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Drowning out the Silence

Nigerian Civil War Literature and the Politics of Gender-Based Violence

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Popular, academic, and policy discourse on transitional justice and social healing revolves around truth and reconciliation commissions and the testimonial method for treatment of post-traumatic stress. A new generation of scholarship critiques these policies as insufficient for addressing and resolving the traumas experienced by victims of sexual and gender-based violence. The key issues of stigma and silence are only compounded when the conflict ended years before efforts at reconciliation became the norm. This is the case with the Nigerian Civil War (1967-70) which continues to have a profound impact on contemporary Nigerian society and politics. One body of work that has been largely neglected as a potential source of memory, representation, and even reconciliation is Nigerian Civil War literature. This paper seeks to bring literature into the wider discourse on memory and reconciliation, with special attention to the role of female Nigerian writers in representing sexual and gender-based violence.

It was the very sense of being inconsequential that pushed her from extreme fear to extreme fury. She had to matter. She would no longer exist limply, waiting to die.

Cimamanda Ngozi Adiche, Half of a Yellow Sun (p.351)

I. INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian Civil War began on 30 May 1967 when the south-eastern provinces declared their independence and Nigeria initiated an unrelenting military campaign to reverse the Biafran secession. The world watched as millions of Biafrans and Nigerians were displaced, starved, raped, slaughtered, and pushed to the very edges of human suffering¹. Because the conflict officially ended in 1970, too little attention has been paid to addressing or treating the deep macro (social, political) and micro (local, personal) traumas inflicted by the war. This omission is particularly striking in light of Nigeria's ethnically, regionally, and religiously divided population which remains fraught with the same tensions that triggered the war. The message seems to be that Nigeria has neither forgotten Biafra, nor forgiven².

Existing literature on post-conflict reconciliation centers around two inter-related policies: truth and reconciliation commissions for mass social healing³ and the testimony method for treatment of post-traumatic stress⁴. However, these policies are mostly silent on the issue of sexual and gendered violence because of the profound stigma levied against both victims and perpetrators of these forms of assault⁵. Indeed, first-hand accounts of gendered violence during the Nigerian Civil War are rare and rape, abuse, and gender-selective violence receive no more than a sentence or two in most academic accounts. Though this silence could indicate that gender-based violence was negligible, literary accounts of the Biafran war suggest that incidents of rape, sexual

exploitation, gender-selective forced recruitment, and gender-selective genocide were widespread. However, the role that literature plays in memory and reconciliation has largely been neglected by both proponents and critics of the truth commission and testimony methods. Thus, two key questions inform the scope of this paper: (1) what is the role of literature in representing historical cases of gendered violence?, and (2) to what extent might literary descriptions of gendered violence during the Nigerian civil war have a therapeutic effect for victims and a healing effect on Nigerian society? After discussing some flaws and omissions in conventional methods of social healing and reconciliation, this paper discusses the potential role of Nigerian Civil War literature in supplementing these conventions. Special attention is paid to analyzing two works of fiction—Cimamanda Ngozi Adiche’s Half of a Yellow Sun⁶ and Buchi Emecheta’s Destination Biafra⁷—with regards to accounts of rape, sexual exploitation, gender-selective recruiting, and gender-selective genocide. Though issues of bias, representation, and the politics of memory complicate the incorporation of literary accounts into policies of reconciliation and social healing, these works do address the silence surrounding sexual and gender based violence. Most profoundly, this analysis reveals that fiction has the capacity to transcend stigma and blame, overcome the limitations of the victim/ perpetrator rhetoric, and introduce academics, westerners, and policy makers to necessarily personal accounts of gendered violence.

II. STIGMA AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE: TRUTH COMMISSIONS AND THE TESTIMONY METHOD

2.1 In the area of transitional justice, national and international truth and reconciliation commissions/ tribunals generally take center stage. Ostensible successes in Yugoslavia, South Africa, Rwanda etc., have raised public and policy support for the continued use of post-conflict tribunals and fact-finding missions as a method of social healing and reconciliation. Even so, an

emerging body of scholarship is deeply critical of these institutions, suggesting that they are: “established as a substitute for persecutions and represent compromises made on human rights during the peace negotiations”⁸, culturally inappropriate, and a potential obstacle to local transitional justice mechanisms⁹, and/or manifestly incapable of dealing with the complex social and political stigmatization of gender-based violence. For the purposes of this paper, this last critique is of central importance. Sexual violence is generally under-reported by truth commissions because “disclosure of sexual assault is risky and can result in estrangement from family, mistreatment of children and social exclusion.”¹⁰ In many cases, women are also un-empowered and constrained by patriarchal social structures that dictate subservience and quiet acceptance. Accordingly, though international law and post-conflict tribunals have begun to recognize sexual and gender-based violence as unique and prosecutable war-crimes, “these advances... have been more symbolic than revolutionary in nature.”¹¹ Discussing the shortcomings of judicial proceedings as a form of transitional justice for victims of rape and sexual violence, Katherine Franke argues that trials are often humiliating and destructive:

Justice for these witnesses entails the public telling of their stories and a sense that they are being heard. But this kind of truth-telling is not within the jurisdiction of formal legal fora. The translation of human suffering into a vocabulary and a form that is acceptable and appropriate to a judicial proceeding can be a dehumanizing experience, not only for victims of sexual violence, but particularly for them.

This is not to say that national and international transitional justice efforts should be abandoned, but rather that they insufficiently address gender-based violence and must be supplemented or enhanced in this critical area.

2.2 One possible supplement is the testimony method for treatment of post-traumatic stress. In a controlled intervention study with survivors of the Mozambique civil war, Igreja et.al¹² found that the test group experienced a statistically significant reduction in the symptoms of post-traumatic

stress¹³ when they were given the opportunity to “tell the story of their traumatic experiences and, together with the interviewer, they create a narrative document of these experiences.”¹⁴ These findings are supported in studies by Agger and Jensen¹⁵, Leydesdorff¹⁶, and Wein et al.¹⁷, as well as Mertus, who asserts in her critical work on Rwandan war crime tribunals:

For survivors, storytelling is not a luxury. War serves to strip survivors of control over their lives and to erase all sense of a volitional past and future.... The discourse of torture, rape, murder and other forms of violence teach their targets that they are nothing but objects... The process of telling and observing one’s story being heard allows survivors to become subjects again, to retrieve and resurrect their individual and group identities.¹⁸

However, despite the vital importance of storytelling for both individual and collective healing, the collection of testimonials has occasionally been obstructed by international bodies and governments who fear exposure and blame¹⁹. Moreover, the few testimonies that are collected may be distorted by metadata; the “rumors, inventions, denials, evasions, and silences” that influence the delivery and interpretation of personal accounts of violence²⁰. With regards to testimonies of sexual violence during the Nigerian Civil War, social stigmatization, the patriarchal subjugation of women, and the effect of time may compound the issues of testimonial collection and interpretation. Finally, unless caution is exercised when collecting, interpreting, or publishing testimonials, these accounts may become complicit in institutionalized violence. This is particularly troubling when narratives of sexual violence are absorbed into “cultural appropriations of suffering”²¹ and “poverty tourism.” Through this process of ‘cultural appropriation,’ the West tends to interpret survivor narratives according to dichotomous good/evil, victim/perpetrator paradigms that neglect the complexity of human behaviour and belief. Thus, personal accounts are paradoxically absorbed into the amalgamated framework by which we endeavour “to grasp and comprehend the real condition of a mass of human beings.”²² Ultimately, it is necessary to consider alternative sources of memory, reconciliation, even social healing that more sufficiently account for

gender-based violence, whilst circumventing the more obvious pitfalls of truth and reconciliation commissions and the testimony method. This paper turns next to an analysis of fictional accounts of gender-based violence in Half of a Yellow Sun and Destination Biafra.

III. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN LITERARY ACCOUNTS OF THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR

3.1 Adiche and Emecheta: Rape and the Sexual Exploitation of Women

The systematic oppression and sexual exploitation of women in war are central themes in the works of Adiche and Emecheta. For example, Debbie Ogedembe, to whom we attribute the omniscient narrative in Destination Biafra, ruminates often on what the ideal Nigerian woman is expected to do/be. She remarks, for instance, that “to Nigerians, in a marriage the male partner was superior and the female must be subservient, obedient, and quiet to the point of passivity.”²³ Here, the sense of immobility and silence is oppressive. Debbie pursues sexual empowerment by joining the Nigerian army, but is ultimately stripped of her militarised/ masculinised identity when she is brutally raped by a group of soldiers. After the attack, Debbie observes that if she shared the story of her rape, she “would become a laughing-stock. The pain and humiliation would forever be locked in their memories.... but (she) was alive, and that was everything.”²⁴ Even for a member of the social elite then, silent suffering is preferable to the stigma against victims of rape. With respect to the representation of sexually exploited women, Debbie’s rape is importantly de-politicised. She is assaulted by ‘friendly’ soldiers, she is stripped of elite agency and voice, and her ethnic identity (Itsekiri²⁵) is inconsequential in the attack. Though she later re-gains her voice and tells a number of people about her rape, it is clear that the majority of non-elite, non-educated women would not have the same degree of political and social agency. Similarly, in Half of a Yellow Sun, the houseboy-cum-schoolteacher Ugwu partakes of a system of sexual exploitation that is also exogenous to the

ethnic, religious, and regional framework of the war. His pre-war romantic interest is 'sold' to a Biafran commander in return for the promotion of her brother, and once Ugwu is forcibly conscribed by the Biafran militia, he observes and participates in the rape of a Biafran bar-girl. Ultimately, the framing of rape as tangential to the social and political causes of the war in these works, could explain both the scarcity of personal accounts of rape and why gender-based violence is brushed over in the academic literature. Essentially, if sexual violence and exploitation are perceived as a feature of war in general and not endemic to a particular conflict, little attention will be paid to the contextual dimensions and effects of rape and sexual abuse.

In addition to drawing attention to shortcomings in the analysis of sexual violence during the Nigerian civil war; literature offers what conventional methods of social healing and reconciliation have not, an account of rape without blame and without 'digging up' past atrocities. Because the social, ethnic, and regional scars that sparked and were sustained by the Biafran secession remain raw, it is necessary to navigate the post-conflict healing and reconciliation process somewhat apolitically. The focus should be on developing a shared collective history with "consideration of injuries to both sides, even if *substantially unequal*."²⁶ Though this process is notably difficult when groups remain divided, literature may offer an account of conflict that humanizes all parties, and places a critical focus on systemic and institutional forces that drive violence. Particularly in the case of sexual violence, there is little hope of identifying or locating individual offenders and no evidence that persecuting individuals will have a salutary effect. Alternatively, literature might offer a narrative of the abuses of war with respect to the severe emotional and psychological trauma and humiliation experienced by victims of rape²⁷, without blaming any particular group or locating those traumas in a political agenda. Literary accounts also offer an alternative to public truth-telling that may have detrimental effects for both victims, who

may experience humiliation and hostility, and witnesses who face “short and intensive trauma exposure that has been found to be re-traumatizing in previous psychological research”²⁸. Finally, literary accounts that tell life stories may help westerners and policy makers to account for the oppressive social and systemic forces that disempower rape victims and inform how society responds to sexual violence.

3.2 Adiche: Gender-Selective Recruitment and Militarized Masculinities

As mentioned above, in Half of a Yellow Sun, the young boy Ugwu is forcibly recruited into the Biafran militia. This story arch fits into a wider theme of alienation and ‘outsider’ identity formation. Simply put, Ugwu struggles throughout the story with multiple competing identities (e.g. houseboy-friend, student-teacher, rural poor-intellectual elite), which leaves him vulnerable to the dominant and easily accessible militarized masculinity. His yearning for the clarity of a hegemonic masculine identity is revealed as he fantasizes about joining the army:

He would be like those recruits who went into training camp – while their relatives and well wishers stood by the sidelines and cheered – and who emerged bright-eyed, in brave uniforms stiff with starch, half of a yellow sun gleaming on their sleeves.

He longed to play a role, to act. Win the war.

Because Ugwu cannot fully access other identities, he tacitly idolizes strong masculine figures like the disciplined soldiers of early Biafra, his academic/activist employer Odengibo, and the poet turned soldier Okeoma²⁹. However, Ugwu’s actual experiences with the Biafran militia are far removed from his early whimsical fantasies. He is kidnapped and forcibly conscribed by a group of wandering soldiers “with no boots, no uniforms, no half of a yellow sun on their sleeves”³⁰ and soon finds himself engaging in brutal trench warfare. He clings to a book, “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave: Written by Himself”³¹ as the only connection to his past life but is otherwise entirely co-opted into the army. Still, although Ugwu kills, rapes, and is complicit in

the violent war, his story represents a departure from the inadequate victim/ perpetrator paradigm.

This is because, even as a rapist, Ugwu is not de-humanized. Instead, he is deeply traumatized by his own actions and his grief becomes central to the story:

It haunted him, filled him with shame. It made him think about that girl in the bar, her pinched face and the hate in her eyes as she lay on her back on the dirty floor... It surprised him that it was possible for his body to return to what it had been and for his mind to function with permanent lucidity.³²

By allowing Ugwu the humanity of grief and the opportunity to write the book-within-a-book "*The World Was Silent When We Died*", Adiche discards dichotomous understandings of trauma as inflicted by a perpetrator and felt by a victim. Thus Half of a Yellow Sun presents a more nuanced understanding of suffering that could help westerners to comprehend war zones where the good/evil paradigm is functionally irrelevant and moralizing discourse is an insult to human complexity.

3.3 Emecheta: Gender-Selective Genocide

Though Destination Biafra is fundamentally a novel about the representation and identity of women, Emecheta also draws attention to gender-selective genocide against men:

They were still loading the women into the lorry when the shooting started. The air was again filled with the cries of men dying. The men were bleating like goats and baying like hounds. In no time, it was all over.

...Over two thousand men died along the Benin Asaba road on "Operation Mosquito". But, as they say, that was war.³³

This passage calls attention to both the gendering of trauma in Destination Biafra and to local conflict and tragedy navigation techniques. First, while the genocide itself is gender-selective, the resulting social and psychological trauma is also gendered. Men are massacred and women are left behind to navigate the brutal war zone in a state of heightened emotional and psychological distress. In this way, neither group escapes genocide, nor can either group can be privileged in post-

conflict reconciliation efforts. Second, the phrase “as they say, that was war” resonates with a body of academic literature that discusses social navigation tactics and human resiliency in zones of conflict or extreme poverty. For example, Nancy Scheper-Hughes challenges the “limitations of the dominant psychological trauma model”³⁴ and discusses such trauma-coping mechanisms as normalization, narration, reframing, black humour, and making merry. In Destination Biafra, characters often normalize mass violence rather than internalizing and being torn apart by the sheer burden of loss³⁵. This is not to say that post-conflict trauma should remain untreated, but rather that the apparent symptoms of post-traumatic collapse may actually be “signs of resilience and strength.”³⁶ Thus Emecheta is empowering the female witnesses of genocidal violence and drawing attention to local coping and survival mechanisms that might otherwise be interpreted as evidence of post-traumatic breakdown.

3.4 Central Critiques: Bias, Literacy, and Representation

The above analysis has shown that, in the area of gender-based violence, Nigerian civil war literature has the potential to supplement public truth-telling, challenge the victim/perpetrator paradigm, and draw attention to local coping mechanisms. However, there are a number of critical challenges to incorporating literary accounts into wider policy and academic discourse on gendered violence and post-conflict resolution.

First, there is a clear elite bias in these works, both of the authors and their central characters. Emecheta was attending the University of London when war broke out and her involvement was as one of the “students demonstrating in Trafalgar Square in London.”³⁷ Her work is informed not by personal experience but by witness accounts and wartime records. Similarly, American educated Adiche was born seven years after the war officially ended and credits her many

family members who shared their experiences. It is telling then that literary catharsis is experienced in both novels only by those characters with access to an above-par education. In Destination Biafra, Oxford-educated Debbie observes that “most of the incidents were written down in her personal code which only she could decipher. If she should be killed, the entire story of the women’s experience of the war would be lost”³⁸. Here, Debbie implies that the oral tradition is insufficient to account for the women’s experience and that their stories must be written down in order to be meaningfully remembered. Underlying this insinuation is a reverence for the written word that may reflect the author’s own natural bias, and an emphasis on the role of educated elite in the process of memory and reconciliation. Oike Machiko analyzes representations of subaltern women in Destination Biafra and posits that the novel “records the impossibility of representing the Other.”³⁹ Essentially, he finds that Emecheta’s elite bias is an obstacle to her representation of non-elites. Similarly, in Half of a Yellow Sun, it is the houseboy-cum-schoolteacher Ugwu who is tasked with writing about the war. This is significant because his voice carries less of an elite bias than those of the novels other protagonists; yet he has still received an education far superior to that of most Nigerians. Ugwu’s educated elite bias is revealed by the historically contextualized and highly intellectual passages from his book-within-a-book, “*The World Was Silent When We Died*”. There are, however, direct references to Ugwu’s writing as therapeutic to other characters including Olanna who observes that, “his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of, and so she told him all she remembered...”⁴⁰. Still, the salutary effect is experienced by the storyteller and witness and there is no mention that it will equally benefit those who read or hear the story.

A second impediment to the incorporation of Nigerian Civil War literature into the process of social healing is the language and literacy bias. Because English is an official language in Nigeria, it

is reasonable to assume that the majority of Nigerians speak and some English; however, only 68% of the total adult population can read and write, and literacy rates decline significantly as age increases⁴¹. This means that survivors of the Nigeria-Biafra war are significantly less likely to be able to read than their younger counterparts⁴². Adult literacy rates also vary greatly by region with some states reporting rates as low as 24%⁴³. In addition, the United Nations Development Programme reports that 70.8% of the Nigerian population lives on less than a dollar a day, while 92.4% lives on less than 2\$ a day⁴⁴. Understandably, people living at or below the subsistence level are unlikely to have the surplus income necessary to purchase books or other written materials. This is particularly true because high tariffs, import costs, and printing costs add to the already-high cost of books in Nigeria⁴⁵. The bottom line is that even if a war survivor could read, there is little chance that they would be able to access books like these.

A third obstacle is the issue of representation. Because neither Emecheta nor Adiche were present in Nigeria during the war, their attempts to represent incidents of gendered violence must be critically examined. This concern is particularly relevant in light of Robben's investigation into "personal defence and social strategies," which he claims are used either intentionally or inadvertently by both perpetrators and victims of violence to lead researchers astray⁴⁶. Robben posits that these techniques of seduction complicate subjective accounts of violence because they represent attempts to shape truth. With literary accounts of violence, these seduction strategies become further muddled by storytelling. Essentially, with fictional narratives of real-world events, it is unclear what is derived from historical fact, what is influenced by seductive witness testimonials, and what has been interpreted and dramatized by the storyteller. These issues are of paramount importance because concerns over representation of violence are central to transitional justice efforts. Integrating fictional accounts of conflict may complicate post-conflict reconciliation;

however, literary narratives remain one of the few mediums in which personal accounts of sexual and gender-based violence are represented without stigma and shame. Though it is valid and necessary to question an author's bias and capacity to represent the other, it is also important to acknowledge that representations of sexual violence in the Nigerian civil war are a testament to the transcendent nature of literature.

Ultimately, while the testimony method is empirically shown to have a salutary effect for sufferers of post-traumatic stress, it is uncertain who exactly will benefit from literary accounts of conflict. This paper shows that deeply personal accounts of gendered violence might address the silences in policy and academic discourse; however, it is difficult to imagine an empirical test of these effects. Theoretically it might be possible to test knowledge of and sentiment towards a conflict before-and-after reading a literary work, but there is no guarantee that the survey results would be an accurate representation of the impact of literature. Some confounding factors might include the time it takes to read the book and previous experiences with literature (positive or negative). Still, the possibility that literary accounts could improve understanding of the gendered dimensions of conflict, particularly for westerners, academics, and policy-makers is too significant to discard due to methodological uncertainty.

IV. CONCLUSION: BRINGING THE INDIVIDUAL BACK IN

The scarcity of academic and policy discourse on gender-based violence during the Nigerian civil war is glaring. By framing the war in primarily ethnic and religious terms, scholars and politicians neglect the experiences of individuals who were psychologically and physically tortured due to their gender. What's more, conventional post-conflict reconciliation and transitional justice mechanisms are often silent on the issue of sexual and gender-based violence because of the deep social

stigmatization associated with rape and sexual abuse. Thus it is necessary to consider the introduction of alternate forms of memory and social healing that address gendered violence without stigma. Literary accounts tend to transcend the silence surrounding sexual and gender-based violence, whilst circumventing the victim/perpetrator paradigm. Thus, literature could play an important role in introducing westerners and academics to necessarily personal and deeply emotional accounts of gender-based violence during the Nigerian Civil War.

¹ Though individual statistics are contested, it is uncontroversial to state that a large portion of the 'Nigerian' population was impacted in some way by the war. See: Odling-Smee, G. W. (1970). Ibo Civilian Casualties in the Nigerian Civil War. *British Medical Journal*, 592-596.; Philips, B. (2000, January 13). *Biafra: Thirty Years On*. Retrieved December 8, 2010, from BBC News: <http://news.bbc.co.uk>; Wiseberg, L. S. (1975). The Statistics Jungle: Measuring War, Plague, Fire and Famine. *New Styles in Social Research*, 12 (5), 53-60.

² For a discussion of the impact of the Biafran secession and Nigerian Civil War on contemporary Nigerian politics and society, see for example: Last, M. (2000). Reconciliation and Memory in Postwar Nigeria. In V. Das, *Violence and Subjectivity* (pp. 315-332). Berkeley: University of California Press; Amadiume, I. (2000) The Politics of Memory: Biafra and Intellectual Responsibility. In Amadiume, I. & An-Na'im, A. (Eds.), *The Politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice* (pp. 142-161). New York: Zed Books.

³ See, for example: Allan, A., & Allan, M. M. (2000). The South African truth and reconciliation commission as a therapeutic tool. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 18 (4), 459-477.; Allen, J. (1999). Balancing Justice and Social Unity: Political Theory and the Idea of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *The University of Toronto Law Journal*, 49 (3), 315-353.; Chapman, A. R., & Ball, P. (2001). The Truth of Truth Commissions: Comparative Lessons from Haiti, South Africa, and Guatemala. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 23 (1), 1-43.; Dyzenhaus, D. (2000). Survey Article: Justifying the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 8 (4), 470-496.; Stein, D. J., Mbanga, I., & Zungu-Dirwayi, N. (2001). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa: relation to psychiatric status and forgiveness among survivors of human rights abuses. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 178, 373-377.; Sarkin, J. (1999). The Necessity and Challenges of Establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Rwanda. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 21 (3), 767-823.

⁴ See, for instance: Agger, I., & Jensen, S. B. (1990). Testimony as ritual and evidence in psychotherapy for political refugees. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 3 (1), 305-318.; Igreja, V., Kleijn, W. C., Schreuder, B. J., van Dijk, J. A., & Verschuur, M. (2004). Testimony method to ameliorate post-traumatic stress symptoms: Community-based intervention study with Mozambican civil war survivors. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 184, 251-257.; Leydesdorff, S. (2007). Stories from No Land: The women of Srebrenica speak out. *Human Rights Review*, 8 (3), 187-198.; Weine, S. M., Kulenovic, A. D., Pavkovic, I., & Gibbons, R. (1998). Testimony Psychotherapy in Bosnian Refugees: A Pilot Study. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 155, 1720-1726.

⁵ For a discussion of the silence surrounding gender-based violence, see for instance: McKay, S. (2000). Gender justice and reconciliation. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 23 (5), 561-570. For a more positive assessment of truth and reconciliation commissions in the area of "gender justice", see: Valji, N. (2009). Gender Justice and Reconciliation. In K. Ambos, J. Large, & M. Wierda (Eds.), *Building a Future on Peace and Justice: Studies on Transitional Justice, Peace and Development The Nuremberg Declaration on Peace and Justice* (pp. 217-236). Heidelberg: Springer.

- ⁶ Adiche, Chimamanda Ngozi. (2007) Half of a Yellow Sun. Alfred A. Knopf.
- ⁷ Emecheta, Buchi. (1981) Destination Biafra. Allison & Busby.
- ⁸ Richard, W. (2001). *The politics of truth and reconciliation in South Africa: legitimizing the post-apartheid state*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ⁹ Baines, E. K. (2007). The Haunting of Alice: Local Approaches to Justice and Reconciliation in Northern Uganda. *International Journal to Transitional Justice* , 1 (1), 91-114.
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- ¹¹ p. 817 | Franke, K. M. (2006) Gendered Subjects of Transitional Justice. *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law*. 15 (817), 813-828
- ¹² Igreja, Victor, Kleijn, Wim C., Schreuder, Bas J. N., van Dijk, Janie A., Verschuur, Margot. (2004) Testimony method to ameliorate post-traumatic stress symptoms: Community-based intervention study with Mozambican civil war survivors. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 184, 251-257.
- ¹³ Post-traumatic stress symptoms were measured with the Self-Inventory for PTSD (SIFP).
- ¹⁴ Igreja et.al. (2004) p. 251
- ¹⁵ On the role of the therapist in guiding refugee testimonials: Agger, I., & Jensen, S. B. (1990). Testimony as ritual and evidence in psychotherapy for political refugees. *Journal of Traumatic Stress* , 3 (1), 305-318
- ¹⁶ On the necessity of personal accounts of violence during the Bosnian War: Leydesdorff, S. (2007). Stories from No Land: The women of Srebrenica speak out. *Human Rights Review*, 8 (3), 187-198.
- ¹⁷ For evidence from another selective intervention, see: Weine, S. M., Kulenovic, A. D., Pavkovic, I., & Gibbons, R. (1998). Testimony Psychotherapy in Bosnian Refugees: A Pilot Study. *American Journal of Psychiatry* , 155, 1720-1726.
- ¹⁸ p.142 | Mertus, Julie. (2000). Truth in a Box: The Limits of Justice through Judicial Mechanisms. In Amadiume, I. & An-Na'im, A. (Eds.), *The Politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice* (pp. 142-161). New York: Zed Books.
- ¹⁹ Leydesdorff, S. (2007), p.135
- ²⁰ Lee Ann Fujii. (2010). Shades of truth and lies: Interpreting testimonies of war and violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, 47, 231-241.
- ²¹ Kleinman, A. & Kleinman, J. (1996). The Appeal of Experience: The Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times. *Daedalus*, 125 (1), 1-23.
- ²² W.H.Dubois cited p.35 In Soyinka, W. (2000). Memory, Truth and Healing. In Amadiume, I. & An-Na'im, A. (Eds.), *The Politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice* (pp. 21-37). New York: Zed Books.
- ²³ Destination Biafra (1981) p.43
- ²⁴ Destination Biafra (1981) p.136
- ²⁵ Emecheta intended Debbie to be "neither Ibo nor Yoruba nor Hausa, but simply a Nigerian" (ibid, p.viii)

- ²⁶ p.881 | Staub, E. (2006) Reconciliation after Genocide, Mass Killing, or Intractable Conflict: Understanding the Roots of Violence, Psychological Recovery, and Steps toward a General Theory. *Political Psychology*, 27 (6), 867-894.
- ²⁷ p. 221 | Uchendu, E. (2007). Women and Conflict in the Nigerian Civil War. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press Inc.
- ²⁸ p.429 | Brounéus, K. The Trauma of Truth Telling: Effects of Witnessing in the Rwandan Gacaca Courts on Psychological Health. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 54 (3), 408-437.
- ²⁹ Okeoma's story is inspired by the life of Nigerian poet and Biafran independence fighter Christopher Okigbo
- ³⁰ Half of a Yellow Sun (2007) p. 450
- ³¹ Ibid., p.451
- ³² Ibid., pp.496-497
- ³³ Destination Biafra (1981) p.177
- ³⁴ p.1 | Scheper-Hughes, N. (2008). A Talent for Life: Reflections on Human Vulnerability and Resilience. *Ethnos*, 73 (1), 25-56. For further discussion of female agency in conflict settings, see for instance: Coulter, C. (2008). Female fighters in the Sierra Leone war: challenging the assumptions? *Feminist Review*. 88, 53-73; Utas, M. (2005) Victimcy, Girlfriending, Soldiering: Tactic Agency in a Young Woman's Social Navigation of the Liberian War Zone. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 78 (2), 403-430.
- ³⁵ For example, Destination Biafra (1981) | p.135 "Hundreds of women have been raped – so what? It's war"; p.177 "But, as they say, that was war"; p.187 "My daughter, you have to stop mourning for the dead now. We are still alive"; p.213 "Debie marvelled at the resources of women... only a few days after the death of her husband, she had the courage to slap another woman, and tell another woman to stop engaging in self-pity." p.251: "Never mind, though, it is war";
- ³⁶ Scheper-Hughes (2008) p.50
- ³⁷ Destination Biafra (1981) p.vii
- ³⁸ Destination Biafra (1981) " pp.223-224
- ³⁹ p.69 | Machiko, O. (2008). Becoming a Feminist Writer: Representations of the Subaltern in Buchi Emecheta's Destination Biafra. In Emenyonu, E (Ed), *War in African Literature Today 26* (pp. 60-70). Ibadan: HEBN.
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- ⁴¹ *The World Factbook* (2009). Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>
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