

**WAR TRAUMA AND OTHER SIDES OF PAIN AND VIOLENCE IN
ADAOKEREAGBASIMALO'S *THE FOREST DAMES* AND ALEXANDER
MADIEBO'S *THE NIGERIAN REVOLUTION AND THE BIAFRAN WAR***

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Abstract

Most of the Nigerian fiction and non-fiction writings on war have depicted the violence and pains of war from various perspectives which are in consonance with the recurring tragic experiences the war goes with. During the bloody Civil War of 1967–1970, individuals were forced to experience different sorts of violence and pains which include sickness, death and killings to mention but a few and this defining historical moment has remained the most topical issue in Nigerian literature both from the fictional and non-fictional perspectives. This study investigates how both fiction and non-fictional works of AdaOkereAgbasimalo's *The Forest Dames* and Alexander Madiebo's *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War* portrayed the war trauma and other agonizing shades of the war. The aim is to portray the pains and violence as regards to fact and fiction of the war. The study adopted Psychoanalytic theoretical framework as a suitable theory to query and investigate the trauma and psychological imbalances in the characters capable of triggering depression and neurosis with loss of life at the very peak of its repressive effect. The study adopted a textual analysis of the two texts from a fictional and non-fictional perspective. The study discovered that from AdaOkere's perspectives, individuals suffered terribly during the war. Madiebo, in his own account, presented a real life narrative of the war while tracing its remote and immediate causes. The study concluded on the overall impact of the violence, pains and traumatic situations of the war gleaned from the selected works which have continued to serve as great materials for writers on both historical and fictional sides of the war literatures and narratives.

Keywords: Violence, Pains, War, Trauma, Psychology

Introduction

There is no other experience in life or dreadful event which depicted violence and pains in Nigeria citizens than the Nigerian Civil war. The Nigerian Civil War which took place between 1967 – 1970 left several indelible marks on the annals of the nation and raised several questions on the citizens viability as one sovereign entity. This thirty months gruesome experience, fought between what many scholars and war analysts refer to as “The aggressor and the aggrieved” or “The rebels and vandars”, brought untold hardship and tragedies in the lives of the teeming population of the country especially on the side of the Igbo people who identify on the side of the “rebels”. During this bitter struggle there were a lot of violence and pains meted against humanity.

OlusegunObasanjo (1980) while quoting Von Clausewitz in *My Command* writes that: “War is an act of violence intended to impel our opponent to fulfill our will” (52). From the account of this war narrator, it is obvious that any attempt of violence intended to make one's opponent

to fulfill one's will brings pains upon the oppressed opponent. With this, one can see that war is all about violence and pains which leave behind, long lasting traumatic experiences even years after the real war experience must have been over. This goes with Madu and Dozie's (2015) ideas that: "The lives of many are torn apart by the civil war that broke out between Nigeria and Biafra" (56). During this bloody war, people passed through pains, meeting series of painful experiences like: sickness, hunger, death, killing, betrayal, hiding, etc. And these tore so many lives and families apart. Looking at these traumatic events, Goodluck Jonathan quoted in EmefienaEzeani's in *Biafra Africa Died* (2013) attests to the disheartening violence and pains of war thus: "these act of mayhem are sad reminders of the events which plunged our country into 30 months of unfortunate civil war, referring to Biafran war in which more than one million people died" and the 1966 pogrom in the North"(50). This was a war which no one expected as it came as a surprise to the entire nation. Chinua Achebe in *There was a country* (2012) confirms that: "The war came as a surprise to the vast majority of artists and intellectuals on both sides of the conflict. We had not realized just how fragile, even weak, Nigeria was as a nation. Only a few Nigerians, such as the poet Christopher Okigbo, had early and privileged insights into the Nigerian-Biafran crisis. We the intellectuals, were deeply disillusioned by the ineptitude of Nigeria's ruling elite and by what we saw taking place in our young nation". (108)

These violence and pains which the entire nation faced during the war triggered AkachiAdimora – Ezeigbo to opine in *Fact and Fiction in Literature of the Nigerian Civil War* (2019) that: "The Nigeria-Biafra conflict proved to be one of the most serious and devastating crisis that Africa had ever experienced" (39). The words of Sophie ObiajuluOgunde (2008) in *Politics and Human Rights in Non-Fiction prison literature*, an article, supports the above view, that: "The period of the Nigerian civil war is yet our darkest in history and even 30 years on the socio-political super structure still resonates with some of the ugliest vibrations of the war" (78).

What makes the Nigerian civil war look ugliest than other wars fought in Africa are those enshrined in the enormity of violence and pains people suffered during the war and this still vibrates in our memories as ChukwuemekaOdumegwuOjukwu, one of the key players of the dreadful war confirms in his book, *Because I Am Involved* (1989) that: "The memories of the war are still in the minds of people. A lot of Nigerians harbor sad memories of that period, so do I, yet, it is a period we just can't abolish or erase because it has become part of our history, something we have to live with" (176).

Following the war Lord's opinion about war, it is clear that the injured party, which is Biafra, can never forget the violence and pains they passed through. InibongUko affirms this vociferously that "...the Igbo, who directly suffered and still bear the pains of war, reveals that the war was avoidable" (49).

It is this violence and the manner it was unleashed on the injured and oppressed groups, especially the side of the rebels, the pains and trauma it left behind that prompted Chukwuemeka Ike (2014) to conclude in *Sunset at Dawn* that "War is evil...it is terrible" (147). Yes, war is evil, due to the violence and pains it goes with. War is neither glamorous nor attractive; it generally affects people socially, economically, physically and psychologically.

Psychoanalysis as a Theoretical Anchor: A Justification

Sigmund Freud, an Austrian physician (1876-1931), through his investigations brought up the idea of psychoanalytical theory through which human psyche is investigated. Psychoanalysis,

as Ikechukwu Asika affirms, “is a branch of study that is interested in the study of the human mind and how the activities of the mind both in the conscious and the sub-conscious functions in the buildup of a healthy personality. It is a method of analyzing psychic phenomena and treating emotional and mental disorders that involves treatment sessions during which the patient is encouraged to talk freely about personal experiences and especially about early childhood and dreams (202). This tells that from Freud’s observation, every action of man comes from his mind.

Stephen Ogene Mbanefo and Ezeonyi N. Onyinye (2020), while quoting Freud state that “in examining Freud’s Psychoanalysis, Freud explores the three persons “Id”, “ego”, and “superego”. Freud believes that his structured model of mind (id, ego, superego) could be in conflict at anytime since they perform different functions”(180). They further opine that “a person’s ego adopts one or more defence mechanisms to protect him or her when he or she could not cope with the stress of conflict”(180). Psychoanalysis has become an interesting theory in the study and analyses of a work of art. Supporting this view, Nebeife and Kanu in “*Trauma of Migration: A Psychoanalytic Study of Chimamanda Adichie’s Americanah*” (2017) assert that: “Freud repeatedly talked about the role of the mind. He believes that the mind is responsible for both conscious and unconscious decision based on drives and forces ... He believes that people are simply actors in the drama of their own minds pushed by desire and pulled by coincidence”. (93)

In driving home the above point, and concomitantly justifying the choice of psychoanalytic theory as the theoretical anchor for this research, it is pertinent to explain that the actions and attitudes of characters in literary works (both from fictional and non-fictional dimensions) in many ways are reflective of their experiences, inner struggles and conflicts with forces largely against their control. Events come and go leaving behind, it’s indelible marks and shades of experiences on characters and individuals which however way it goes, are capable of affecting the characters in the positive and most cases, in the negative ways. Sometimes, bizarre experiences “may result to feelings of inadequacy and dependency for survival as the characters become entangled in finding a solution to his or her inner conflicts” (Odinye 43). Asika (2013), while dissecting Freud, supports that:

Human minds are driven by several intrinsic and extrinsic forces often beyond our controls. How people react and respond to issues, events and situations, our actions and inactions are always dependent on the psychological composition of our minds. Our desires and wishes are always in a cross-road with that of others because the mind is channeled and propelled on a pedestal geared towards fulfilling a certain desire and awakening. (134)

The Civil War, as gleaned from the perspectives of the writers under study, fell on an unexpected and unprepared generation and the violence, pains, torture and agonies that came with it was unprecedented and novel too. The war fell on an innocent individual whose lives, joys, aspirations and sanities were altered in the thirty months of civil strife, chaos and violent brutal exchange for power and territorial control. The war, more than anything ever, altered the lives of the people and it is only natural that their psyches, emotions and behaviours will be deeply thwarted and affected by the pains and violence that ensued during the war and it is from this perspective that the postulations of Freud becomes apt in questioning and investigating the effects of these experiences on characters and the psychological and neurotic sides of these effects. Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory becomes the most interesting psychological construct through which this study will delve and investigate, especially the feelings and emotions of individuals made possible by the trauma and pains of the war. The writers no doubt represented the traumas and experiences of the war on individuals in different

perspectives. According to Nebeife and Kanu (2017), “The word trauma” is used to describe experiences that are emotionally painful and distressing and which therefore overwhelm people’s ability to cope, leaving them powerless. Trauma has sometimes been defined in reference to experiences that are not normal for humans (92).

Through such psychological quest aided by Freud’s postulations, the unseen pains and hidden agonies of the war, its lasting effect on generation will be holistically articulated in the effort to condemn war in its entirety and add to the bulk of what is already known regarding the psychological and traumatic shades of the inevitable Civil War that exerted and still exerting lots of influences on our oneness as a nation after over fifty years of the dreadful experience. It is, therefore, on this fact that this paper focused on looking at the excessive repression and lingering traumas of the war which are capable of devastating individuals and groups and also degenerating to unabated bitterness, rancor, lingering acrimony, loneliness, alienation, violence, chaos, killing, ethnic rivalries, segregation, oppression and suppression witnessed and still been witnessed in the polity of the nation.

Analysis of Trauma, Violence and Pains in AdaOkereAgbasimalo’s *The Forest Dames*- A Psychoanalytic Approach

The Forest Dames is a novel that talks about the bitter experience of the Nigerian Civil War. The account of the dreadful war novel focuses on peoples’ life especially women as the major victims of war. Some men were also captured and conscripted against their wishes; children were not left out of the suffering. They all have been starving as there is nothing to eat. It is of course the violence and pains that these women saw during the war that made them take their daughters to the forest and this is as what made them the forest dames. The story being carved out from female perspectives tells that all female characters in the novel met violence and pains which war meted against them. The writer carves out two brave mothers and four courageous girls named Gonma, Deze, Sofuru and Lele who were hidden in the forest in avoidance of the violence of war as the novelist writes:

The brooding darkness simmered with the sound of the wild. The dames had learnt to live with the sound. They had resigned themselves to the belief that both life and death were in the hands of their maker. Beside, at the rate people were dying, one thanked the Almighty if one saw the next day. ‘After all’, they asked themselves, ‘between being devoured by beasts and being shattered into pieces by mortar bombs, which is preferable? Either way the result is death’, they consoled themselves, ‘and, it is inevitable’. Brave stance! But the dames were still scared stiff, never failing to imagine the likelihood of a famished beast leaping towards them, and the muffled last prayers that would follow. (20)

Gripped by fear none of them was in her right sense because the outcome of their act of hiding is unknown to them. We should not forget that the novelist made use of an irony here where she depicted it clearly, that despite that these dames were taken out from home into the forest yet; they still meet the pains and violence they were avoiding. Even the stories which their mothers told them about home also brought pains in their heart as the narrator writes about Gonma saying:

Her mother was not there. She had gone to the distant market and had not returned. So Gonma simply listened to the conversation of the others. Her two brothers and only sister were home alone, finding it hard even to feed. Their middle-aged father had been forcibly taken away from home by some aggressors... Dennis’ daughter was captured yesterday... “She was. They came when she had returned from her hiding place and took her unawares. (21)

Such stories bring pains to those who are still surviving the war. There is no how that Gonma would be free from the pains of losing her mother who had gone to market and had not returned, her two brothers who are suffering from hunger and her father who had being captured by the aggressors. Dennis himself is not free from the pain of losing her daughter, Wakego who has been captured. All these bitter experiences traumatise them and plant pain in the lives of these characters that have lost their lovely ones. Other stories told in the novel which tells the pains which people experienced during the war is also told by Sofuru's mother on how Ogechi was forced to leave her food and follow the soldiers right at her husband's presence as the narrator says:

One of the aggressors had ordered the women to stop eating and follow them. Trembling she picked up her baby and got up to go with them but was rebuked and ordered to leave the baby there. Ogechi left her baby in obedience. As she was led away, her five-month-old baby who was still on breast milk cried as if she knew what was going on. Her husband, Obed looked on speechless. His wife was gone with the invading soldiers and he now had to take over the care of their baby. (22)

With this situation it is obvious that any woman that experiences such must be affected psychologically. It also shows that children also suffer terribly during the war. Most of them lost their mothers or fathers or even both. The lucky ones lost only one, either father or mother. But those that met the bitter pains of war are those who lost their mothers and were left in the hands of their fathers as seen in the life of Ogechi's five-month-old child.

From the life of Obed, Ogechi's husband, the narrator did not fail to tell her readers that men also experience violence and pains of war. She says: "You know Okedu, the fisherman? They stopped him as he strolled into his compound from the village stream and told him he must go with them. Okedu called out to one of his children and tried to hand over a hooked fish to him but was not allowed to do so. They abducted the fish as well as Okedu found himself in their military camp".(23)

From the novel, it is a clear fact that not only Okedu met such violence, Joseph has his own pains of war. This was a man who was beaten to death for refusing to let his bicycle go to some uniformed men who forcefully took it out from him. This stands as symbol of pains people undergone at the time of war. The narrator says:

Deze's mother told the girls about an elderly men, Joseph, who(sic) was beaten to death because he tried to stop the uniformed intruders from forcibly taking his bicycle. After they beat the man to death, they still took his bicycle away. They also took bicycles belonging to other villagers for no known reason. Yams, other food crops and livestock were loaded into a big truck with the bicycles and taken away. It did not bother them if we all starved to death (23).

It is indeed an act of violence and pains that the innocent citizens during the war were exposed to so many atrocities, beating, killing and taking away from them their foods with which they survived the war without considering the pains of starvation they would pass through. Here, the narrator applies satire, ridiculing the lives and violent behaviour of the soldiers against the innocent citizens whom they were called to protect. Such violence is what these citizens saw even after the war from the enemy force. The narrator writes that:

The soldier wondered what was in the sack. "Wetin be this?" he demanded, peeping inside. "Okwe, game", Udunna answered, allowing the shells to clatter

in the sack. “Wetin?” The soldier did not understand. “Mgbo, bullets”, Udunna said, confusing him further. The soldier hissed loudly and planted a dirty slap on his cheek. The boy fell down but got up quickly. His grandfather walked up to the soldier in mild protest. The boy’s father had been in one of the battle fields and was expected to return soon. Oho o, na you be the papa, baa, I see, you are the father”, the soldier said, furious. Bikonwa m, spare him, he’s just a boy”, the old man begged but the soldier picked up his koboko instead and began to flog him in the presence of the helpless group. (232)

This violent act meted against Udunna and his grandfather made both to pass through pains in the hands of the soldier. Another violence and pains which children saw during the war is what the narrator gives account of, in Chuka as the mother says:

I had a small bag on my head as I ran and Chuka’s hand in mine while Okezie and Nneoma were running along. Suddenly, it felt like Chuka had become lighter to pull along but I continued running”. “Mummy Chuka, Chuka” Okezie and Nneoma were crying. “I stopped and saw Chuka’s mutilated arm in my hand. I screamed and ran back. My son was on the ground. I picked him up and we continued running, load still on my head. The shelling was too much and we needed to move faster, at least, a place of shelter. I dropped the dead boy and his hand and we continued the race. (65 – 66)

People met their death by the shelling and bombers. The novel records: “It became a daily affair. Sometimes bombers came twice in one day, leaving behind mangled corpses and wrecked lives. In the communities, they became used to burying the victims... (67).

At a time people became accustomed to death. Weeping and pains which come with death were also what they became accustomed to. The narrator writes: “They became accustomed to the air-raids but hunger became another challenge” (68). As it is said, hunger is the greatest weapon for war. This statement meant nothing but violence as was believed to be the reason why the Federal government blockade Biafrans from getting assistance or aids from other countries and this brought severe pains of hunger in the lives of the Biafrans. The novelist writes:

Hunger and starvation still ruled, dealing with people treacherously. Death in the community, especially of children, the elderly and those who depended on others for their livelihood became a daily affair. Men were hardly seen on the roads. Women worked hard to sustain the family but their children dropped dead under their very noses. Starvation after a period of extreme emaciation or bloating was the major cause. (86)

As a result of hunger, people met another pains stronger than the air-raids, taking cover in the bunker and death. Children could not bear this pain and in order to survive the violence they began to hunt rat and picked bush fruits. The narrator confirms, thus: “Those who had no reserves went hungry. Their children hunted for rats, rabbits and big insects; picked bush fruits, nuts, roots and tubers for dinner” (76).

The violence and pains which the war brought upon lives never made mothers keep their motherhood or affections towards their children aside despite the horrors of war. They found remedies to make their children survive the war, taking risks, going distant markets, just to get food for their families and with this, they were exposed to violence. The novelist comments:

The soldiers sometimes waylaid the women returning from the distant market and dispossessed them of their goods. Every woman who passed by that way had to part with some of the items she was carrying. When the military vehicle

was filled up, the soldiers drove off. The women on this day had walked up to the waiting soldiers and dropped a food item each. Dora dropped one tuber of yam but the soldier rejected it and insisted on collecting the only stockfish she was able to buy, hoping to resell it at a good price or barter it for a more needed commodity at home. (73)

This is how these women met another side of violence on their return from attack trade, a market which exposed lives to violence during war time. After escaping bullets, air-raids and shells from these open markets, the soldiers would take away from these women what they had laboured to keep their families living. Most of them went back homes with pains watching their children dying due to starvation. The narrator tells of how Deze interpreted to Dr. Carol Harrison about a plight of Julie Ejema's child who becomes sick as the cause of starvation saying: "Dr. Harrison, this woman named Julie Ejema..." Dr. Harrison began to scribble down particulars pertaining the woman". ...said that her son, Sunday, has been emaciating for the past one month. They all have been starving as there is nothing to eat. The boy has been vomiting and stooling frequently. She pleads with you to assist and not allow her child to die" (147).

From the writer's idea, the little Sunday is passing through pains as a result of sickness which made him vomit and stool. Even the mother also had her own pains for the fear of losing her child. The fact the writer wants to elaborate here is that the violence of war mostly made mothers and children suffer pains. These pains and violence still go even at the end of war. The narrator writes:

Unfortunately, not every girl who saw the end of the war was so lucky. Deze learnt that Sofuru, after suffering as a forest dame, fell into the hands of the abductors on her way home with her folks. Deze's group could be said to have been lucky since they suffered minimal molestation compared with the tales of others. Some told of vandals who, knowing that they would soon be leaving seized the opportunity to temporarily abduct girls hitherto in hiding. Members of one of the returning groups narrated how on passing an enemy camp, they were halted, the girls picked out and taken to their camp. All other members of the group, including parents and relations of the girls, waited on the grass around the area outside. After what seemed like an hour or more the girls began emerging, some frowning, others expressionless. There was no need to ask what had transpired. (235)

Girls after the war met pains of molestation, violence of abduction and raping. Some of them after these acts were put into family way. The novel presents Ojiugo as one of the dames who meets such violence as she says that:

I was not comfortable with the name his father called him at the camp. There is no way my son can come into our community answering that name so I renamed him after his father's rank the moment I came home. The man knows that he has a son here. He knows this village from where he forcibly took me... have you forgotten that the abduction was like a death sentence?...What a horror! She wrapped her arms across her chest as if she was feeling cold. She was frowning. "That violation is worse than death; I don't know what I am still living for. (258)

Ojiugo's heart was filled with pains after been violated by an enemy soldier, a Major who forcibly raped her. She passed through trauma and depression and when she could not bear the pains, she killed herself. A violent act which Deze witnessed as the novelist says :

Deze stood on tip-toe but could see nothing. "please, what is happening"? She asked again yet received no answer. At last she found a space and peeped. Ojiugo's body was dangling from the roof of her mother's kitchen; her eyeballs popping out, her tongue jutting slightly, her wrapper and the floor soiled. A mild stench oozed. "Oh God, did she have to do that? Why?" "She survived the war and should have put everything behind her. This is too much. "Ha, Ojiugo. She hinted at it – o. Ever since she came back with the baby, she has not been herself... "May God accept her soul. Rest in peace, Jugo!" (260).

Ojiugo's death, which ironically meant to her a means of easing off her pains against the violation she had experienced, put her family members and friends into pains of losing her. This is a violent act, an abomination that made her hang herself. Following the analysis of this novel, in *The Forest Dames*, AdaOkekeAgbasimalo presents her perspective of war telling that war is traumatizing, violent and evil, those who experienced it met severe pains of their lives.

A Psychoanalytic Approach to Violence and Pains in Alexander Madiebo's *The Nigeria Revolution and the Biafran War*

Madiebo was one of the Biafran Majors who led and piloted the affairs of the Nigeria Civil War. Being a soldier, he has firsthand information about war. His work is non-fiction; it is a real account of war where he elaborated on all the violence and pains that went with the Nigerian/Biafran war. His historical account of the war is traced from the origin, the cause of the revolution which finally led Nigeria into war. This revolution came as violence as, the historian says: "Over the telephone Gowon passionately described how he had come back from Britain on the night of 14 January 1966, a day before the coup started. Gowon narrated the story of his narrow escapes from death in the hands of the revolutionaries who, he said, were after him the whole night and throughout the following day" (25).

From Gowon's experience, the revolution was indeed a violence even Nzeogwu and other revolutionaries experience the same. The narrator writes: "When we arrived, Nzeogwu was sitting in the Brigade Commander's Office, with a heavily bandaged neck, surrounded by soldiers of Northern Nigeria origin. There was no doubt he was in pain but appeared calm and very serious" (19).

The coup which took place on 15 January 1966 was indeed a bloody act which install pains in the hearts of the Northerners as the narrator reveals their anger:

The real turning point came at the beginning of March when one morning, the Governor of the North called a conference of all army officers in Northern Nigeria. Addressing the conference in an angry voice, the Governor ...speaking about the January Coup he described it as a well-organized "Murder operation" for which the participants ought to have been punished if the Lagos authorities were fair and sincere to all. He warned that when the Northerners were ready for their own coup, it would be conducted in a broad daylight and would be very "bloody indeed", unlike the January coup when cowards went around by night murdering people in their sleep. (32 – 33)

With this, it is clear that the Northerners were nurturing pains over the violence of the coup which took lives of their top Northern leaders like; Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, Chief TafawaBelewa and other high ranking military officials. In retaliation of this, a riot was carried out by the Northerners against the Igbos, the narrator writes about Shuwa an

eyewitness to the incident saying: “Shuwa said he saw private homes, churches, shops, schools and market stalls belonging to Southern Nigreians, in flames. He saw crying children, the young and the old, both men and women being chased about and being beaten to death while their homes were looted”. (38 – 39)

Lives of the southerners were harmed even their properties and their innocent children. As if this violence was not enough, another riot began the following day. The history records that:

On the 30th of May, 1966, the riots began again rather early. The rioting was much fiercer than the previous day, and the commanding officer himself with the assistance of his escorts, had to go round the town trying to disperse the mobs by firing in the air. In places where he rescued people who were still alive, he arranged to send them to the military medical centre for treatment. A story was told of a whole family that was locked up inside their house and the house set ablaze. I also listened to the story of an incident at the Kano Railway station where a large crowd of Southerners had gathered waiting to escape by train. They were attacked by a mob which killed or maimed most of them, and their property was looted. (39)

As this violence was going on in Kano, Zaria was not exceptional. The Southerners like in Kano saw severe pains by the Northern rioters. The narrator writes:

The Brigade major, Major Sam Ogbemudia, said that the expatriate staff at Ahmadu Bello University were leading the rioters in Zaria. According to him, these gentlemen were even using their personal cars to move the rioters quickly from one part of the town to another. The cars also had anti-Ironsi slogans pasted on them... There in Sokoto, while other towns rioted, the Southerners went into their church to pray to their God for the return of peace. While they all gathered there and prayed the church was cordoned off. Having poured petrol over the church building, it was set ablaze, and the multitude died while praying for peace (41)

The way these people were murdered while they were praying in the Church tells that no prayer for peace could withheld the violence and pains meted against the Southerners at the time of this crises in Nigeria. This went on to an extent that AguiyiIronsi the then head of state, met his death on his peace tour. Madiebo writes: “However, he was determined to continue his tour. When he came back from Northern Nigeria, he left for Midwestern Nigreia on the 27th of July and as expected, never returned” (57).

The death of AguiyiIronsi which was seen as counter coup was told by Captain Nwankwo. The narrator writes:

According to Nwankwo, at 0630 hours on the 29th of July, 1966, Ironsi, Fajuyi, the Governor of Western Nigeria and himself were arrested at Government House, Ibadan by Northern troops under the command of Captain Danjuma... The troops used to affect the arrests were those detailed to protect the General during his tour. The captives were driven to an isolated jungle just outside Ibadan. By the time they go there, the three prisoners had been so thoroughly beaten that the older two – Ironsi and Fajuyi – could hardly stand up. Shortly after, Fajuyi was shot and then, Ironsi. (85 – 86)

From the history, before Aguiyi could be shot to death, he passed through pains of torture by his captors in that isolated jungle outside Ibadan. After the death of Ironsi, other violent crisis came and this resulted to war. Fighting broke out between the two warring forces. The narrator

reveals that, “Fighting began with each enemy battalion poised against two platoons of Biafra Army. After two hours of intensive exchange of fire, the enemy turned round and broke into a run towards their start line. They were obviously surprised and for that reason suffered heavy casualties...” (126).

With this, it is obvious that the two enemies in open confrontation exchanged arms and exposed their lives to violence. The Biafran enemy, the Northern troops never expected such brevity from the Biafran troops after they had suffered heavy casualties and broke into a run. Despite the pains of exchanging fire between the two forces, war did not stop. The violence continues as the writer writes:

The enemy attacked in Garkem at 0530 hours with two main Garkem – Afikpo road. His preparatory bombardment using artillery and heavy mortars was extremely heavy and sustained. Our own troops, even though they had suffered some casualties, were still firmly in their newly dug trenches but with no overhead cover. By 0900 hours the first enemy assault of three ferret and one Saladin armoured vehicles came in. a landrover mounted with a 106 RR anti-tank gun moved in with the attacking vehicles which rained bullets in all directions and knocked down the mud huts of the village. (125)

People of Garkem lost their homes and land as a result of heavy bombardment of the enemy with ferret and armoured vehicles. One can imagine the pains which these people must have passed through when their huts were all knocked down. With this violence, these people become homeless wonderers in their own land. In Onitsha, a similar violence took place as Madiebo records: “For ten days, there was a non-stop air bombardment of the town beginning at dawn each day and lasting till dusk. The Russian war planes strafed and bombed until neither life nor buildings were left in Onitsha; thereafter the planes resorted to attacking livestock”. (202)

“The enemy” attacks against Onitsha was a severe violent operation. There is no doubt that the enemy must have planned this attack over her pains of losing Onitsha severally as the Biafrans see Onitsha and make a mockery song of it as Ono nsoelu aka “near, but beyond reach”. With the pains of their several failures of drawing close to Onitsha but not reaching it, they commit such violence, destroying lives with livestock roams around. Following this attack, the narrator reveals another violence committed by the aggressors on their vengeful desire to enter Awka thus:

Biafra soldier fought desperately to prevent the enemy from entering the town until the afternoon of the 19th of January when the town came under heavy bombardment. The confusion that followed could hardly be described as men, women and children ran about under a rain of shells. Many died and the survivors abandoned the town intact. Many young men ... were caught and executed by the enemy... The complete destruction of Awka town which eventually took place was therefore done by the enemy at a later date, in his own chosen time. (219)

No one in Biafra believes that the enemy will capture Awka because of the strong defensive attack the Biafran troops often give to them each time they ventured. So when they made a successful entrance, every Biafra feared as a popular saying of fear arouse among the Biafrans saying “Hausa AbatagoAwka” (Hausa has entered Awka). This proved Biafran disbelief that the enemy troops would ever venture into Awka. Unfortunate to them, they ventured and bombarded the town. The Biafran troops could not withstand them due to shortage of ammunition and lives of men and women were violated with pains of death and destructions

of properties. Meanwhile, the falling of Awka into enemy hand gave the enemy a greater courage of installing violence in the hearts of Biafrans with hope that they would capture all Biafrans. But on reaching to Abagana, they met a counter attack from Biafra troops which caused violence to them. The narrator tells of the violent attack of Biafran troops against enemy troops in Abagana. Thus:

This is how the battle was fought. When the convoy approached our troops around Ifite-Ukpo Junction, Major Uchendu very wisely allowed the advance party of armoured vehicles to pass. He then attacked the main convey from the front, middle and rear. The leading lorry was knocked out and blocked the road, and was quickly set on fire. None of the vehicles, thereafter could move forward, and being very bulky, could not turn about on the narrow road. The enemy was helpless and less than one hour, all the enemy soldiers were either killed or had escaped... (224 – 225).

This violent experience which the Biafran enemy had in Abagana was what all Biafrans saw as miracle as they termed the battle, ‘Abagana miracle’. One of the most violence Biafrans saw during the war was deaths of their lovely ones as they had the painful death of Christopher Okigbo’. Madiebo writes: “The greatest disaster of that operation was that the well-known poet, Major Christopher Okigbo, one of the bravest fighters on that sector, died trying to lob a grenade into a ferret armoured car. The whole Army in general and the 53 Brigade in particular never completely got over his death for the rest of the war”. (166)

The pain of death of Christopher Okigbo was a heavy blow to Biafrans especially the fighting men who knew his brevity in the war front. Okigbo was a poet, seer and a soldier, who had firsthand information about this war, which eventually took his life at Opi as he prophesied in his poem. Other death which caused Biafrans severe pain that they could not easily get over was the death of another brave soldier called CoporalNwafor. Madiebo narrates that: “...attempts were being made to recover the captured armoured vehicles. Both vehicles were finally recovered but Corporal Nwafor himself died during the recovery operation (259)”. Corporal Nwafor after using the only anti-tank rocket in the entire 54 Brigade to destroy the Hausa’s Saladin which he equally killed the crew, went ahead to recover Biafran’sarmoured vehicles, through which he lost his life this became a violent and painful experience both to his fellow fighting men and Biafrans at large. Nwafor stands as a symbol that narrates how most people lost their lives through violence of war while trying to protect their father land from pains of destructions by the enemy. At the cause of this violence and pains, the brevity and popularity of both Chris Okigbo and Corporal Nwafor were captured by some fiction writers like Chukwuemeka Ike in his *Sunset at Dawn* and others where they depicted a lucid picture of their death through which each of these writers according to his or her perceptions and perspectives present the violence and pains that follow war. The pains which children suffered as a result of hunger can never be neglected as violence meted against them.

The narrator narrates:

Immediately Ikot-Ekpene fell, I went into the prisons there and what I saw still gives me nightmares from time to time. I saw several hundreds of Zombie-like creatures – men, women and children, lying, sitting or squatting in the midst of others who were dead. The living ones were completely reduced to skeletons and could not talk. I was seeing for the first time what I later knew to be kwashiorkor. Frankly, I took fright, and so did a majority of Biafrans at the thought of what would happen the “Majorities” in the hands Nigerians, if the much-talked-about “Minorities” get nothing but slow and painful death by starvation. (263)

The violence which hunger brought to Biafrans mostly affected the children with a dangerous sickness called kwashiorkor which destroys their lives and leads them to slow and painful death. With the violence and pains that come through this starvation Biafrans lost their faith and became fate to violence. The faith which held and kept them all the three years of struggling. The narrator confirms that: “This faith in our ultimate victory was what kept Biafrans slugging on for three years in spite of heart-breaking set-backs, to the astonishment of the whole world. We felt that having been so unjustly treated, humiliated and massacred, God and international opinion could not stand idly by and allow us to be exterminated in our homeland. (377)

The violence and pains of war respect no one’s faith in God or International back up. Despite that the entire Biafrans have faith in God as they believed, he could rescue them from unjust killings meted out against them in their homeland, they also strongly believe that since they are fighting a just fight the international opinion would raise alarm for their rescue but this is not so. Upon their faith in God and hope on the international opinion, they still being slaughtered, unjustly oppressed, humiliated and massacred in their own land. This tells the extent of violence and pains war could bring upon a country or nation not withstanding their faith in God. The narrator bemoaned the pains the war has caused to the entire nation saying: “In the end, the whole exercise of splitting and re-uniting Nigeria cost us over three million lives. The question is how could anyone ever justify the loss of so many lives in order to gain political control of his country?” (388). From the writer’s opinion the cause of these violence and pains which Nigeria as a nation experienced during her three years bloody struggle is caused by selfish decision of the leaders. Following the cause of war in Nigeria one will understand that the main cause of the war is ‘power tussle’, where leaders of that era struggled for power and leadership. This confirms what Chinua Achebe (1984) said in his book titled *The Trouble with Nigeria* where this author stated it clearly that; “The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership” (1). This problem of leadership split the nation apart and marched them into war which cost over three million lives.

With this, we can see that Alexander Madiebo presented every detail and fact of the Nigerian Civil War. His perceptions, perspectives and experiences about war is what he presented with a real fact and truth rather than fiction. Following his narrations and presentations of account of the Civil war, one is made to see his work as a historical account of the Nigerian civil war where it is believed that every violence and pains of war are recorded.

Conclusion

The history of Nigeria will never forget those violence and pains which the bloody war of 1967 – 1970 meted against lives of the people Children, young and adults perceived the pains, the pains of hunger, sickness, killing, death, betrayal, hiding, molestation, oppression and victimization. It is clear that every living thing during this war is casualty. AdaOkereAgbasimalo presents lives of four young girls who were hidden in the forest for the cause of war. From the novel, women were molested, intimidated and oppressed by both native soldiers and enemy soldiers. Men were killed in the north which made Deze’s father with some other men run down to the east. Children were starved to death. Mothers who went to markets, taking risk on attack trade as a result of hunger often molested and taken away what they have bought by the soldiers. All these ills of war can be traumatizing to humanity no doubt. Madiebo as a historian went all round narrating the real events of war. His historical account is all based on violence and pains which individuals and Nation(s) Nigeria and Biafra experienced during the war. From his narrative, lives at the cause of war were destroyed. He presents killing and

death as the most things suffered during the war. The death of a poet Christopher Okigbo, Corporal Nwafor and other characters he presented tells of the pains of the war which he also pictured through starvation which led people into death and sickness, especially, to young children who suffered kwashiorkor due to lack of food and blockage.

The two works depict terrible pain and trauma as regards to the fact and fiction of the Nigerian civil war which Nigeria as a nation experienced during the war. In order to avoid pains of life either through crisis, conflict or whatever that might cause shedding of blood, violent act must be avoided.

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