

RUMOUR AND PROPAGANDA AS INSTRUMENTS OF

WARFARE IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S

HALF OF A YELLOW SUN

AND

ISIDORE OKPEWHO'S *THE LAST DUTY*

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project, written under the supervision of **Dr. Promise Adiele**, is an original research work by me. The information derived from various sources has been duly acknowledged in the text and the list of references provided. This research work has not been presently presented anywhere as the award of any degree or certificate.

BADEJO OLUWATOSIN. E. _____

Signature

Date

CERTIFICATION

I certify that this work was carried out by **BADEJO OLUWATOSIN EMMANUEL** at the Department of Languages, Mountain Top University, Ogun State, Nigeria under my supervision.

Signature _____

Dr. Promise Adiele

Date

(Project Supervisor)

Signature _____

Professor Emmanuel Adedun

Date

(Head of Department)

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project firstly to God Almighty then to my parents Mr & Mrs BADEJO, also to my siblings for their utmost support. To Daniel Damilola for her care and support. To my supervisor Dr. Promise Adiele for his thorough supervision and to all those who made those who made this work a success.

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ABSTRACT

World history is replete with war of different kinds. These wars play important roles in defining or shaping future socio-political realities. The wars are so significant that they occupy an important portion of literary production known as War Literature. Many scholars believe that War Literature has shaped the consciousness of historical evolution and political realities across the world. However, War Literature is full of rumour and propaganda. This study argues that Rumour and propaganda helps to determine the nature, dimension, and effects of war on the people. The war of interest in the study is the Nigerian Biafran War that lasted from 1967 to 1970. Using two Nigerian novel, Chimanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty* the study demonstrates that rumour and propaganda play significant roles such as elongating the period of the war, creating hate and tension among Nigerians and still plays some roles in today's Nigerian politics. It is also discovered that some literary writers that concern themselves with war in their works actually use such works to advance rumour and propaganda. It is hope that going forward, people will be able to recognize rumour and propaganda and disregard them especially in this era of new media.

Keywords: Rumour, Propaganda, Motivation, Reality

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

In the historical evolution of Nigeria's literature, there is a category of literary production gainfully referred to as War Literature. When the term War Literature is used in Nigeria, it refers to a body of works which encapsulate the period when Nigeria witnessed its worst civil conflict. The Nigerian/Biafra war, which took place in Nigeria from 1967 to 1970, has been described as the worst internecine patch in the history of the country. Its remote cause was the coup of 1966 and a counter coup of that same year. The first coup saw Aguiyi Ironsi emerge as the military head of state which did not go down well with Northern elements who saw the coup as an Igbo coup. According to Peter Baxter "once the dust had settled and the coup had been effectively crushed, the military nonetheless, very readily assumed power, installing military commander Aguiyi-Ironsi as the head of state" (12). The northern elements, who saw the coup as an Igbo coup because of the emergence of Ironsi quickly staged a counter coup, killed Ironsi and Gowon became the head of state. Many Igbo people were killed all over Nigeria and in reaction, Ojukwu, the most senior Igbo military officer at that time recalled all Igbo people to the South East and then declared the Republic of Biafra. Afterwards, in Gowon's bid to keep Nigeria one, military action was declared against the seceding Biafrans which resulted to the civil war.

During the period, it is estimated that more than three million lives were lost. Since the end of the war in 1970, it has generated its own body of literature generally regarded as the Nigeria/Biafra war literature. Various authors have written to give an account of the war from different perspectives. While most of the war literatures are objective, others are subjective, serving personal, sectional interests. But the list of canonized war literature which is studied in

universities, schools and colleges somehow present an object account of the war. While many of such books condemn the very idea of the war, blaming the political and military leaders of that time, many of the texts demonstrate how those who fanned the embers of the civil strife ought to be blamed. Although some writers have brought religion into the mix, Onwusah Opiah insists that that religion played little or no role in the war. According to him “there was no noticeable or known difference between Muslims and Christians. During Christian feasts, we invited our Muslim friends to celebrate with us. The Muslim, also invited their Christian friends for their feasts” (10). Yet there are writers who try to show the roles played by such phenomenon like rumour and propaganda. Some of the writers of the Nigeria/Biafra war are Festus Iyayi with his novel *Heroes*, Sam Omasteye with his novel *My Name is Okoro*, JP Clark with his poem *Casualties*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie with her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Isidore Okpewho with his novel *The Last Duty*, Chinua Achebe with his novel *There was a Country*, Elechi Amadi with his novel *Sunset in Biafra*, Flora Nwapa with her novel *Never Again*, Chinelo Okparanta with her novel *Under The Udala Trees* etc. Certainly, most of these novels about the Nigeria/Biafra war approach the incident from diverse perspectives. While most of them view it from the perspective of gender, in which case they try to expose the sufferings of women and how they are the most vulnerable victims of war, other writers look at the war from a Marxist-Socialist perspective in which case they examine the capitalist, exploitative aspects of the war. The perspectives of interpreting the war are not exhaustive because it cuts across different ideas, background and issues.

The immediate concern of this study is to critically examine the roles played by rumour and propaganda in increasing and elongating the civil conflict of that period using two texts Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Okpewho’s *The Last Duty*. The two texts are similar in many

ways given the roles played by rumour and propaganda in the narrative. Rumour is an unsubstantiated information without a genuine or verifiable source but which has the similarity of truth given prevailing circumstances in the immediate society. Propaganda on the other hand is the manipulation of available information, often the truth, against a particular person or group of persons to achieve a particular purpose many times narrow and self-serving. To a large extent, the two ideas played very important roles in during the Nigeria/Biafra war to the extent that at some point, people relied on them for information and education about events of the war. In Adichie's novel, there is a clear indication that rumour and propaganda were instruments for the creation of waning confidence and the assurance of victory even in the face of obvious reality which was not far from defeat. In fact, Adichie relies on the two ideas to propel actions in his novel and reveal how they both sustained the conflict, dragging it to last for three gruelling years. Because Adichie is Igbo, the ethnic enclave of the secessionist Biafra, she is also guilty of using her novel to peddle rumour and propaganda since most of the accounts in the novel only provoke sympathy for Biafra and angst towards Nigeria. For Okpewho, it does appear that he is more objective in his account given that he comes from a neutral part of the country which is neither Igbo or the Hausa dominated Nigeria. Events in Okpewho's novel also show that although there were incidence of rumour and propaganda, they only led to ignorance and contributed to the tragedy at the end of the war. These issues shall provide a critical background for the interpretation of the two novels chosen for this study.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Many critics and creative writers have written copiously about the Nigeria/Biafra war so that the literary scene is inundated with too many books describing the incident from various, different perspectives. While many of these works dwell on the inevitability of the war, others

condemn it totally showing how futile it was to embark on the war in the first place. However, none of these works has turned its critical searchlight on rumour and propaganda to show how it contributed and can indeed contribute to fuelling civil unrest and strife. That is a major problem that this study seeks to unravel and solve. Rumour and propaganda are negative phenomenon which can alter the consciousness of a people and sway their mindset to believing in falsehood. When falsehood is believed and draws conviction from the people, it can lead a society into the wrong direction. In fact, many years after the Nigeria/Biafra war, fragments of rumour and propaganda that held sway at that time still remain. Most people still hold unto outright lies, mere fabrication and unsubstantiated narratives which has guided their vision of society. The challenge in this study is to identify what is rumour and what is propaganda. How can these be separated from the truth? Are rumour and propaganda the same things as falsehood? To what extent did the two writers Adichie and Okpewho use their novels to peddle rumour and propaganda? By answering these questions, the study shall provide a workable prognosis to dissect or situate rumour and propaganda as instruments of warfare. Also, the study shall expose the role of the media as channels or outlets through which rumour and propaganda are disseminated and consequently absorbed. The society must be educated to isolate rumour and propaganda from truth and fact.

1.3 Aim And Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

- i. To demonstrate that rumour and propaganda animate the plot of the two novels
- ii. To show the roles played by rumour and propaganda in the war as narrated in the novels
- iii. To demonstrate the effect of rumour and propaganda on the lives of the characters

- iv. To show how rumour and propaganda can affect a society negatively.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because beyond using the events of the Nigerian/Biafra war to critically interpret the roles of rumour and propaganda in civil conflict, it calls the attention of the public to the roles rumour and propaganda can play in shaping a country's socio-political or historical reality. In contemporary times, many literary texts have become mere items of rumour and propaganda where information is distorted to either sway the public or mislead the ignorant. This study seeks to awaken the academic community, literary critics and the general public to the dangers of rumour and propaganda. In this way, the society and general public has a responsibility to identify rumour and propaganda but focus on truth and facts of an event in the country. This study is also significant because it is a multi-disciplinary study which is relevant in Literary Studies, Communication Studies and Sociological Studies. This is basically because the society and its reactionary tendencies to information in times of civil conflict is the ultimate focus. Lastly, this study is significant because it provides an opportunity for aspiring writers to eschew rumour and propaganda, focusing only on facts and truth. Although it can be argued that rumour and propaganda seem to provide an alternative view of events and how people's consciousness react to these events, it should not be used as an instrument to mislead the public and push a false narrative into the public space.

1.5 Research Questions

This research is guided by the following questions:

- i. How do rumour and propaganda animate the plot of the two novels
- ii. What roles do rumour and propaganda play in the war as narrated in the novels

- iii. What is the effect of rumour and propaganda in the lives of the characters in the novel
- iv. How do rumour and propaganda affect the society negatively

1.6 Research Methodology

This study is qualitative and descriptive. It will make use of textual thematic analysis depending solely on the two texts *Half of A Yellow Sun* and *The Last Duty*. The study uses Deconstruction as a theory for a critical analysis of the two texts. The choice of Deconstruction in this study is suitable because the theory gives us the liberty to interpret the literary texts in a new way. While the chosen two texts are the primary sources of interpretation, journals, the internet and magazines are the secondary sources for this research

1.7 Definition of terms

- Rumour is an unconfirmed information which usually derives from an existing, confirmed information, usually without source or origin peddled by people to score a cheap socio-political point
- Propaganda: is the manipulation or distortion of an existing information, usually with an origin to suit a particular purpose whether negative or positive
- Warfare: is an act of conflict between two fiercely opposed enemies for the control of an identifiable socio-political or economic resources
- Motivation: is any act that persuades, guides or encourages a particular behaviour at a given point in time
- Reality: is the actual state of things as they exist in a given period as against idealistic or notional perspectives

1.8 Theoretical framework

The theory chosen for this study is Deconstruction. Although Deconstruction is attributed to many thinkers and philosophers, only one thinker and philosopher Jacques Derrida provides a concise and detailed outline of the theory which is why this study shall be relying on his deconstructive approach to texts. Other writers that have proposed different dimensions to the theory deconstruction are Luce Irigaray and Geoffrey Hartman. Jacques Derrida propounded his theory of deconstruction in the 1960s and since then the theory has played major roles in the interpretation of various texts in the hands of scholars and critics alike. Deconstruction as a literary theory emphasizes that every literary texts is made up of multiple, overlapping meanings, therefore cannot have just one meaning. According to deconstruction, a literary text can have many meanings, it all depends on the critic therefore it will be wrong to ascribe one meaning to a text. Deconstruction as a theory empowers critics to interpret works of literary from multiple dimensions which the author or writer of a text may seem unaware. For example, a literary text may be dominated by Marxist interpretation for many years but this does not mean that the same text cannot be interpreted from another critical perspective. A literary text may also be dominated by Formalist critical interpretation but this does not mean that it cannot be interpreted from another critical perspective. The text chosen for this study, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *The Last Duty* as war novels easily yield themselves to critical interpretation from a Historical Materialistic perspective. Most writers have also interpreted them from a Marxist Socialist perspective. In fact, there are writers who have interpreted the texts from a Feminist perspective where they examine the plight of women during civil unrest. However, this study takes a different view by using deconstruction to interpret the texts and critically highlight the roles played by

rumour and propaganda in the novels. By so doing, the study does not reject or challenge the existing theoretical paradigms used to interpret texts but adds to the growing critical voices in appraising the events of the war. Deconstruction is suitable in this study because it grants us the liberty of interpretation from hitherto unconsidered perspectives. Deconstruction is dynamic, it engages literary texts at a level of their immediate relevance to the public. Although some people can sometimes submit that a literary text is old or expired, given the time it was written, deconstruction does not recognize such outdating of a written material. What it does is to revive a text and bring its realities to contemporary relevance. This is why many critics have explained deconstruction as the most suitable theory because it gives life to expired texts by ascribing new meanings and prescribing new ideas which the writer or other critics may not have thought about. In Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the interest of critics seem to be the tension created by the conflict between Nigerian forces and Biafran forces, between Gowon and Ojukwu. The novel also paints a picture of betrayal in relationships, love affair and the transmutation of human character seen in how Ugwu's shifts from an innocent houseboy to an implacable rapist. But given the freedom of deconstruction, the study, while acknowledging the import of these different and divergent ideas, zero in on rumour and propaganda as instruments which either motivate or demotivate the characters leading to the outcome in the novel.

In Okpewho's *The Last Duty* also, there have been concentrated interests by critics on the framing of Oshevire by Toje, the endurance of Aku in the absence of the husband and the determined but inadequate effort by Ali to maintain law and order in his area of command. Feminist critics have tried to exonerate Aku from the tragedy in the novel arguing that she was exposed to much vulnerability and in that circumstance no one should blame her for the

death of Odibo and Toje. However, through the critical prism of deconstruction which allows us to pay more attention to the events in the novel, it is revealed that all the actions in the play are motivated and sustained by rumour and propaganda. Ali's inability to secure his military command is as a result of the existence of rumour and propaganda. Toje relies heavily on rumour and propaganda to over rate himself. Oshevire's travails are sustained by rumour and propaganda. Aku's life draws sustenance from rumour and propaganda seeing that she was caught off from the rest of the society as a result of her ethnic origin. The whole Zonda and Simba area largely depend on unconfirmed reports and false narratives to form opinions about the war. Thus deconstruction helps to generate multiple themes from the novels and this is the immediate concern of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Literature Review

The Nigeria/Biafra war has generated a lot of literature, constituting a canon in literary creation among critics and writers all over the world. As with every aspect of reality, be it historical, political, economic or social, interpretations of the events of the Nigeria/Biafra civil war has taken so many twists and turns. While some critics are obviously biased depending on their personal interest and loyalty, other critics, especially foreigners are objective in their accounts of the war. Thus, there are facts and fiction about the war. The fiction aspect of the war inheres from rumour and propaganda and is consequently upheld by the degree of acceptance and assimilation by the people. While many writers believe that rumour and propaganda are not far from the truth in which case they cannot exist in isolation, some other writers are convinced that the truth is different, far removed from rumour and propaganda. For the latter category of critics, rumour and propaganda distort the truth and mislead the people. Julius Afolalu observes that “the civil war was predicated on the Northern massacres of the 1966 coup and counter-coup. Although the greater number of the victims were the Igbos, the killings were not limited to Igbos” (22). From the above assertion, the writer argues that the Igbos were not the only ones killed during the the Northern Massacre of 1966 which was a prelude to the civil war. This is in sharp contrast to the narrative presented in Adichie’s *Half of A Yellow Sun*. In Adichie’s account, only the Igbos were massacred in Northern Nigeria during the counter coup which preceded the war. While Afolalu and Adichie agree that there was a massacre of the Igbo people during the counter coup, they both differ on the degree and number of Igbos that were massacred. It is this kind of difference in narrative that gives rise to rumour and propaganda to flourish. In fact, other writers have given different figures about the number of Igbo people that were killed. While Adichie narrates the events leading to the war in her novel, Okpewho does not give that account

apparently because he did not want to be caught in the rumour and propaganda cross-fire since it will be difficult to ascertain the exact number of people that died in the massacre.

While the account in the two novels by Adichie and Okpewho gives the impression that the Eastern Nigeria mostly populated by the Igbos was mostly affected by the war, Frederick Forsyth thinks that the entire Nigerian nation crumbled as a result of the war. According to him, “the mighty federation of Nigeria was crumbling into a ruin before the eyes of foreign observers who had only few years before hailed Nigeria as the great hope of Africa”. (11) Forsyth’s remark here indicates that not only the Biafran enclave was affected by the war but the entire Nigeria as a country. This is at variance with the narrative presented in the two novels where the writers paint a picture of anguish on the part of Biafra and victory on the part of Nigeria. Forsyth here maintains all parts of Nigeria, in fact, the socio-economic and political nucleus of the country crumbled as a result of the war. Although Forsyth’s observations appear objective enough, he does not point out how this objectivity was able to assuage the bruised feelings of the two warring parties in the conflict. While Biafra through a well oiled rumour and propaganda machinery consistently assured the world that they were having the upper hand in the battle, the Nigeria press from Lagos gave the hope that the Biafrans will only last for the next week before surrendering. Thus objectivity in battle was disregarded while rumour and propaganda festered. The point must be made that the Nigerian federation suffered hardship collectively so that the havoc wrecked on Biafra was a havoc wrecked on Nigeria.

Gordonz Jay in his account of the Nigeria Biafra war tends to pander to rumour and propaganda sentiments. This is because he presents unconfirmed figures which were some of the issues that fuelled the conflict that engulfed the Nigeria federation. It is obvious that most writers of the Nigeria Biafra war depend on such unverified accounts which further mislead the public.

According to Jay “From June to October 1966, pogroms in the North killed an estimated 8,000 to 30,000 Igbos with more than a million fleeing to the Eastern region. The new republic adopted the Biafra flag which was unveiled on the 30th May 1967” (33). Jay’s account sounds frivolous and outlandish. The figures he quoted are not confirmed by any known statistics therefore can be said to be a mere guesswork. It is such figments of rumour and propaganda that eventually sustained the anger and bile on the minds of people from the Eastern enclave known as Biafrans. These kinds of sentiments are also echoed in the two novels. Adichie gives unsubstantiated account of how many Igbos were killed during the war and Okpewho also indulges in peddling unsubstantiated figures about the number of people killed in the battle. However, Jay fails to analyze how these kinds of information affected the progression of the war in one way or another. Such unconfirmed accounts thrive on sentiments and affect the psychology of those who survived the war. Although the civil is over for more than fifty-years, the rumour and propaganda associated with it still affects the relationship between Igbos and the rest of Nigeria. Such effects sometimes culminate in hatred, intolerance, and even anger towards one another.

Al J. Venter advances the narrative of rumour and propaganda by insinuating that the reason why Britain USSR supported Nigeria against Biafra was the oil in Biafra. According to him “the war that followed was a savage and often brutal battle by Britain and Soviet Union (obviously the oil that lay under Biafran earth had a lot to do with that unlikely alliance) – and a tiny enclave that was soon completely surrounded by its enemies” (29). Going by Jay’s submission, Nigeria got support from Britain and USSR because of their economic interest in Biafra. Since there is no official document to back up this claim by Britain and USSR, the assertion above can best be described as rumour or propaganda or both. These kinds of assertion helped to fuel the degree of enmity between the two warring factions. Interestingly, after the civil

war which Nigeria won, it is not clear if Britain or USSR has benefitted from the oil and other economic items which Nigeria took over from Biafra. It remains to be seen if accounts such as these have affected the narrative of the Nigeria Biafra war and in what magnitude. Realistically speaking, oil in the South-South of Nigeria which was an enclave of Biafra during the war has been Nigeria's economic mainstay, but to say that it was for that reason that Britain and USSR supported Nigeria during the war is to stoke the embers of rumour and propaganda. Although this assertion might not be totally untrue, yet the lack of any verifiable document to back it up confines it to the dustbin of rumour and propaganda.

Issues of propaganda and rumour about the Nigeria Biafra war transcend the boundaries of Nigeria, venturing into the international community and especially other African countries. While the war raged in Nigeria, foreign narratives, either for commercial purposes or for education created an unending news item about the war. Inevitably, it affected politics and Nigeria's foreign relations with other African countries and regional international organizations like OAU. Outside Nigeria, the narrative depended on which side the country in question supported in the conflict. According to Nwobi Obiora, "the Nigerian civil war came as a result of the claims and counter-claims that some sections of the country is dominating the polity or by the suspicion by other section that other ethnic group is trying to dominate the polity" (26). The above submission which contains "claims and counter-claims" indicates that nothing is known for certainty. Every claim is repudiated or challenge by another claim. That is the bedrock of rumour and propaganda. During the war, people made claims to suit their whims and caprices so that it becomes difficult to know the truth and what exactly to believe. Both parties in the conflict Nigeria and Biafra made claims and counter claims about the war. These claims and

counter claims were not stable, some of them were outright falsehood too but unfortunately people believed them in order to satisfy their bruised consciences.

Although the Nigeria Biafra war threw up a lot of unverified information, there were glaring evidence that most of the rumour and propaganda turned out to be true. For instance, when Ojukwu, the Biafran head of state asserted that thousands of children were dying in Biafra out of hunger and starvation, many people thought that it was naked propaganda to curry international sympathy. However, it proved that what started as propaganda was indeed true. According to Tunde Atiba, “the economic blockade used as a weapon of warfare which led to mass starvation of Biafrans in 1968 however played a crucial role in the outcome of the war” (17). Atiba’s submission here proves that indeed Nigeria used economic blockade as a weapon of warfare against Biafra which led to the death of millions of people.

Besides the rumour and propaganda that held sway during the war, there is another kind of war narrative known as post-war rumour and propaganda. This means rumour and propaganda that still exist many years after the war. In contemporary times, people still tell unsubstantiated stories about the war which has immediate effects in ethnic relations in Nigeria. For example, Chima Korieh remarks that “fifty years after the war, Biafra remains a site to interrogate several issues fundamental to understanding the problems of post colonial states in Africa, the multiethnic composition of African nation-states, the problems of ethnicity and the lack of progressive ideas to build stable societies in Africa. The ghost of Biafra still haunts Nigeria” (43). These kinds of narrative long after the war opens old wounds and reminds the living of the pains of the war. As fragmented as Nigeria is now, the post war rumour and propaganda machinery is helping to stoke the embers of ethnic hate, animosity and strife in the country. Perhaps by critically identifying these issues in the two texts selected for this study, the public

will be better educated to disregard rumour and propaganda either concerning the past civil war or in the countries socio-political realities.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 The nature of rumour and propaganda

3.1 *The Last Duty*

Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty* recounts the events of the Nigeria civil war between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the seceding Republic of Biafra. However, Okpewho does not directly mention Nigeria and Biafra in the novel. He chose to create a fictitious narrative using two towns within a fictitious country called Zonda. In the novel creates two separate towns, Igabo which belongs to the federal side and Simba which belongs to the rebellious, seceding faction. The novel gives a lucid account of the war and its many devastating angles especially how it affects human relationships, families, rivalries and even children. Through the collective evidence technique, internal monologue, and personal accounts by the characters, Okpewho is able to graphically capture the different experiences of the major characters and how the war affected them. In presenting these characters, the novelist also demonstrates that rumour and propaganda helped to fuel the civil conflict. At some point, rumour and propaganda contribute in the consciousness of the people and their reaction towards the war. At other times, the people are deceived and misled which also affects their reaction and relationships with people around them. The phenomenon of rumour and propaganda in the novel become a propelling force for plot development. The characters move and act on different piece of information and many times, their lives are defined by these issues. However, the interest of this study is to examine the nature of rumour and propaganda and how it affected the growth of the war. Before concentrating on the nature and dimension of rumour and propaganda in the novel, it is important that a brief synopsis is given. In given a brief synopsis of the novel, characters and their reactions to rumour and propaganda are presented.

At the beginning of the novel, the Simba rebels had just been chased away from the town of Urukpe by the federal army forces led by the efficient the efficient Major Ali. The audience is introduced to Toje, a self-conceited, arrogant and proud man who happened to be a rubber merchant. However, Toje is dishonest in his rubber business because he mixes it with latex and increases the price. Toje capitalizes on the helplessness and confusion of the war situation to exploit his customers who had no choice but to patronize him. While Toje flourished in his rubber business, there emerged Oshevire, a young man who is also in the rubber business. According to Abdulahi Inuwa:

He is one of the citizens of Urukpe who is arrested and detained at the command of Toje. He is the husband of Aku and the father of Oghenov. Oshevire is intelligent and hardworking. Because of his honesty in doing business, he soon takes the lead in the rubber business and Toje hates him for that. His intelligence is revealed in his evidence during his trial at Iddu. He carefully proves his innocence and the tribunal have no other option than to set him free. It can also be said that Oshevire is a peace-loving and law-abiding citizen. (11)

However, Oshevire is honest in his rubber business and inevitably, attracts more customers. Oshevire's success and rise in the rubber business anger Toje because Oshevire attracts more customers and becomes more popular. According to the novel:

Before long, Oshevire was already attracting labourers away from me because he paid better . . . not much later the government came up with all that nonsense about unadulterated latex and in no time the buying agents began to turn their focus away from me...and Oshevire began to enjoy increasing attention. Oshevire began to grow bigger and bigger and even throw his weight about (122) .

In order to deal with Oshevire and get him out of the way, Toje frames him up for collaborating with the rebels. He achieves his wicked aim by exploiting his relationship with Major Bello the military commander of the federal forces in Urukpe. Because major Bello respects and reveres Toje as a chief in the town, he believes Toje's lies and goes ahead to arrest Oshevire and detain him in Iddu. With Oshevire out of the way, Toje decides to capitalize on the situation and have sexual affair with Aku, Oshevire's wife. Akun comes from the rebel Simba town. At the wake of the arrival of federal forces who chased the rebel Simba army away, many people from Simba ran away from Urukpe but Aku, Oshevire's wife did not run away. In the absence of her husband, the community is hostile towards her to the extent that she could not venture outside her house with her son for fear of being mobbed. Therefore, when Toje started giving her gifts, she accepted his good gesture but also suspected that Toje may want something more. Toje had a high impression of himself and thought that Urukpe town was nothing without him. According to the novel:

If therefore anything happens to me that might detract from the position in which we are held, no sacrifice should be too great from anybody in this town to ensure that we keep our place, that we maintain our position. Every citizen has to pay. Great names are rare and must not be wasted (5)

It turned out that Toje indeed wanted something more. Capitalizing on Aku's helplessness and vulnerability, Toje starts having sexual affair with Aku but unfortunately, Toje is impotent and cannot achieve a regular erection to have a successful sexual experience. To cure his impotence, Toje visits a native doctor Emuakpor to procure a medicine that will help him achieve erection. However, Emuakpor deceives him by giving him a mixture of cow dung which fails to achieve the desired erection to have sex with Aku. After fumbling with Aku and arousing her in the

process, Toje fails to achieve erection. Then he sends his deformed nephew Odibo to stay with Onome, Aku's son. However, when Aku gets home, being aroused after several touches, she is inevitably involved in a sexual rump with Odibo. After the sexual experience with Odibo, it become a regular pattern in Odibo's house and one day, Toje walks into Odibo's house and catches two of them. Odibo defends Aku and a fight ensues between Odibo and Toje. Both men cut each other with cutlass and die afterwards. Meanwhile, Rukeme, the man Toje paid to give false evidence against Oshevire is not able to do this. The military tribunal in Iddu threw away all his evidence and set Oshevire free. Oshevire returns to Urukpe to discover what happened to his family. He decides to move away from the village to avoid the shame. He sets his house on fire and packs his load with his wife Aku and his son Oghenovo. While they were walking away during a curfew because it was war time, soldiers ask them to stop but Oshevire refuses and the soldier fired at him and he drops dead.

3.2 Rumour and Propaganda in *The Last Duty*

This study is concerned with the roles played by rumour and propaganda in a war situation especially the Nigeria-Biafra civil war. Given that the events of the war took place during a war situation, rumour and propaganda played major roles especially in the hands of the rebel Simba forces. The Simba military forces do not have a well trained army or organized assault mechanism but they thrive on rumour and propaganda which gives them home and motivation. According to Chukwuma Nwachukwu and Uruama Nwachukwu "the Simbians are obviously a protest force. They are not on ground and obviously do not deploy good military equipment in their incursion in Urukpe. They merely engage in guerrilla attacks, which is subtle, roguish and mainly intended to discomfit Igabo. This is the tactic of the weaker adversary"(8). In one of their numerous air-raids and attacks, they killed 207 people including civilians but Simbians blew the

news out of proportion. The rumour was that more than 1,000 people were killed. According to the novel, Simbians used locally made weapons which had “to fly so low to achieve anything like a hit” (94). The weapons were locally made and must be deployed in such a way to fly low to achieve their aim. Immediately the weapons killed 207 person, the rumour all around Simba was that the Simbian soldiers had killed thousands of federal army officers. This piece of rumour and propaganda energize the rebels and sustain their hope of victory in the war. The process of disseminating the rumour and propaganda is normally through gossips but mainly through the mobile local radio station which reminds one of the popular Radio Biafra during the civil war. The most potent channel or source of disseminating rumour and propaganda is street gossip. But during war conditions, rumour and propaganda can be disseminated through the media especially radio and newspapers. The Simba forces achieved their rumour and propaganda objectives through street gossips and the media especially radio and print media.

Another instance of rumour and propaganda is seen through the character Rukeme. Rukeme is Toje’s cousin whom he paid to give false evidence against Toje’s business rival Oshevire. Toje had framed up Oshevire as a saboteur against the federal forces. In truth, Oshevire saved a young twelve-year old Simba boy who was being pursued by an angry mob. After the incident Toje and in fact most people in Urukpe who didn’t like Oshevire twisted the narrative and turned it into a mere propaganda. The propaganda was that Oshevire actually set a Simba soldier free even though the soldier wore army camouflage. The rumour was that Oshevire was working for for the Simba soldiers. In fact, many people peddle the rumour that he was their spy agent in Urukpe. Knowing the fragility of human consciousness during war times and the danger of labelling someone a saboteur, Toje capitalized on these circumstances and recruited Rukeme to give evidence generally derived from rumour and propaganda against

Oshevire. It is instructive to note that Osheiver's wife Aku is from Simba. After Oshevire was arrested for saboteur, he was detained in Iddu and Rukeme went there to give false evidence against him. Rukeme's evidence against Oshevire is largely predicated on rumour and propaganda. They were unfounded, unconfirmed reports which were aimed at implicating Oshevire and have him found guilty. First, Rukeme says that Oshevire fraternized with the rebels more because his wife came from Simba, the rebel town. He also claimed that the rebels from Simba visited Oshevire's household for food and other refreshments. Again, he claimed that Simba soldiers patronized Oshevire's wife in her wares in the market. Obviously, Rukeme understood the collective consciousness of the people during war situations and the role rumour and propaganda could play. But the tribunal in Iddu were not fooled by his lies and unconfirmed evidence. When it looked like Oshevire was going to be set free, Toje had to travel to Iddu to threaten Rukeme that if he failed, he will refund the 150 pounds that he collected for the job. After Rukeme gave his evidence which was all based on rumour and propaganda, the tribunal subjected it to critical scrutiny and found out that he was lying. Consequently, Oshevire was set free after three years of incarceration. His freedom is a major indicator of the inconsequentiality of rumour and propaganda even in a war situation.

The last evidence of rumour and propaganda which leads to the death of Oshevire and gives the novel its major aspect of tragedy occurs when Oshevire arrived in Urukpe from Iddu after he was set free. When the tribunal proved beyond every reasonable doubt that Rukeme was lying against Oshevire, the tribunal had no option than to set him free after three years. The day Oshevire arrived Urukpe, oblivious of what had happened to his family, he was greeted by jeers and scorns. Two villagers he met on the way mocked him with mere propaganda and rumour about what happened to Aku, Oshevire's wife. Toje and Odibo his nephew had slaughtered each

other with cutlass when Toje caught Odibo having a sexual affair with Aku. The villagers that met Oshevire on the way turned the story into a piece of propaganda and rumour. The first villager said that he had that almost all the men in the village were having sex with Aku. The second villager said that he had that Aku was also charging a fee for a piece of her body. Of course, these information originated from a real event that actually took place but they were twisted to achieve a particular purpose which is what rumour and propaganda thrive on. These information affected Oshevire. When eventually joined his family and learnt the true story of what happened, his first reaction was to accept it as a man, forgive his wife and move on with their lives. But the rumour and propaganda he first heard upon his returned played on his mind. He thought that since everyone in Urukpe knew what happened, it would be difficult to continue to live in the town. He actually believed that the incident was worse than what he was made to believe by Major Ali. Based on the exaggerated information he heard when he returned to Urukpe, he decided to move away from the town since it would be difficult to continue to live there given that people will be making fun of him and his family. While the rumour and propaganda played on his mind, he refused to talk to his wife even though he had made up his mind to forgive here. Convinced that the rumour and propaganda were true, he prepared his family, set his house on fire and moved with his wife and son to an indeterminate location. It was while they were on their way out of Urukpe that the soldiers on duty shot and killed him. Given that during a war situation the town was always observing curfews and movement was restricted, Oshevire was asked by the soldiers to stop, he refused and they fired at him. He slumped and died. It can be argue that Oshevire was driven by rumour and propaganda to take a decision that he would otherwise not have taken. It is indeed unfortunate that after all of Oshevire's tenacity

while in detention in Iddu, he finally gives up and succumbs to mere rumour and propaganda. He decides to move away from Urukpe and loses his life in the process.

3.3 *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* is one of the many novels that deal with the events of the Nigeria – Biafra war which lasted from 1967 to 1970. In the novel, Adichie gives an account of how the war affected the major characters who have direct experiences in different ways as the war raged. The novel explores the evils of the war and its effect on human beings. Through a character transition, the characters move from one form of reality or consciousness to another one. Through a combination of horror depiction, romance, love, betrayal and child innocence, Adichie adequately captures the carnage that can occur both physically and psychologically during war time. Although the focus of this study is to examine the role played by rumour and propaganda in the war as demonstrated in the text, the enduring effect of the war through the lives of the characters is also analysed. There are obvious evidence that rumour and propaganda affect the behaviour and reaction of the characters in the novel. Also, the commanding heights of both warring parties in the conflict, Nigeria and Biafra are affected by rumour and propaganda. The remarkable difference between the two novels is that while Okpewho's *The Last Duty* is anchored on fictional recreation of events with a change in the names of the warring parties, Zonda Republic, Igabo and Simba, Adichie's novel directly mentions the names of the warring parties Nigeria and Biafra. Perhaps, this directness in Adichie's novel makes it easier to relate with events of that historical period and the roles played by rumour and propaganda. Although Adichie insists that her novel is fictional work, there are valid grounds to argue that the novel is a direct account of real events that took place before and during the Nigerian civil war. These accounts are too vivid and direct to be dismissed as mere

fiction. Before examining the roles and dimensions of rumour and propaganda in the novel, a brief synopsis is necessary.

Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* can be described as a war novel. At the beginning of the novel, Ugwu, a rustic village boy leaves his domain to Nsukka to serve as a houseboy to Odenigbo, a professor of Mathematics at the iconic University of Nigeria Nsukka. Odenigbo lives with Olanna, the daughter of a wealthy Igbo man. Through Odenigbo's encouragement, Ugwu also goes to school to acquire knowledge. The novel also presents Richard, a British aspiring writer in Nigeria who leaves his girlfriend Susan for Kainene, Olanna's twin sister although both of them lack any form of resemblance. These events form part one of the novel. However, part two recounts the events of the coup in Nigeria which brought the country's first republic politics to an end. After the first coup which was viewed as an Igbo coup, there was a counter coup where many Igbo people were slaughtered in Northern Nigeria. Olanna escapes from the carnage in the Northern region assisted by Mohammed, a Northerner who was initially interested in her for a love affair. Olanna witnessed so much bloodshed which led to her depression however Odenigbo and all members of his family relocate to the Eastern part of the country as the war become too intense and enemy forces approach Nsukka making it unsafe. After the leave Nsukka, they settle in Odenigbo's hometown Abba with Odenigbo's mother. After some time, with the increasing intensity of the war, the family again moved to Umuahia but Odenigbo's mother refuse to move with them. Ugwu, the houseboy is disappointed with the new environment, but Odenigbo and Olanna after settling down in their new home get married. During their wedding reception, there is an air raid but which disrupts the ceremony.

In part three of the novel, the narrative returns again to the period before the war started. Olanna travels to London and while away, Odenigbo's mother came to visit him bringing with

her a young girl known as Amala. Odenigbo has sex with Amala and gets her pregnant. When Olanna returns, she finds out about Odenigbo's affair with Amala. Disappointed with the development, she moves out of the house. Olanna gets intoxicated one day and has sex with Richard, her sister's boyfriend. Both Richard and Olanna decide not to tell Kainene but Olanna tell Odenigbo. Eventually, Olanna and Odenigbo come together again and adopt Amala's child whom they simply call Baby. The narrative again shifts to the period of the war. Now, as the war progresses, there is hardship, hunger and starvation in Biafra due to the blocked imposed on the region by the Nigerian government. Ugwu is forcefully conscripted into the Biafra army where he kills and participates in rape. Odenigbo's mother dies and he takes to drinking, becoming a drunk. Kainene harbours Olanna's family immediately Umuahia felled to the invasion of the Nigerian federal troops. As the war was coming to an end, Kainene decides to do business across enemy lines but never returned. Ugwu learns that his sister was gang-raped and decides to write a book. Odenigbo and Olanna accept Kainene's disappearance and Ugwu dedicates his book *The World was Silent When We Died* to Odenigbo.

3.4 Rumour and Propaganda in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

As with *The Last Duty*, there are many instances of rumour and propaganda in *Half of a Yellow Sun* where they played roles which contributed to the war in one way or another. Because Adichie's novel is more direct with real events, rumour and propaganda of that period is more immediate and still lingers in the consciousness of many people. It is easier to relate with names of people and places in the novel because they are not fictionalized. In some ways, the novel can be viewed as a historical document which serializes actual events. According to a Gradesaver analysis posted on the internet:

Adichie's book traces the events that shook Africa during the early and late 1960s, including the period when the Nigerian Civil War took place. In crafting her narration, Adichie takes a beautifully anachronistic approach, flowing back and forth in time to tell the tale of those affected by war. The first and third major portions of the book are devoted to the early 1960s, while the late 1960s are depicted in the second and fourth portions. (2)

However, the interest of this study is to highlight instances of rumour and propaganda and the significant roles they play in the novel paying attention to how the characters react to them. Rumour and propaganda were ingredients that sustained the war for three years. It was not only from the Biafra perspective or Nigeria perspective, both of the two warring factions indulged in rumour and propaganda to either justify their positions, scurry sympathy or to motivate their people. While it is not possible to highlight or outline all the elements and rumour and propaganda in the novel, a few from both sides of the conflict will suffice. While addressing some school children, Olanna tells them that “red was the blood of the siblings massacred in the North, black was for mourning them, green was for the prosperity Biafra would have, and finally the half of the yellow sun stood for the glorious future” (87). This kind of propaganda has the propensity to indoctrinate and adulterate the minds of young people living in Biafra. It could sow a seed of hatred on the minds of the young ones who obviously will carry such hate into the future. By addressing the young ones in that kind of language, Olanna made them to believe that anybody from Nigeria was their enemy. She also made them to believe that many of their siblings were massacred in the North by Nigerian soldiers, therefore anyone from Nigeria is their enemy. Olanna was inadvertently reminding the children of the need to mourn since their siblings were dead, murdered in the hands of Nigerian soldiers. Furthermore, she made them believe that Biafra had a glorious future which was stifled by Nigeria. This kind of negative, divisive narrative propelled the hatred and animosity which gave impetus to the war and made it

thrive. While Biafrans believed in the genuiness of their struggle for freedom, Nigerians believed that keeping the country as one was a task that must be done. Both parties deployed rumour and propaganda to justify their positions.

Another instance of rumour and propaganda comes from the Nigerian side. Obviously the Biafrans were the weaker side in the war. Following Nigeria's blockade of the region, people starved and many children died of malnutrition and kwashiorkor. But the Nigerian government, through its media and propaganda outlets denied that any child died of malnutrition or starved to death. When one American journalist who obviously visited Nigeria to cover the war in favour of Nigeria, he says, "I want to see real Biafran". Then Adichie observes that:

He was like President Nixon 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 over-flogged, that all was well as it should be in the war. (45)

The above piece of propaganda is offered and delivered by a white journalist who was evidently sympathetic to the Nigerian course. In the quotation above, the white journalist denies the existence of malnutrition and that children were not dying of hunger and starvation. This was in direct response to pictures of children with big stomach which Biafra set out to the international community. In response he two leading world heads President Nixon of the United States of America and Prime Minister Wilson Churchill of the United Kingdom sent journalists to Nigeria for fact-finding mission. These journalists were sent to Nigeria and not Biafra. Expectedly, since they were hosted by Nigeria under Gowon, they gave reports that would favour Nigeria irrespective of its authenticity. Of course the world was aware that children were dying in Biafra through malnutrition, hunger and starvation, but the fact-finders denied these

events and reported that all was well. Also, pictures of civilians who died in the war through incessant bombing by Nigerian soldiers flooded the pages of international newspapers. But yet again, the fact-finders denied these realities and reported that Nigerian soldiers never bombed the civilian populace of Biafra. These propaganda behaviour may have affected the responses of the international community which led to the unnecessary prolongation of the war.

Another instance of propaganda is seen in the character of Odenigbo who identifies himself as a Biafran. While speaking to Ugwu his houseboy, he tells him clearly “I am Nigerian because a white man created Nigeria and gave me that identity. I am black because the white man created black to be as different as possible from his white. But I was Igbo before the white man came” (25). This kind of indoctrination obviously leaves a permanent scare on the mind of the young Ugwu who would always see himself first as an Igbo person and the Nigerians and white people as his enemy. Ugwu as a young boy and like many other young people grew up to imbibe these propaganda elements and it defined their lives in no small measures. There was certainly a desire by both warring parties to use information as a controlling mechanism to create false realities which were inconsistent with the truth. On another occasion while Odenigbo was speaking to Ugwu, the same pattern of indoctrination is applied. According to Odenigbo “they will teach you that a white man called Mungo Park discovered River Niger, that is rubbish. Our people fished in the Niger long before Mungo Park’s grandfather was born. But in your exam, write that it was Mungo Park. (25). Odenigbo goes on and on to miseducate the young Ugwu whose fertile, innocent mind will accept all the information without questioning given that he looks up to Odenigbo as the all knowing master. Although Odenigbo is educated, he indulges in rumour and propaganda. This proves that the two phenomenon is not about being educated or illiterate. In fact, even Richard, a white man is involved in the while propaganda harvest.

According to Calire Amitstead writing in the Guardian “Richard’s awkward perspective – as a white man in a relationship with a black woman, who forsakes his academic work to become Biafra’s director of propaganda – illuminates the colonial fantasy that underpins the whole mess” (3). This shows that even a foreigner was a part of the propaganda machinery.

A careful reading of *Half of a Yellow Sun* also indicates that the author may have indulged in rumour and propaganda to attract sympathy to the Biafran cause seeing that she is Igbo, the ethnic group with the largest population of Biafrans. For example, she writes that “Odenigbo’s mother was shot to death by a Nigerian soldier” (229). Again she writes “Odenigbo and Olanna’s wedding is interrupted by air-raids by the Nigerian army” (202). “Olanna witnesses a woman carrying the severed head of her baby in a calabash while riding a train”(149). Richard witnesses many Igbo people shot to death by Nigerian soldiers at the airport on the way back to Port-Harcourt”(153). “He also witnesses Ikejide’s decapitation due to being struck by a shrapnel” (317). With all of the above, it is obvious that Adichie also indulges in propaganda by promoting information that are not confirmed but which tend to achieve sympathy for Biafra and promote hate against Nigeria. Since Adichie was not born during the war and since she has on many occasions maintained that the novel is fiction, it therefore follows that she uses her novel to tell a story from the perspective of Biafra. These perspectives will definitely continue to affect the war narrative since the novel is studied in schools across the world.

To a great extent, we can argue that Biafra utilized the instrument of rumour and propaganda more than Nigeria. This is because Biafra is the weaker side and understandably needs global sympathy more than Nigeria. This is not to say that every information from Biafra was a piece of rumour and propaganda. There were truths in many of them but inevitably,

rumour and propaganda thrive on truth. While truth stood alone, rumour and propaganda grew on it and festered. This is what this study examines.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 The Dangers/Effect of Rumour and Propaganda

So far, the study has highlighted the roles played by rumour and propaganda during the Nigerian civil war which took place from 1967 to 1970 as replicated in two Nigerian novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and *The Last Duty* by Isidore Okpewho. Although it is easy to identify guns, bullets, war vehicles and other forms of weapons as instruments that caused destruction in the novels during the war, Rumour and Propaganda constitute as much harm as the visible instruments of warfare. Rumour and propaganda achieved as much harm and destruction in the country as other forms of war weapon. In fact, it can even be argued that rumour and propaganda caused more harm in many cases. Beyond the horrifying narratives in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, we can say that the novelist indulges in mindless rumour and propaganda using the medium of her novel. It will not be far from the truth to say that Adichie uses her novel to inflame the Nigerian polity following the events of the war. Although the war ended fifty-two years ago, a careful study of Adichie's novel will immediately invoke anger, passion and pity depending on the side the reader belongs. Since the stories and narratives in the novel about the war cannot be substantiated, since they lack verification and authentication, one can say that it is a piece of rumour and propaganda told from the point of view of a writer who shares sympathy with the Biafran cause. It is possible that the contents of the novel may have provoked different kinds of protest and negative reaction among people of the Eastern part of Nigeria who were Biafrans during the war. This is one of the dangers of rumour and propaganda in a documented form. This chapter will examine the dangers of using literature to propagate rumour and propaganda within a historical period and the effects it can have on the future of a country. Nigeria is preparing for the 2023 general elections and obviously some of the issues raised in Adichie's novel will affect the outcome of the election one way or another.

Also Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty* thrives on rumour and propaganda but not to the degree or in the same way as *Half of a Yellow Sun*. *The Last Duty* is a work of fiction, the names of the characters are fictitious, the names of the warring parties are fictitious and the name of the country Zondo is also fictitious. While Okpewho remains faithful to the fictitious identity of the novel, Adichie does not remain faithful to the fictitious identity of her novel. While the names of the individual characters in Adichie's novel can be said to be fictitious, the names of the principal characters of the war, Gowon and Ojukwu are not fictitious. Even the name of the warring parties, Nigeria and Biafra are not fictitious. Although Okpewho tries to maintain a fictitious identity in his novel, it is clear that he is recounting events of the war between Nigerian and the seceding Biafra which took place from 1967 to 1970. Because Okpewho is faithful to the fictitious nature of the narrative, the novel cannot be called a piece of rumour and propaganda. It is purely literature. Therefore the rumour and propaganda in the text are situated within the context of events in the text and do not have any larger implications to social cohesion and reality. The rumour and propaganda in the novel affect events and the development of the plot. The characters are affected too based on how their lives are affected by rumour and propaganda. Major Bello, the military officer in charge of Urukpe zone is a victim of rumour and propaganda. He accepts Toje's friendship based on what he heard about him and mere perception of his personality. When Toje reports Oshevire to the military authorities headed by Bello, the military officer makes no attempt to properly investigate the story. He arrests Oshevire and sends him to Iddu to face charges of sabotage. Rumour and propaganda in the novel are basically for artistic purposes. They have no immediate effect on the political and social relations of different groups in the country. It is the same rumour and propaganda that forces Oshevire to move out of town which leads to his death in the hands of soldiers. He was afraid that his family would not be able

to cope with the rumour and propaganda that would follow his wife's sexual betrayal with Odibo and Toje.

4.1 Findings

In the course of carrying research of this study, the following findings were made:

Firstly, rumour emanate from existing truth while propaganda is pure falsehood: As earlier stated at the beginning of this study, the relationship between rumour and truth is thin. Rumour needs an existing truth to thrive. Therefore we can say that rumour is the falsehood aspect of truth. Without an existing truth, there will be no rumour. This buttresses the popular saying that 'there is not smoke without fire'. Where ever there is rumour, there is an element of truth. During the civil war as demonstrated in the two texts, people feasted on rumour anytime there is a bit of information which explained the situation of war. For example soldiers kill people during the war, there is no doubt about that but in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the rumour was that more than the number of reported civilians were actually killed. Information is twisted and the volume is increased to achieve a particular purpose. During war time or any form of civil unrest, people are always in search of information of any kind. With this craving and hunger for information, rumour fills the gap when truthful information is paltry and not enough. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, it is reported that thousands of Igbos were killed at the Lagos airport. It is possible that some Igbos were killed but the number was no where many thousands. In *The Last Duty*, it is true that Aku, Oshevire's wife had sexual relations with Odibo and Toje attempted to also do the same. But the rumour was that she sold herself to different men in exchange for money. It was the fear of this damaging rumour that made Oshevire to take the decision to move away with his family to another town, a decision that led to his death.

Secondly, It is discovered that rumour and propaganda can be used to alter any social structure and dislocate the lives of people. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the rumour and propaganda of an impending Nigerian onslaught forced many Biafrans to relocate to another town even when there was no such threat. Thus, many families were dislocated due to these unsubstantiated information. Although it is true that the Nigerian soldiers and entire army were advancing towards Nsukka, information had it that in fact they had entered the town and were indeed killing people. Biafrans living in Nsukka, including Odenigbo and his family quickly reacted to these rumour and propaganda and moved to Umuahia. In this way, the family structure was dislocated and interrupted. In the same way, it is the rumour and propaganda that Oshevire assisted an enemy soldier to escape that led to his arrest and detention in Iddu. During a war situation, people are always framed up for one thing or another even if such stories lack merit. There are many instances of such situation during the Nigerian civil war which made many families lose hope or lose individuals. Oshevire's death is a good example.

Thirdly, rumour and propaganda can inflame the polity of any country causing hatred and misleading people. For example such hatred is exemplified in the prayer offered by Pastor Ambrose in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. According to him:

God bless his Excellency! God bless Tanzania and Gabon Strength!

God destroy Nigerian and Britain and Egypt and Algeria and Russia!

In the mighty name of Jesus! (345)

This kind of hateful speech can inflame the passion of people even many years after the civil war. Obviously, Pastor Ambrose is incensed that Britain, Egypt, Algeria and Russia supported Nigerian against Biafra. Therefore, he directs a very dangerous prayer against these countries. He also invokes the spirit of God to bless Tanzania and Gabon because they supported Biafra. These

kinds of emotions can inflame the polity and cause irreparable damage on the polity long after the war. In *The Last Duty* after the death of Toje and Odibo following their gruesome fight over Aku Oshevire's wife, Major Ali, the military officer in charge of Urukpe was relieved of his duties. The military authorities based their decision on Ali's failure. According to them, Ali failed because he could not prevent the death of Toje Odibo. This was the general sentiment of the people which the military authorities believed and acted upon. That piece of negative information destroyed everything Ali achieved in the area as a soldier. Sometimes, rumour and propaganda can wear the garb of truth in which case they are believed and acted upon. In fact, they can be used to formulate government policies which will in turn have far reaching consequences on the people.

Fourthly, the research discovered that literature will continue to be an instrument of rumour and propaganda. This cannot be controlled. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a novel that will last for many years. As long as the novel lasts, the information and narrative of the war contained in it will always remind people of that black patch in Nigeria's history. Also, even though *The Last Duty* tries to veil its propaganda identity, it is obvious that the novel recounts a very dangerous patch in the history of Nigeria. The two novels are war literature. War literature across the world thrives on rumour and propaganda depending on the consciousness and sympathy of the writer. All over the world, in all the places where war have taken place, there are always avalanche of literature which seek to describe and recount the events of the war. The World War 1 & 11 that took place many years ago which event shook the entire world is still generating different kinds of literature. Many of them are piece of rumour and propaganda while many are factual. Given available political developments in Nigeria and the realities of the North South relationships, it is true that the effects of the civil war, the injury of that war has not healed completely. However,

as long as there is liberty in literary expressions, war literature will always emerge and writers will always be at liberty to tell their stories from different perspectives.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 Recommendations

The study recommends the following after a careful research of rumour and propaganda in the literature of the Nigeria Biafra war.

1. Leaders, politicians and wielders of power in any country must endeavour to embrace peace and dialogue at all times. It is possible to control peace and dialogue, control information and news when there is peace and peaceful co-existence but the moment there is war, it becomes different to control what information gets into public space and circulate. According to accounts from *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the civil war was avoidable but Gowon and Ojukwu failed to embrace peace and dialogue. If they had done so, they would have avoided the war and saved millions of lives that were lost during the war.
2. The study also recommends that in this era of social media and free press, people should not always believe or act on what they hear. Rumour and propaganda will continue to thrive, it cannot be controlled. Therefore, every information must be taken with a pinch of salt. It is possible that 80% of information circulating on social media are either lies, rumour or propaganda. Efforts by the government to control fake information on social media has not achieved the desired result. Therefore, people must be careful and circumspect about any news they receive. There are instances where lives have been lost due to fake news. There are instances where families have been broken due to fake, misleading news. There are instances where countries and governments have acted based on fake, misleading information. There are cases of diplomatic tensions between two countries due to fake, misleading news. These fake stories or hoaxes – deliberately or not

– misinform or deceive audiences. Usually, these stories are created to influence people's views, push a political agenda or cause confusion and can often be a profitable business for online publisher. Everyone must be weary of fake, news, rumour and propaganda.

3. Although writers are at liberty to express themselves and preach their convictions through their works, there must be some sort of control on what writers write especially about war. From what Adichie has done in her novel, it is obvious that bias can never be removed from war narratives. The government should control the contents of war literature to ensure that old wounds are not opened each time a new text hits the shelves.
4. Finally, war shapes human relationships during war times. This study recommends that in the event of war, people should as much as possible stay together with their loved ones through thick and thin. In the two texts studied, betrayal is a common practice. Odenigbo betrays Olanna by sleeping with Amala, Olanna retaliates by sleeping with Richard. Toje betrays Oshevire and Aku betrays Oshevire as well. Even if there is no physical combat as war, different kinds of social tensions, economic and political can create an atmosphere of war in a society. The message is that people must never betray their loved ones under any circumstance. Betrayal could lead to unforeseen situations leading to death. Therefore betrayal should be avoided at all times.

5.1 Conclusion

The study has examined the role, nature and effects of rumour and propaganda during the Nigerian Biafra war which lasted from 1967 to 1970. For most Nigerians, the war over the breakaway state of Biafra is generally regarded as an unfortunate episode best forgotten, but for the Igbo people who fought for secession, it remains a life-defining event. In 1967, following two coups and turmoil which led to about a million Igbos returning to the south-east of Nigeria,

the Republic of Biafra seceded with 33-year-old military officer Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu at the helm. The Nigerian government declared war and after 30 months of fighting, Biafra surrendered. On 15 January 1970, the conflict officially ended.

The government's policy of "no victor, no vanquished" may have led to a lack of official reflection, but many Nigerians of Igbo origin grew up believing stories from people who lived through the war. After the war, many people wrote about it, many with factual information, while others were mere rumour and propaganda. All the literature of that era constitutes what is known in Nigerian literature as War Literature.

5.2 Biafran Timeline

- January 1966 - Nigerian government overthrown in what was seen as an "Igbo coup" led by junior army officers
- January 1966 - Lt Col Odumegwu-Ojukwu appointed military governor of Eastern Region
- July 1966 - Second coup masterminded by Murtala Muhammed, Lt Col Yakubu Gowon becomes head of state
- June to October 1966 - Riots in northern Nigeria targeted at Igbos, killing many and forcing up to a million to return to south-eastern Nigeria
- May 1967 - Ojukwu declares independence of the Republic of Biafra
- July 1967 - War begins
- October 1967 - Biafran capital Enugu falls
- May 1968 - Nigeria captures oil-rich Port Harcourt
- April 1969 - Umuahia, new Biafran capital falls to Nigerian forces
- January 1970 - Ojukwu flees Nigeria
- January 1970 - Biafra surrenders

5.3 Ojukwu's return and death

When it became obvious that Biafra was going to lose the war, Ojukwu fled to a neighbouring African country Ivory Coast. Ojukwu remained in exile for twelve years. After he was officially pardoned by the Nigerian government, he returned in 1982, with multitudes pouring into the streets of his home state of Anambra to welcome him. He died in November 2011 and was given a full military burial in a ceremony attended by then Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, some other African leaders and members of the diplomatic corps. Fifty years after the Biafran conflict, Nigeria is still battling to maintain its unity, with various groups, not just the Igbo, calling for the restructuring of Africa's most populous state. It is probably for this reason that the war is barely mentioned. The government has nothing to gain by reminding Nigerians that secession happened before and can be attempted again. Gowon, the commander of the Nigerian army and Head of State when the war took place is still alive till today.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR HOPE EGHAGHA ON RUMOUR AND PROPAGANDA IN WARFARE

DATE: 20TH JUNE 2022

VENUE: DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS

QUESTION 1: SIR, DO YOU THINK THAT RUMOUR AND PROPAGANDA PLAY SIGNIFICANT ROLES IN POLITICS?

ANSWER: When you talk about rumour and propaganda you are talking about two different instruments of communication or miscommunication. Rumour may not be attributable to a source. A rumor is usually something in the public space without an attribution to a source. Propaganda is usually from parties to the conflict, when there is a conflict between two bodies, two communities, two countries or nation. Usually both sides have their areas of weaknesses, where they are not strong, where they are very strong. What they try to do is to push an opinion to the public space in order to intimidate their opponent or to reassure their own people that they have an upper hand so that is standard in warfare and it is not only in Nigeria or Africa, it is worldwide. In the case of the Nigeria civil war the period before it was list with rumors. It was before the days of social media, where the rumor meal was very strong, was indeed one of the easiest ways of disseminating information. At the time newspapers came once a day and in some areas in the country people read the newspapers two days after it has been published in Lagos. The telephone was not active. It was not present in most cities in the country so people depended on the rumor meal. As a result, if one man was killed in Kano the rumour meal may say 20 men were killed. The effect of this was that it raised fears, it raised uncertainties and it increases the

tension in the land so rumor have a way of polluting the environment. A rumor is statement, an idea, a narrative, that is in the public domain but cannot be substantiated not attributed to anybody. In the rules of communication, once you generate a story by the time the second person is telling the story there are usually exaggerations so that in a chain of hundred persons. So rumor have a way of unofficial and officially raising tension, to that extent you can say there is a role it plays in warfare.

QUESTION 2: DO THEY AFFECT THE OUTCOME OF CIVIL UNREST?

ANSWER: Yes they do, sometimes positively but most often negatively. The time we live in demonstrates this clearly. In the past we used to be told don't believe everything you hear, now we are being told don't believe every picture that you see, don't believe every video that you watch. For example, there could be a video of many men being buried, mass graves from Rwanda. Somebody will push the video of what happened ten years ago, somebody would push into the Nigeria state and say this happened last week in Nasarawa state. Thousands were slaughtered and it just goes into the rumour state, people will watch it and think it is real. It has a devastating effect on the outcome of war. Propaganda also has the effect of keeping the spirit up. Take for instance when Hitler was bombing London during the Second World War. It was the propaganda of the Prime Minister Wilson Churchill that kept the British people going. When the Biafran territory had been reduced to an insignificant portion of what it was when it started, it was the Biafran radio propaganda by Uche Chukwumerije and Okonkwo that kept the Igbo people going. If you listen at the time to the Radio Biafra you will think that the entire Nigerian troops have been destroyed. If you listen to the Nigeria side you will think there was not an Igbo man left on the surface of the earth. So if there is strong propaganda it keeps the spirit of the people going. Look at the current war in Ukraine, the president constantly dresses in his t-shirt

and he addresses the world, all around him are ruins but he keeps speaking to the people and when soldiers in the field watch him, they are encouraged. So rumor and propaganda have an effect on the outcome of the civil war.

QUESTION 3: NOW TO THE WAR SIR, DO YOU THINK RUMOUR AND PROPAGANDA PLAYED ANY ROLE IN THE OUTCOME OF THE BIAFRAN WAR?

ANSWER: Yes, if you have read about the Biafran war in history it gives detailed information about the civil war, the prelude to the civil war, all the things that happened starting with the coup of 1966 January when those five Majors led the coupist to eliminate corrupt politicians but for some reason the Premiere of Eastern Region was spared and people said they left the Igbo man but if you read Madiebo and the rest it was not an Igbo coup. Usually when you want to plan a coup, you take people that are close to you that can keep your secret which is how coup has always been. However Ifeajuna who was supposed to execute it in the South-East altered the ground, according to him the arch Bishop Macarius was visiting from Cyprus and he didn't want to create an international scene so he didn't arrest Okpara but Tafawa Balewa, Okotie Eboh, in the north were all killed. Now the rumour mill then took over - the Igbo wanted to take over Nigeria, that's the reason they plotted a coup. It was aided by some pictures in the media at the time. So propaganda took over and then there was reaction in the North, they started killing Igbo people, slaughtering them, even those who have boarded train going back to the East were killed. July 29th 1966 Hausa/Fulani did the vendetta coup and killed mainly Igbo officers and that was how General Gowon, somebody from the middle-Belt emerged as Head Of State 1st of August 1966. Following the pogrom, the killing, Igbo people who went home started saying what had happened to them. Of course they were bloody stories, violence and all. Some naturally exaggerated and passions were inflamed in the East and they said no, we cannot live in the same

country these people so that's how we started from August when colonel Ojukwu refused to accept the headship of Gowon and then they started to have peace talk by July of 1966 through August, September, October, then May the next year Gowon split the county into twelve states instead of the four regions that we had, Ojukwu rejected it and then declared the Republic Of Biafra. So you can see propaganda and rumor intertwined.

QUESTION 4: DID ADICHE AND OKPEWHO DOWNPLAY OR OVER RATE RUMOR AND PROPAGANDA IN THE NOVELS?

ANSWER: There are different ways to look at it. Did they depend on rumor in the narrative?. No. their sources were largely historical but of course they discussed rumors, what people were saying during the war so to the extent that the war is a historical fact, they derived their information from historical document, newspaper reports, the archives, all of these played a role in the documentation or the narrative by Isidore Okpewho and Chimamanda Adiechie but what they did both writers was to bring the personal dimension, they brought flesh and blood into the narrative so that when we are talking about Isidore's narrative we are not simply saying Igbo and the North fighting, we are saying that during the war, this woman had this kind of experience, this man had this kind of experience so you find different features of human character playing a role in the two novels. They are not historical figures, well if you talk about Ojukwu in both novels, the rebel leaders, they are historical figures but when you talk about those individual characters they are fictional.

QUESTION 5: IT IS SAID THAT OJUKWU DEPLOYED THE INSTRUMENT OF RUMOR AND PROPAGANDA TO SUSTAIN THE BIAFRAN RESISTANCE DURING THE WAR. SIR DO YOU AGREE?

ANSWER: Well, they deployed propaganda definitely but not rumor because as we said propaganda is official rumor is unofficial, so they couldn't be depending on rumor meal to sustain the war. The propaganda was very effective, but rumors for instance carried like those who went to the front, remember those women who went to the front, those who were used to trap enemy soldiers, enemy forces, that's unofficial but as we said earlier on propaganda is a tool in any warfare, it helps to keep the spirit going.

QUESTION 6: SIR, DO YOU THINK THAT RUMOR AND PROPAGANDA ARE INEXORABLE INGREDIENTS OF WAR?

ANSWER: Yes they are because war in itself is very ugly. The reports might be beautiful. "Ooh during the war Ore as falling, Benin as falling, Agbo as falling, Asaba as falling, ohh they are now trying to take Onitsha, Onitsha as falling, Awka, Abagana". When it continues for too long you begin to lose your humanity so people then use the propaganda machinery to booster the spirit of people, it boosters the spirit of soldiers. In for instance there is an attack and five thousand soldiers were killed they will report that only 300 soldiers were killed, hearing that five thousand soldiers were killed will put fear in you, you won't be able to fight so that's what is usually done'

QUESTION 7: SIR, YOU ARE FROM THE NIGER DELTA REGION, EVENTS IN *THE LAST DUTY* TOOK PLACE AROUND YOUR REGION. DO YOU HAVE ANY DIRECT EXPERIENCE OF THE WAR?

ANSWER: I was a 9-10 year old boy during the war and yes we experienced the war in the sense that the Mid-West where I come from were run over by Biafran forces. They took over the administration, imposed a curfew, they seized our liberties in the sense that we were not free to

move. They harassed girls, in fact all the young girls were hidden, anyone who had a girl or who had a young wife didn't allow her to go out because those soldiers were there. Then onions were scarce, salt was unavailable because the salt used to come from the North so during that period we ate soup, stew without salt, we learnt how to do that. There were shootings too because the federal troops came and chased out the Biafran soldiers and there was fighting and there was also looting. When the federal troops came into town, persons who were not Igbo but who were from the Northern-Delta, we call them Igbo speaking, the Anioma people, were violated, attacked. People will meet soldiers and say, an Igbo man lives there and they will loot the house. So we felt the war directly like that. There was rumour at the time that Ojukwu used to come to the town, to Sapelle, that he had a mistress in the town, those were rumours. Then sometimes in the night, Biafran airplane will come and bomb the town so when we heard their planes coming, we will switch off all lights so everywhere will be dark. So we saw dead bodies sometimes rotting along the road, violent things I cannot forget. Then the day the federal troops came, they marched round the town in military formation, they were up to 50/60 marching, singing with their guns aggressively. At some point they will all stop and turn left and when they turn left they turn right, march as if they are entering the bush and come out and start marching and we will clap, you know entertaining people but it was a period of uncertainties and then some adults were conscripted. Sometimes at night, people will go and give false reports about you but one of the most enduring images of that war was a member of my church, he was an interpreter, he was a goldsmith and I remember how he used to dress well. One of the first persons that I saw as a young man who dressed in agbada, wore gold necklace and he spoke well. He just got married less than a week. There was a curfew imposed by the Biafrans so that night where he lived the toilet was not inside the house so he came out and left his wife inside. He came out of the house

to ease himself so when he was going back the soldiers asked who are you? Stop there! So he ran inside his house, lock the door, open the door they said. They fired the shot through the door and killed him, I can never forget that day.

QUESTION 8: SIR, DO YOU THINK RUMOUR AND PROPAGANDA WILL SHAPE THE OUTCOME OF NEXT YEAR'S ELECTION IN NIGERIA? WHAT INFORMS YOUR POSITION?

ANSWER: I don't think it will shape it, I think it will have an effect

QUESTION 9: WHAT PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM DO RUMOUR AND PROPAGANDA HAVE ON PEOPLE

ANSWER: Propaganda thrives on exaggerations to make you fear. You may not lose your mind but you will not give a correct judgment. So warfare is like that. Propaganda came in forms of news bulletin, more of songs, singing, slogans. The federal troops had their own the Biafrans had theirs, for instance, the federal troops slogan was "to keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done" then the Igbo people, the Biafrans had theirs, they called Nigerians vandals, the Nigerian vandals and they have effect on the psychology of people. When Ojukwu left the country January of 1970, a lot of people didn't know that he had left because of the effect of propaganda, they still fought.

THANK YOU SIR.

