 (Falola and Heaton xvii-xviii).

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GERMAN ABSTRACT

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Verarbeitung des Nigerianischen Bürgerkrieges in fiktiver Literatur. Zwischen 1967 und 1970 herrschte in Nigeria Bürgerkrieg zwischen der separatistischen Republik Biafra und der Zentralregierung Nigerias. Dieses einschneidende historische Ereignis brachte eine Vielzahl an literarischen Werken hervor, die sich mit dem Thema des Krieges befassen. In bisheriger Forschung bezüglich nigerianischer Bürgerkriegsliteratur wurden vor allem Werke früheren Ursprungs behandelt. Jedoch steigt die Zahl an Veröffentlichungen zu diesem Thema und es existiert wenig wissenschaftliches Material zu den neueren Publikationen. Ziel dieser Masterarbeit ist es, die Parallelen und Unterschiede in der Verarbeitung des Bürgerkrieges anhand von fünf Autoren aufzuzeigen. Zu den herbeigezogenen Werken zählen Achebes "Civil Peace", "Sugar Baby" und "Girls at War", Emechetas *Destination Biafra*, Adichies *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Kalus gesamte Kurzgeschichtensammlung *Broken Lives and Other Stories* (mit Ausnahme der Kurzgeschichte "Independence") und Abanis *Song for Night*. Diese limitierte Auswahl stellt eine Mischung aus früher und später Bürgerkriegsliteratur dar. Die Lücke in bisheriger Forschung soll zumindest teilweise geschlossen werden, indem wenig behandelte Werke, wie jene von Kalu und Abani, mit den viel diskutierten Texten von Achebe, Emecheta und Adichie verglichen werden. Zu den angewandten Forschungsmethoden zählt die deskriptiv-analytische Interpretation der einzelnen Texte. Im Zuge der Masterarbeit wurde der Schluss gezogen, dass alle Werke thematische Parallelen aufweisen, wie zum Beispiel die Darstellung der Situation von Zivilisten im Bürgerkrieg. Es wurde hierbei festgestellt, dass diese meist im Vordergrund steht und dass es nicht die Erzählungen von Soldaten sind, die überwiegen. In den verschiedenen Texten werden männliche und weibliche Zivilisten jedes möglichen Alters und sozialen Standes im Überlebenskampf gezeigt. Die Darstellung von Kriegsbedrohungen, wie etwa von Luftangriffen und der Brutalität von Soldaten, sowie die Versuche der Bevölkerung der Hungersnot und diesen Bedrohungen zu entgehen, bilden den Kern der Werke. Im Bezug auf Unterschiede bleibt hinzuzufügen, dass Emechetas *Destination Biafra* einen starken politischen Hintergrund aufweist, wohingegen die anderen Werke die Politik rund um den Krieg bestenfalls erwähnen. Ein weiterer herausstechender Unterschied ist, dass in Abanis *Song for Night* ein toter Soldat als Erzähler eingesetzt wird. Dieser, dem Erzähler noch unbekannte Zustand, ermöglicht es ihm, Geister wahrzunehmen, weshalb der Roman von spirituellen Ausschweifungen geprägt ist. Diese zentralen Schlussfolgerungen zeigen, dass auch in neueren Werken zum Bürgerkrieg, die teils von Autoren der zweiten und dritten Generation verfasst werden, ähnliche thematische Schwerpunkte gesetzt werden. Der Bürgerkrieg in Nigeria war und ist ein einschneidendes historisches Ereignis, was sich in früher und später nigerianischer Literatur widerspiegelt. Ohne Zweifel wird der Corpus nigerianischer Bürgerkriegsliteratur weiterhin wachsen und somit ist die Rolle der Wissenschaft, diese Literatur zu untersuchen, keinesfalls abgeschlossen. Nichtsdestotrotz hat diese Masterarbeit ihren Teil zu diesem Forschungsgebiet beigetragen, indem sie bereits existierende Studien zu bestimmten Werken weitergeführt hat und kaum behandelte Texte mit in die Diskussion eingebracht hat.

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