

POLITICS OF ETHNICITY IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THERE WAS A COUNTRY: A PERSONAL HISTORY OF BIAFRA*

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Abstract

*This paper examined the representation of politics of ethnicity in Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, focusing on the depiction of characters, tribes and events. Politics of ethnicity is mostly concerned with ethnic interest over all other considerations - say national goals. Drawing on Edward Said's postcolonial theory and using the qualitative method of data analysis; this study analysed how the primary text under study thrived on the politics of ethnicity. Postcolonial theory is concerned with the aftermath effects of colonialism. The findings reveal that the novel do not necessarily present politics of ethnicity as being dangerous in itself, but that; it is so much more an irresistible submission on the need for premeditation unto self-discovery, negotiations, re-negotiations, and most essentially, rebuilding of strained relationships and broken walls, among the various Nigeria ethnic groups. The study also reveals that the rigging of elections in Nigeria today, among other aberrations are indissociable from its colonial heritage - and that this faulty ground upon which Nigeria was conscripted must be approached urgently with a new frame of mind to give space for meritocracy. This study will provide insights into future discourses on literature as well as subsequent debates on ethnic, regional and world politics.*

Keywords: Politics, Ethnicity, Postcolonial, Theory

Introduction

Literature is a creative work that transmits culture. It differs from general writing; as it embodies richer kind of experiences than the ordinary non-literary work. Literature, from the Latin word, *littera*, means letters and refers to being knowledgeable about the character of a written word. That is, the written work of a particular culture, sub-culture, religion, philosophy or the study of such written work which may appear in prose, poetry or a drama text. The literature of a particular community could be seen as the sum total of all works of

imagination either in oral or written form, in prose or in verse which have helped to reflect and project the life and culture of that community in the areas of drama, poetry, prose and several other narratives that embodies the literary.

In African literature, African writers often seem to be faced with the task of re-creating the readers mind in the traditional way of life, portraying different degrees of human realities - making frequent allusions to their people's costumes and traditions. They record communal activities such as festivals, ceremonies, beliefs, occupations and ritual practices. Emmanuel Obiechina broadly captures this idea when he says that, "it is only by incorporating a country's tradition in writing that makes them who they are" (10). Literary works from Africa remains an important sphere for critically engaging Africa's past, present and the future.

Politics of ethnicity usually places ethnic goals above national interests. Policies are mostly carried out by emotional sentiments. The phrase politics of ethnicity often takes a derogatory connotation, signifying negative behaviour and actions among members of a particular ethnic group. The term is gaining popularity among the general public in Africa, owing to the ideological clout of elite politicians and cultural leaders who grossly abuse the term; as they see it as an opportunity to manipulate the gullible members of society. Despite the gross abuse or misrepresentation of this concept, it is however, important to emphasise that politics of ethnicity is not necessarily dangerous in itself as it's more or less the functioning or the act of playing of ethnic cards in a society. That is, the consciousness of belonging to a set. This paper therefore examines politics of ethnicity as represented in Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* with focus on the depiction of characters, tribes and events.

Literature Review

Available studies in relation to politics of ethnicity in Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* variously debate the causes of politics of ethnicity; how they are perpetuated; and how they are challenged. This is evident in studies such as those by Bernard and Kinggeorge (2014), Chinedu (2014), Ekhaton (2014), Ngwu et al (2013), and Ebiede (2012). Among these groups, Benard and Kinggeorge examine how the history and memory of the war and the lessons as portrayed in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and **Achebe's** *There Was a Country* could facilitate collective exorcism and engender national unity. They conclude that the text boosts national memory and enhance the nation's history. In line with this discourse, Chinedu attempts to

trace the trends of Achebe's initiation into the tribal life of his people, his creative thoughts and his conception of the 'art of the masquerade' in his works, especially, in *There Was a Country*. The paper submits that the work is Achebe's ljele.

In interrogating the Nigerian - Biafran War and the elites' notion of nation and nationalism in Achebe's *There Was a Country*, Ekhator contends that Nigeria's story and Achebe's story were told to inspire in future Nigerians the spirit of nationalism, values for where Nigerians are coming from.' He notes that the veritable themes in the memoir are politics of nationhood, ethnic nationalism and integration." According to him, these are the sum of the causes of the Nigeria-Biafra war. Ngwu et al discusses public opinions on the book using qualitative and quantitative data generated through the interview, questionnaire and focus group discussion. They investigated how the text has influenced Nigerians to construct their memories of the war and discovered that they had influenced Nigerians to build and rebuild negative memories of the war. In extending the theme of politics of ethnicity Ebiede argues that, *There Was a Country* should be a source of inspiration and advocacy guide for those calling for a Nigeria, a Nigeria where members of different nations have an equal place no matter their size and where they would not repeat the unfortunate incidence that happened from July 1967 to January 1970. To him, the book fills a yawning need in Nigeria's historical analysis, one need the Nigeria state and her historians have carefully avoided that. Having examined previous studies on the text, this present study therefore seeks to extensively engage ethnic politics as a primary concern of the novel.

Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial theory is a literary theory or critical approach that deals with literature produced in countries that were once, or are now, colonies of other countries. It may also deal with literature written in or by citizens of colonising countries that takes colonies or their people as its subject matter. The theory is based around concepts of otherness and resistance. Postcolonial theory became part of the critical toolbox in the 1970's, and many practitioners credit Edward W. Said's book *Orientalism* as being the founding work. The proponents of the theory examine the ways in which writers from colonised countries attempt to articulate and even celebrate their cultural identities and reclaim them from the colonisers. They also examine ways in which the literature of the colonial powers is used to justify colonialism through the perpetuation of images of the colonised as inferior. Homi K. Bhabha's "The

Commitment to Theory and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" have also been effective in postcolonial conversations.

The colonial experience of many African states influences many African artists to serve as catalysts of social consciousness. Through their imaginative works, they act as social reformers, activists and crusaders against societal flaws so as to achieve a better society order than the ones imposed through colonialism. Jaques Derrida is of the view that "literature is the institution that allows one to say everything in every way" (36). Literature therefore is a natural zone for a literary writer not just to fire gun shots but to cast as many missiles as possible so as to cause expected changes to happen in his or her environment. This position corresponds to the tenet of postcolonial theory as an aspect that both analyses the aftermath effects of colonialism and attempts to strike a balance between the coloniser's world and the colonised.

Depiction of politics of ethnicity in Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*

Politics of ethnicity as a concept in literature has over time gained massive impetus with its formidable root in the tenets of literary criticism and theory, and most especially, postcolonialism. It would suffice most succinctly to state that many African writers have variously explored this theme in their literary engagements. Chinua Achebe's master piece, *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* is a literary autobiography in which the issue of politics of ethnicity is most clearly raised, questioned and discussed with distinct manifestations in terms of characters, tribes and events.

The representation of some of the key characters in the text are worth examining. This representation of character is essentially fascinating. Characters are generally believed to be the life of literature. This then is to suggest that a literary work without a character or characters would be deemed a dead work. According to M. H. Abrams "characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as possessing particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it - the dialogue - and from what they do - the action" (33). In the text, one finds all kinds of characters - multiple characters. There are many ways that these characters could be categorised. Several of the characters in the story fits into one or more categories, or more appropriately moves into categories. For example, the two war lords in the text: Ojukwu and Gowon are characters, and exceptional characters at that - indispensable to the realisation of the novel.

Even Nigeria and Biafra in their respective ways are characters. Another important character that is central to the text is Britain. Britain here, needless, represents the British government of the day headed by Harold Wilson and of course, the symbol, as the former colonial administrator of Nigeria. Therefore, Britain as colonial, and Harold Wilson are figured both implicitly and explicitly as characters not just in the literary sense but even much more so in the social and political sense. Actions of each of these actors are central to the novel's plot. The following excerpts from the text provide an irresistible detail about Ojukwu and Gowon:

No! It was the action of the leaders! When it got to the stage whereby the leaders would not agree then a decision had to be taken. There would not have been a civil war had there not been secession! If there was no decision to break away from the country, certainly there wouldn't have been any reason to start fighting. The civil war was as a result of the East and the leadership of Ojukwu deciding to break away. Now, I had a duty and responsibility. I swore allegiance to Nigeria, and Nigeria is composed of all the various parts. And the East was part of Nigeria. But the Ojukwu leadership, because of whatever reason it had, and, of course, I know there were very strong reasons why he made certain decisions; but I know it was personal ambition more than anything else. Yes, unfortunate events had occurred, and I can assure you, if anyone had any sleepless night, it is because of the sort of thing that happened in Nigeria from 1966 up to that time... (290).

Events of the time made war possible... not me. My good friend, Jack; he was thirty-three then, and so was I. That, in addition, made war almost inevitable. My good friend, Jack had a smattering knowledge of the Eastern Region, but I grew up in it, and that created its own conflict. And so on and so forth. There are so many things.... My good friend, Jack: His people sent me a Christmas present of a headless corpse. He heard about it.... I received it! There's conflict even in that experience, and so on and so forth... (291).

The above excerpts are quotations from Gowon and Ojukwu. Henry James asks: "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?" (74). Abrams also expresses that "the grounds in the characters temperament, desires and moral nature for their

speech and actions are called their motivation" (33). As indicated in the excerpt, Gowon provides a strong argument as to why the war occurred. He believes that the war was very much avoidable but was also at the same time inevitable, most especially with the Biafran secession. According to him, he only played the role of having to protect the sovereignty of Nigeria to which he swore an allegiance, which Biafra's breakaway is an assault to. He is also of the opinion that the war would have been avoidable if Ojukwu had not been driven by personal ambition.

Vehemently, he argues that it was out of personal grievances that Ojukwu called out for the war. He however seems very remorseful of the horrendous experiences that the Igbos had to go through, especially in the Northern part of the country that subsequently led to war breakout; and distances himself from it - he is not in any way a part of the reason why the war ensued. But also, in many senses, Gowon's argument is relative or more essentially contradictory: he appears to say two or more things that are in conflict - Ojukwu is this, Ojukwu is that; that is, Ojukwu is outrightly responsible for the war, while also acknowledging at the same time that Ojukwu was invariably pushed into going to war by a number of circumstances.

Ojukwu, on his part also believes that the war could have been avoided; even though, he makes light of it; as he goes on to capture the seriousness of events which made it absolutely impossible. For example, he draws attention to the headless corpses that Gowon's people - the Northerners sent him as a Christmas gift which Gowon didn't do anything about; even though he heard about it, and was in the position to address the situation as head of state but failed to do so. According to Ojukwu, this conspicuous barbarity, Gowon's failure to honour the Aburi Accord meeting in Ghana, among all other things were the situation that provoked him to declare the Sovereign State of Biafra.

Harold Wilson's led government and indeed the colonial power is both implicitly and explicitly figured as the villain in the text. The villain here is largely because of its role in the war time. It would suffice to corroborate with this excerpt from the text:

Cabinet papers for [1967], just released, show how the decision to continue arming Nigeria was not based on arguments for or against secession or in the interest of its people, but on backing the likely winner. It is a case study in *realpolitik*. As one Commonwealth Office briefing document to the prime minister put it: The sole immediate British interest is to bring the

[Nigerian] economy back to a condition in which our substantial trade and investment can be further developed (99).

Here, as indicated, Britain is not in any way bothered about the wastage of human lives in its former colony, especially in the Eastern part - the killing of Igbos in Nigeria. Its only concern is to do business. It supplies arms to Gowon who's from the Northern part of the country to kill his brothers in the Eastern part of the country. The role of Harold Wilson is total cruelty to the happenings in its former colony of Nigeria. What is evidenced here is postcolonialism. That is, Britain dictating and exacting total influence in the affairs of its former colony, even though it's no longer physically present in the soil. There are however so many Britons who criticise him over his position against the Biafra that some British workers even refused to load ships going to Lagos, protesting that they were using it to kill Biafran children.

Tribe is another predominant issue in the text. The country that would later become Nigeria is "one of the most populous regions on the African continent, with over 250 ethnic groups and distinct languages" (1). These various tribes without due consultation or respect were forcefully joined to coexist as one body - country. These tribes now held together by a delicate or in another sense artificial lattice with Great Britain as the sovereign power. In all ramifications, this arrangement, complicated Nigeria's destiny. Chidi Amuta believes that "it is through African history that African literature can be well understood" (6). In this regard, literary texts become an avenue to reveal socio-historic experiences of various African states. Nigeria is an outcome of a colonial administration which for administrative gain and expansion joined different tribes together as one and named it Nigeria. Obiechina is of the view that "history remains the story of a people, and is, therefore always ethnic" (1). There is a fusion between a people and their history.

The various inter-ethnic tribes competed among themselves, scrambling for various resources and positions. There were rivals that resulted into tensions and violence. Britain created this ethnic tension and rivalries among the various ethnic groups. Each of the leaders from the various ethnic groups, overzealous for political share caused serious embarrassment as it created ethnic tensions through various voracious statements. For instance, it was credited to Awolowo the most prominent of the Yoruba tribe of having said that, "All is fair in war, and starvation is one of the weapons of war. I don't see why we should feed our enemies fat in order for them to fight harder" (233). It is disappointing that Awolowo, an intellectual could have made such an utterance against his Igbo

brothers - to say the least. The role of eminent figure, Antony Enahoro who belonged to the middle belt extraction of Nigeria is also an indication of ethnicism since he was literally quiet in that moment of disrupt. What is apparent is that both sides - Biafra and Nigeria are entirely on a different view point. While Nigeria sees the Igbo tribe as enemy - Igbos do not. In Arthur A. Nwankwo's account of the war for example, he notes that Igbos were not willing to fight their Nigeria brother. The following excerpt captures it succinctly:

The argument ran somewhat like this: the Federal Government is not prepared to fight. High Federal officials are already frightened of the 'might' of Biafra - a might we have built by powerful propaganda machine. All we must do is maintain this pretence of power and make the Federal troops feel too defeated to start anything. Even if Federal troops do attack, we will have to resist for only a brief time before internal differences get the better of Federal ranks (16).

As portrayed, Biafra was not ready to fight the federal troops who he sees as his brother - the Biafrans were not in any way interested in fighting the rest of Nigeria - they simply accepted to leave Nigeria because of the way they have been treated - they were pushed out; not that it was their initial intention to secede. The crisis among the political elites degenerated into killing of innocent civilians who were mostly Igbos dwelling in the North. And just like *There Was a Country*, Nwankwo argues that events forced Ojukwu to declare Biafra's secession from Nigeria - the Igbos were no longer wanted as they were massacred in the North and forced to flee to their native homes in the Eastern part of the country. Clearly, the Igbo tribe did not in any way set out to leave its own brother - Nigeria, let alone engage her in a fight. The Igbo tribe is unjustly hated. But most unfortunately for Nigeria as the text succinctly portrays, the Igbo tribe that is being treated as an outcast is undoubtedly the most liberal and the most sophisticated member of the Nigeria organisation that has the formidable strength to make Nigeria prosperously great.

The novel remains consistent that there is apparently no memorable distinction between the activities that led to the Nigeria-Biafra crisis and the Nigeria of today. Nigeria is pervaded by all manners of corruption. And to make things worst is that the Igbo tribe has not been fully absorbed into Nigeria since after the end of the war, as it has always been denied the office of the presidency that other tribes are taking part in, which is in itself a call for the declaration of

another secession. It is therefore pertinent as *There Was a Country* clearly tries to underscore that the Igbo tribe is not giving its rightful share in the distribution of political power in Nigeria; even though it was the Igbo tribe that championed the course for Nigeria's independence - the sons and daughters of the Igbo profile fought to the finish, so that Britain finally accepted to go and eventually left the orbit of Nigeria. Igbos have been marginalized and remain marginalized since after the war. The various scrambling for positions in the country among the various ethnic groups and of course the war is a clear case of a people who have experienced colonisation - they can no longer rule themselves because something strange has happened.

The text is built upon events. One turn of event leads to another event that eventually metamorphosed into a full-blown war. Nigeria has a story, Biafra has a story, Achebe has a story, and indeed everyone has a story. Christopher Collingwood is of the view that history is a continuous process of instruction between the historian and his/her facts in an unending dialogue between the present and the future" (5). In the same vein Jonathan Culler holds that "to tell a story is to claim a certain authority, which listeners grant" (89). "It is for the sake of the future of Nigeria, for our children and grandchildren, that I feel it is important to tell Nigeria's story, Biafra's story, our story, my story" (3). Here, indeed, something has happened and it is important to know what it is.

It is imperative to trace this troubling structure. In the words of Chijioke Paul Anih "The simplest solution to the problems that defies all solutions is the problem itself" (21). It is so important that what has happened to Nigeria is clearly studied, understood and then, to come up with the possible way forward so that Nigeria does not continue to reap from the harvest of its past. Nigeria among all other issues is divided along ethnic lines which accounts for her weakness and retarded progress.

Nigeria must embrace meritocracy as its *modus operandi*; a system where the choice of selection into offices will not be made based on one's tribe, favouritism, who-knows-who and things of that sort; but will be made basically on merit; irrespective of one's religion, social background, political affiliation and other tiny factors that does not hold intimacy with the fabrics of human assemblage. Men and women who have been tested through character wise, and proven to possess indisputable integrity must be given whatever position they so richly merit without any form of discrimination; to deny them of the reputation that they have so strongly built, through tormoil, resilience, self-denial and all the other unimaginable human efforts. The election rigging as

seen in Nigeria today and numerous other corrupt practices are part of its colonial heritage. The passage below captures it vividly:

Later it was discovered that a courageous English junior civil servant named Harold Smith had been selected by no other than Sir James Robertson to oversee the rigging of Nigeria's first election "so that its compliant friends in [Northern Nigeria] would win power, dominate the country, and serve British interests after independence." Despite the enticements of riches and bribes (even a knighthood, we are told), Smith refused to be part of this elaborate hoax to fix Nigeria's elections, and he swiftly became one of the casualties of this mischief. Smith's decision was a bold choice that cost him his job, career, and reputation (at least until recently). In a sense, Nigerian independence came with a British governor general in command, and, one might say, popular faith in genuine democracy was compromised from its birth (50 - 51).

With Sir Robert James, the governor in power, Nigeria first election was stage managed. Throwing his weight on Tafawa Balewa, he emerged as the Prime minister. Tafawa Balewa who was from the North was tipped by Britain to be Prime minister so he could serve British interest. Harold Smith was one of those who were given the assignment of making sure that Nigeria's first election was rigged in favour of Tafawa Balewa, the British choice but he refused to be part of this wickedness and this made him loose his job and other benefits he was promised. This elaborate colonial manipulation of fixing Nigeria's leadership from its time of birth rather than conducting a free, fair and transparent election engineered into all kinds of corruptions and misrule. Public servants misappropriated public funds. The judiciary was hijacked by politicians - and the politicians themselves were mere puppets to the Western colonisers.

There was struggle for power among the various inter ethnic groups and they readily appealed to these sentiments to make war against each other. The Nigeria of the day was melting on the line of political corruption. 'The prime minister of Nigeria, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, who had been built up into a great statesman by the Western world, did nothing to save his country from impending chaos' (51-52). The high-handedness of ineptitude and political corruption was massive but Nigerian leaders would not approach her challenges with some sense of humility; otherwise, they might have found out that Nigeria

was long sitting on a keg of gun powder. Some years into Nigeria's independence, she had been rocked by one crisis after another - but Nigeria would not embrace her challenges.

It was on this note that Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, a junior military officer, from the Igbo tribe, though was raised in the Northern part of Nigeria along with other four of his military colleagues launched a coup d'etat on the Nigeria First Republic that was headed by Sir Tafawa Balewa on January 15, 1966. Nzeogwu was born in Kaduna state, the Muslim capital of the North. He spoke Hausa eloquently and a little of Igbo and was someone who saw himself as a Northerner. He was largely an Igbo by name. "Nzeogwu hastily put together a speech that became notorious for its attacks on the political class, bribery, and corruption" (79). The Nzeogwu coup was targeted against the political class who he believed were rootily corrupt. The naive coup eventually claimed important lives such as two key Northern figures, Sir Ahmadu Bello and Sir Tafawa Balewa, Samuel Akintola, the premier of Western Nigeria among others.

The Nzeogwu coup was eventually crushed by Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi an Igbo man "who was the highest-ranking officer in the Nigerian army" (80-81). It was however learnt that Aguiyi-Ironsi was in the list of those to be killed but upon getting the wind of the plot mounted a serious resistance that broke down the coup and then emerged as the new head of state for Nigeria. Ironsi, a mild-mannered man upon assumption of office on May 24, 1966 suspended all political parties and introduced a unitary system of government to his bewildered country. Ironsi quickly began to move from one part of the country to the other in order to ease tension that was rising across the length and breadth of the country.

During one of his tours, Ironsi stopped over as a guest to his close friend and confidant Lieutenant Colonel Adekunle Fajuyi the military governor of Western Nigeria in Ibadan. While still in Ibadan for a peaceful tour, Ironsi was arrested by an officer of the Nigerian army, Captain Theophilus Y Danjuma, a Northerner who claimed he wanted to "know if Ironsi was linked to the death of the Sardauna of Sokoto" (81). Soon afterwards Ironsi and Fajuyi's body were seen around the bush bullet-ridden. The murder of Ironsi and his friend had been a coup by the Northern officers led by Murtala Muhammed. The corruption in Nigeria gave rise to all manner of bloodshed. Edward W Said's remark in the following words prompts a serious questioning, "The nexus of knowledge and power creating 'the Oriental' and in a sense obliterating as a human being is therefore not for me an exclusively academic matter. Yet it is an

intellectual matter of some very obvious importance" (27). Evidently, the colonial power in its bid to exercise power, made a mockery of the sanctity of knowledge.

With the murder of Aguiyi Ironsi, Yakubu Gowon who was born in Pankshin, Plateau State to a Christian missionary parent emerged the new supreme commander of the military council. This position of head of state was however initially tapped for Murtala Muhammed who belonged to the Hausa/Fulani military establishment but "was quickly shelved in favor of Gowon, the charismatic Christian and ethnic minority candidate from Plateau State" (122). This elevation of Gowon to the position of head of state was clearly a tactical compromise that was aimed at assuaging the growing tension among the different ethnic groups that Nigeria was not in any way coming under an Islamic Hausa/Fulani perceived leadership intent on Christian and Southern domination. Most officers didn't feel that Gowon was the most qualified to be the head of state at the time - there was at least a more senior officer in the army who was of the Yoruba extract whom the position of the head of state should have gone to, instead of Yakubu Gowon. Murtala Muhammed greatly nursed his wounds against Gowon and would later over throw his government in 1975. Ojukwu was one of those who believed that Gowon was not the most qualified for the position of the head of state.

Gowon attempted to respond to the growing ethnic hostility particularly in the Eastern part by appointing Ojukwu, a colleague and a fellow Sandhurst alumnus as the military governor of Eastern Region - this new office was however similar to the one he held under Aguiyi-Ironsi. Ojukwu reluctantly served in this new capacity "because of what he believed was Gowon's unclear role in the coup that led to the assassination of General Aguiyi-Ironsi and nearly two hundred Igbo officers" (123). Thirty thousand civilian men, women and children were slaughtered, hundreds of thousands were wounded, maimed, and violated, their homes and property looted and burned - and no one asked any questions. A Sierra Leonean living in Northern Nigeria at the time wrote home in horror: "The killing of the Igbos has become a state industry in Nigeria" (82). Cataclysm was unleashed on innocent Igbos in broad daylight by its Nigeria brother in Northern Nigeria. The violence against the Igbos in the North by its Northern brothers is nothing short of a germinated discord sown by the colonial master.

Riots upon riots in the North saw the killing, maiming and the destruction of the Igbos as well as their valuables. Including the killing of one

hundred and eighty-five senior military Igbo officers. "The country had not embraced us, the Igbo people and other Easterners, as full-fledged members of the Nigerian family" (87). Apparently, here, the Igbos were no longer welcomed in Nigeria. The Igbos were killed in their numbers and the government of Yakubu Gowon did not do anything to stop the intended annihilation of the Igbo tribe. Clearly, the Igbos were pushed out of Nigeria - Ojukwu declared Biafra's secession because that was his only option. Nigeria has been totally unfair to its Igbo tribe. Sir Tafawa Balewa's silence as Nigeria's First Republic deteriorated into a mayhem of corruption and Gowon's inability to stop the killing of the Igbos living in the North, which subsequently led to the Nigeria-Biafra war is an indication of postcolonialism - a people who could no longer decide their own affairs.

Conclusion

Politics of Ethnicity is a central issue in literary discourse. As it is, it is not negative in appearance but has proven to be entirely negative in practice. It is not bad after all for one to desire something good for the ethnic group he or she belongs to but this desire should manifestly be in the interest of the larger number of persons in the society. The selection process into public offices for example should strictly be on merit. Literature is a product of the society and has been used at various times to question, challenge and bring about positive changes in the society. Many African literary works have in one way or the other seriously engaged the subject of politics of ethnicity. Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* is a literary autobiography that sufficiently captures the theme of politics of ethnicity in such areas as characters, tribes and events. The Western intrusion into Africa under the name colonisation is the rain that shattered Africa, as Africa has since then remained exploited by the West - this consequently accounts for all the pandemonium in Africa. Therefore, the building and the reconstruction of Africa is a collective responsibility. Nigeria as well as all African leaders must sit-up to its challenges and be committed to rebuilding Africa in every way possible. In order for Africa to develop and become what it should be, European countries and the Western world at large must look beyond economic and other material benefits of Africa and be positively committed to her advancement. Nigeria is divided on the basis of ethnic groups which is a major reason for its lack of development and therefore needs to be united in love, peace, purpose and progress. More importantly too is the need to fully integrate the Igbo tribe into Nigeria for

Nigeria to clearly experience positive boom. While Igbos may have their short comings, her democratic, liberal and industrious spirit which is her mark of extraordinary excellence must be imbibed by every other ethnic group in Nigeria, if Nigeria must truly advance to the height that it deserves. To this end, the literary text becomes an extraordinary meditation on the need for self-discovery, negotiations and re-negotiations, because a new Nigeria and indeed a beautiful Africa is achievable.

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