

VOICE AND MEMORY IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN* AND AMMA DARKO'S *FACELESS*.

BY

**Ifechukwude Chinonso JIDEONWO (Miss)
ART2100255**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE,
FACULTY OF ART,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
BENIN CITY,**

NOVEMBER, 2025.

VOICE AND MEMORY IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN* AND AMMA DARKO'S *FACELESS*.

BY

**Ifechukwude Chinonso JIDEONWO (Miss)
ART2100255**

**A RESEARCH WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND
LITERATURE, FACULTY OF ART, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF
BACHELOR OF ART DEGREE.**

NOVEMBER, 2025.

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project titled : Voice and memory in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun and Amma Darko's Faceless was undertaken by Jideonwo Ifechukwude chinonso of the department of English and Literature University of Benin, Benin city under my supervision.

Dr. Lillian Onyeiwu.
(Project Supervisor).

Date

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to God almighty and to my amazing family.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My sincere gratitude goes to everyone who contributed to the successful completion of this research. My heartfelt appreciation goes to my supervisor Dr. L. C Onyeiwu for her guidance, academic corrections, support and constant encouragement throughout the research process. I am also grateful to my lecturers and the Department of English and Literature, University of Benin, Benin city for providing the academic foundation and resources that made this work possible.

Special appreciation goes to my family, my parents Mr. Anthony Chukwuma Jideonwo and Mrs. Joy Nnenna Jideonwo, my ever supportive and wonderful siblings Chiamaka, Isioma, Chiedum and Olise. To my brother and friend, Timothy Udeogwu, extended family and to Harmony, my amazing and loving friend turned sister. My dear friends Susan, Jessi, Gift, Emmanuel, Queency and Perpetual for their unwavering support, understanding and motivation during the course of this study. Above all, I thank God almighty for the strength, wisdom and inspiration that guided me from the beginning of this research to its completion.

ABSTRACT

This research drawing on postcolonial theory and subaltern concept examines voice and memory in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Amma Darko's *Faceless* by examining how voice and memory reclaim silenced narratives, expose social injustices and highlight the struggles of marginalized groups. It also shows how these elements serve as tools for healing, resistance and social transformation. This research analyzes the role of storytelling and remembrance as means of healing and resistance against historical erasure. The findings reveal that Adichie and Darko use voice and memory not merely as artistic expressions but as important tools for confronting the past and redefining African identity. This research concludes that literature serves as a powerful medium for preserving individual and collective memory and also promoting social awareness in postcolonial contexts.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Literature over the years is significant in understanding human beings and the society. It plays a crucial role in cultural preservation, cultural Identity, historical value and in cognitive and language development. According to Alfarhan Ins.Eqbal A. “literature catches common social situations in real time, converts them into fiction and then presents them to the public as a reflection in which individuals can examine and adjust their own behaviour as necessary”(265). In most post colonial African literature, the intersection of memory and voice serves as a powerful tool for reclaiming suppressed narratives and giving voice to marginalized persons. Renowned African writers like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Wole Soyinka demonstrate this within their various works where they do not use memory and voice only to remember and narrate but also to resist, empower, heal and preserve.

Memory and voice also serves as a crucial tool for cultural preservation, identity formation and resistance against colonial narratives. Both authors, Adichie and Darko engage voice and memory differently, showing their use in different historical and social contexts. Adichie uses voice and memory to reconstruct silenced histories of war and highlight trauma as part of a collective national identity while Darko uses voice and memory to expose social neglect and abuse in contemporary urban society (Accra, Ghana), turning personal stories into a demand for social change. Thus, by comparing these two writers, the research demonstrates how memory and voice not only reclaim suppressed narratives but also function as tools of resistance, empowerment, healing and social critique within postcolonial African literature.

Purpose Of Study

This research drawing on postcolonial theory particularly the strand of subaltern concept examines voice and memory in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Amma Darko's *Faceless* by examining how voice and memory reclaim silenced narratives, expose social injustices and highlight the struggles of marginalized groups. It also shows how these elements serve as tools for healing, resistance and social transformation.

Scope Of Study

This research analyzes Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Amma Darko's *Faceless*, focusing on the themes of voice and memory, although *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Faceless* explores multiple themes such as war, poverty, gender based violence and corruption. This research is grounded in the close reading of the primary texts but is not limited to them.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, textual research approach, focusing on close reading and literary interpretation of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Amma Darko's *Faceless*. This research is guided by postcolonial theory which helps to examine memory and voice functions in the texts.

Theoretical Background

This research adopts Postcolonial theory as a framework for the critical analysis of the complex chain of political, social, economic and cultural impacts left in the aftermath of colonial control reflecting on societal issues thereby serving as a form of social critique and agency.

Postcolonial theory originated through some fundamental anti-colonial thinkers like Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire and Albert Memmi whose works formed the foundation on which

the postcolonial theory started to take form. It exposed the cultural and psychological effects of colonialism. According to Robert J. C. Young, their writings provide “the earliest sustained theoretical articulation of anti-colonial resistance and identity formation” (Postcolonialism 11). Although post colonialism at this stage was not yet seen in the light of an academic field of study. Some scholars around the mid-20th century gave postcolonialism its shape as an academic field of study now called postcolonial theory. This era introduced Edward Said as the founding Father of postcolonial theory. Post colonialism in itself is a broad term that encompasses many layers of concepts. Some examples of which are: Orientalism, colonial subjugation, hybridity and the subaltern concept.

Orientalism is a postcolonial theory concept coined by Edward Said the founding Father of postcolonial theory. He laid the intellectual framework for postcolonial theory in his book titled *Orientalism*(1978). The book examines postcolonial theory through the lens of the Western representation of the East. It exposes the creation of a biased and inferior image of the East to justify colonial rule, “ ‘Orientalism’ is this European construction of the East as primitive, savage, pagan, undeveloped and criminal. Such a construction then enabled the European to justify his presence: The poor, weak native needed to be governed and ‘developed’, and it was the task of the European to do so”(Said 221). Said’s work established the important concept that colonial power was reliant on and perpetuated by colonial knowledge, shaping the way postcolonial discourse and studies are understood and applied in understanding culture and literature.

Colonial subjugation is another fundamental concept of postcolonial theory that was derived from Frantz Fanon's works *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and *Black Skin, White Masks*(1952) where Fanon focuses on colonial subjugation and analyzes colonialism as deeply

destructive to both societies and individuals. He argues that colonialism dehumanizes the colonized by stripping them of their humanity, imposing a servile mentality and using both physical and psychological violence to enforce control, harming the colonized peoples mental health and identity. He insists that violent resistance is necessary, describing it as a cathartic act that restores dignity and self-respect to colonized people; this belief influenced his role in the Algerian Revolution(1954–1962). Fanon's work highlights the lasting cultural, political and psychological impacts of colonialism, making it central to postcolonial studies.

Another key theorist is Homi K. Bhabha. He introduced hybridity as a crucial concept in postcolonial theory describing the cultural mixing that occurs when colonizer and colonized cultures interact. He argued that this process takes place in the "Third Space," an ambiguous, interstitial site where new hybrid identities are formed, challenging fixed notions of a "pure" culture and the binary opposition between colonizer and colonized. Hybridity, according to Bhabha, is a productive and empowering force that allows for resistance to colonial power by creating new cultural possibilities within the space of cultural difference. In essence, Bhabha's theory of hybridity emphasizes that cultures are not fixed or separate entities but are fluid and constantly being reshaped through the complex interactions of colonialism, leading to the emergence of new hybrid cultural identities and forms of resistance.

An important strand of postcolonial theory that will be used within this research is the subaltern concept. The concept of the subaltern originated in late medieval England to denote those of an inferior rank but gained its modern critical meaning through Antonio Gramsci an Italian Marxist philosopher and politician who in his book *Prison Notebooks* describe subalterns as politically marginalized and disenfranchised groups. He used the term to identify the cultural hegemony that excludes and displaces specific people and social groups from the socio-

economic institutions of society, in order to deny their agency and voices in colonial politics. In the 1970s, further research by an Indian historian Ranajit Guha and the Subaltern Studies Group developed the concept to examine and challenge "elite" histories by focusing on the experiences and agency of the colonized and oppressed. The term subaltern was later explored and popularized by an Indian scholar, literary theorist and feminist critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who in her essay "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" (1988), Focused on the politics of representation. She questioned whether the subaltern can speak and if they can be truly heard, highlighting the silencing power of colonial and patriarchal discourse. She argued that subaltern voices are systematically silenced by both colonial and indigenous elites "the subaltern woman's voice is mediated and often unheard due to structural disadvantages" (Spivak 104). Although subalterns may literally be able to speak, social and power structures prevent society from truly hearing their voices.

Some features of subaltern concept include, it focus on marginalized groups that are excluded from important political and economic issues within society, It challenges elitism, it analyzes the hegemonic dominance that creates subaltern consciousness, it also seeks to reinterpret history from the view point of the subaltern thereby answering the question, if truly the subaltern can speak.

Review of literature and justification of study.

Many studies have been conducted on *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Faceless*, although not commonly examined together. Different researchers in their studies have examined how the subaltern figures in both texts reclaim agency through acts of remembrance and speech or how these acts challenge political power and social neglect. According to Suryanarayan's "Memory trauma and healing in Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*" trauma greatly affects

characters in *Half of a yellow sun*, highlighting the overall fear, violence and loss they endure, it also shows how memory is used as a coping mechanism and how personal and collective memory serve as both a means of preserving identity and confronting the past. The research also uses characters' experiences to show the importance of literature in providing a voice to people who have endured trauma. It sheds light on the power of memory and healing, showing how *Half of a Yellow Sun* bridges the gap between fiction and reality, offering a space for empathy, understanding and reflection on the experiences of individuals in conflict areas (4434).

Some scholars believe that Adichie's novel connects individual characters' memories with the larger collective history of Nigeria's Civil War by showing how personal stories feed into national memory and how remembering is both intimate and communal. Christopher E. W. Ouma argues that Adichie constructs a "composite consciousness" by weaving together the diverse recollections of Ugwu, Olanna and Richard, thereby creating a polyphonic remembrance of the Biafran War (Ouma 18). Similarly, Adebayo applies the concept of "post memory" to demonstrate how the novel carries inherited trauma into the present, showing how Adichie resists national amnesia by writing memory as a lived and transgenerational force (Adebayo 86).

Another research examines how Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country* use memory and history to address Nigeria's struggle with national unity especially after the Biafran War. It argues that ethnic divisions and the failure to confront the trauma of the war continue to affect the country. Through storytelling, both authors preserve the memory of the conflict, challenge official silence and promote healing. The article suggests that literature can help foster collective understanding and national reconciliation (Dickson and Preye 83).

Also study of focalization and polyvocality in *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Akpome Aghogho points out that the novel decentralizes authority by granting narration to multiple characters, producing a polyvocal account of the war (2013). Jacob Scholastica reads the novel psychoanalytically, critically examining the devastating effects of the Nigerian-Biafran Civil War as portrayed in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Using Freudian psychoanalysis, it highlights the connection between memory, trauma and human behavior showing how war damages lives, property, society and the environment and how the deepest harm lies in the psychological scars and trauma that persist long after the war ends. Scholastica connects memory, trauma and social behavior to argue that Adichie emphasizes the ethical responsibility of witnessing (125).

Furthermore, the politics of memory in the novel have also been studied as acts of resistance. One study underscores how Adichie's portrayal of Biafra functions as a corrective to state erasure by using narrative to reinsert silenced history into Nigeria's collective consciousness (Bernard and Kinggeorge 2014). This is echoed by Wosu, who frames the text as civil war fiction and emphasizes its testimonial stance in recovering a neglected national past (Wosu 160). More recently, critics have expanded this discussion by suggesting that *Half of a Yellow Sun* destabilizes conventional definitions of trauma, positioning narrative experimentation as an ethical tool for remembrance, Duce Violeta article on "Questioning standard Definitions of Trauma: Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* as a Transmodern Narrative" argues that the novel is more than just a war story. It's a powerful, multidimensional narrative that mixes voices, cultures and perspectives to show how trauma affects both individuals and societies. It challenges the usual way of thinking about victims and perpetrators, showing instead a complex web of shared suffering and resilience that continues to matter in today's world (Duce).

Additionally, Amma Darko's *Faceless* has also received significant attention in research by many scholars, primarily around its depiction of child homelessness, gendered violence and the silencing of women's voices. Scholars agree that the novel functions as a social critique of Ghanaian society. An early study by Capo-chichi Lauren Clémence and Agboadannon Koumagnon A. Djossou, frames the phenomenon of street children as a structural, not individual, tragedy, highlighting how the narrative records the realities of children like Fofo, Baby T and Odarley who live on the street and the implications on their education and subsequently their future(175). Akambi Fatiou Raimi emphasizes the symbolic weight of “the street” as both a physical and discursive space where silenced voices emerge (Raimi 37). In a similar vein, Dadja-Tiou and Koffi show how Darko's realist aesthetic renders these marginal voices authentic, insisting that the novel's power lies in its faithful representation of social reality (Dadja-Tiou and Koffi 5). Francis Etsè Awitor examines street children phenomenon in Amma Darko's *Faceless*, their plight and the irresponsibility of the adults be it parents, family members or community. It explores the causes of street children phenomenon, the violence that it nurtures and the misfortunes street children are facing in the hands of the ‘street lords’ concluding that it is the duty and responsibility of both the parents, community and the government in providing and taking care of the children and unless this street children phenomenon is tackled there will be no end to society decay.

Similarly, Maina Ouarodima examines how the novel *Faceless* exposes and condemns the marginalization and violence faced by African women and girls, especially in urban settings. It argues that Amma Darko not only highlights the suffering of women but also challenges the silence of society and failures of government institutions (1703). The article concludes that this marginalization is mainly due to government neglect and calls for greater awareness, advocacy,

and structural change through literature ‘For such basic needs to be effective, Darko utters a wake- up call to the government, which has a tremendous role to play in it. The government should not lose its priorities and become deaf to the cries of the victims (women)’(1705).

In addition, Tchibozo-Laine applies a linguistic lens to show how grammatical mood and modality construct limited spaces of agency for women suggesting that even language encodes social silencing (Tchibozo-Laine 200). Some other studies on Violence and trauma identifies patterns of domestic and sexual violence as forms of systemic silencing, arguing that Darko records such suffering as a form of collective memory (Ouarodima 2019). Ofosu situates *Faceless* within Ghanaian feminist discourse, demonstrating how Darko’s fiction amplifies female voices in a patriarchal context (Ofosu 180).

Also, institutional interventions also receive attention. Iortyer Manasseh Terwase emphasizes the role of NGOs like MUTE as mediators of silenced voices, exploring how institutional structures attempt to rehabilitate marginalized children (Iortyer 14). A recent discourse analysis strengthens this argument, noting that MUTE’s language strategically constructs the street children’s “facelessness” while simultaneously advocating for their recognition (Akinrinlola et al.). Another study on “Streetism as a Social Tragedy” by Ogbeide highlights the structural nature of the crisis faced by Baby T and other street children in *Faceless* as emblems of systemic gendered neglect and offers a solution calling for society to contribute to the eradication of streetism by bringing love back to the family unit, parental control of robust procreation and the intervention of a responsible government (Ogbeide). While another research by Luke Nduki Okolo and Nnenna Cecilia Ogebele applies objectification theory to examine how Darko portrays the plight of the girl-child in Ghanaian society. The research argues that *Faceless* illustrates the multiple forms of victimization that burden the girl-child and perpetuate systemic

oppression, highlighting how patriarchal structures treat women, particularly girls as objects for male gratification, thereby silencing them and limiting their self-actualization (Okolo and Ogebele 163)

However, while Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* have been widely analyzed in several ways academically less attention has been given to how voice and memory function as tools of resistance, social critique and reclamation especially compared with treatment of voice and memory in Amma Darko's *Faceless*. This research seeks to bridge that gap by providing valuable insights into the role of voice and memory as instruments of social critique and political resistance in postcolonial African literature. This research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how African writers reclaim history and give voice to the marginalized through literature.

Thesis Statement.

This research establishes that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Amma Darko's *Faceless* thematically employ voice and memory to critique social injustice, examine the politics of memory in individual and collective healing and create agency for the oppressed and marginalized in postcolonial Africa.

CHAPTER TWO

VOICE AND SOCIAL CRITIQUE IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN* AND AMMA DARKO'S *FACELESS*.

This chapter examines how Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Amma Darko's *Faceless* use voice as a tool for social critique in postcolonial Africa. Voice in this chapter represents both political and personal expression, allowing marginalized characters to tell their own stories and challenge systems of power. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the voices of war victims and ordinary people highlight the failures of Nigeria's political leadership while in *Faceless*, the voices of street children and exploited women expose systematic social injustices such as poverty, societal neglect and gender oppression in Ghana. Through *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Faceless*, Adichie and Darko show how voice(s) can resist silence and reclaim agency for the marginalized. Also it explores how silence and invisibility are imposed on subaltern groups such as women, children and the poor and how Adichie and Darko disrupt this silence by giving narrative presence to those who are often erased by social injustice, political violence, poverty and patriarchy. By doing so, both novels not only critique social and political structures but also restore dignity and recognition to silenced lives.

2.1. Voice as a tool for political and personal expression.

In African literature, voice functions not only as an authorial style but as a critical tool for challenging negative political structures, preserving culture and reclaiming identity. It also serves to critically challenge systems of oppression and marginalization. Both Adichie and Darko exemplify this by giving agency to marginalized groups and exposing the injustices of war, poverty and patriarchy within postcolonial societies.

In Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the dysfunctional political structure of 1960's Nigeria is revealed through the aftermath of Nigeria's independence, where the British system of divide and rule left behind a fragile democracy. This weak structure was quickly corrupted by politicians, resulting in ethnic mistrust, coups and massacres. The novel exposes the negative political structures through the political decay and ethnic divisions of the period while reinterpreting history through subaltern voices within the novel. Adichie addresses Gayatri Spivak's question, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" by showing that marginalized voices can narrate history when given narrative authority, an example of this is seen in *Half of a Yellow Sun* when Ugwu writes a book that discusses the sufferings faced by the Biafran nation. Ugwu's book within *Half of a Yellow Sun* is titled, *The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died*. Similarly, Amma Darko's *Faceless* critiques negative political structures in postcolonial Ghana, especially as they manifest in poverty, inequality, gender oppression, weak governance and the silencing of the poor. In Spivak's terms, the novel dramatizes the possibility of the subaltern speaking when alternative spaces of voice are created (Spivak 283). Which is clearly seen in how Fofo tells her story through the advocating agencies of MUTE and Good Morning Ghana (GMG). In *Faceless* the level of social decay and lawlessness is seen as the consequence of systematic neglect, the failure of the state in providing the basic needs, rights and welfare for its citizens especially the marginalized. These failures are exposed in the novel through Agbogbloshie a slum in Accra, Ghana also known as "Sodom and Gomorrah", a direct biblical reference to cities known for their immorality which is deliberately used by Darko to show the lawlessness and social decay that prevails within Ghanaian society as a result of the government's inability to protect and empower the poor. By reflecting on the plight of street children and the struggles of women in a patriarchal society the novel exposes how corrupt and ineffective political structures continue to

render the marginalized “faceless.”. An example can be seen when the police, who ought to investigate Baby T’s death, dismiss it by saying “We are on it” but it is later revealed that the lack of diligence in operation is due to lack of infrastructure and poor equipments to carry out proper procedures, “ No, we don’t. Not even a battered Tico” this statement reveals how state structures due to lack of funding and poor management actively erase justice for the poor.

Another strong point by which Adichie and Darko challenge postcolonial narrative is through cultural preservation. Both novels preserve culture by weaving indigenous traditions, languages and communal practices into their narratives, thereby resisting cultural erasure in postcolonial societies. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie integrates Igbo language, Igbo names, proverbs, songs, folktales and native dishes such as the repetitions of the traditional soup ‘Nsala soup’ and ‘kola nut rituals’ to affirm Igbo identity and memory during the Biafran war, showing that culture endures even amid political fragmentation. The use of Igbo terms like ‘Kedu’ and ‘Jisie ike’ in everyday dialogue reflects how language becomes a vessel of resilience against cultural erasure. Similarly, Darko’s *Faceless* preserves Ghanaian culture by grounding its narrative in oral traditions that talks about superstitions like the curse on Maa Tsuru, storytelling and the Akan worldview of communal responsibility. The character Naa Yomo stands as a storyteller and oral traditional archive as she aids the work of MUTE in creating traditional modes of oral history, showing how the community safeguards memory through storytelling and MUTE represent agencies that act as a form of historical archive or library as stated within the novel

“we continue to document for posterity information that one would not easily access in a regular library. We salvage knowledge and facts about people and places that used to be handed down orally and we document them”, (Adichie 77).

This emphasizes the role of society in documenting, reclaiming and saving endangered voices. In *Faceless*, this is tied to the broader theme of giving agency to the marginalized, especially women and children like Fofo and Baby T, whose lives represent a wider social reality. The act of documentation becomes a form of resistance against cultural and historical erasure, ensuring that their stories live on and contribute to collective memory. This excerpt also highlights a postcolonial consciousness as Darko critiques the failure of government institutions to preserve subaltern voices and instead shows how grassroots initiatives take up the responsibility of safeguarding memory for future generations. Ultimately, Adichie and Darko preserve cultural identity not just as background detail, but as a living force that sustains subaltern characters against erasure by colonial and post colonial structures.

Adichie and Darko also reclaim identity in their novels by giving voice and narrative authority to marginalized groups whose histories are often silenced. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie narrates the Nigerian Civil War through the perspectives of characters like Ugwu, Olanna and Richard whose experiences would normally be overshadowed by other dominant groups thereby countering official histories and experiences of ordinary people. By allowing a houseboy like Ugwu to become the chronicler of Biafra Adichie reclaims subaltern identity and asserts that history belongs not only to elites but also to the oppressed. Similarly, in *Faceless*, Darko uses voice to restore visibility to street children and impoverished women who are dismissed as “faceless” by society. Through the stories of Fofo, Maa Tsuru, Baby T, as well as the investigative work of Kabria and the NGO MUTE, Darko exposes systemic neglect and insists that the identities of these children and women matter, even within structures that render them invisible like an instance within the novel in Fofo’s discussion with the Non Governmental Organization MUTE where she addresses the government as having “ the power to make people

do or stop doing certain things”. This goes to show that both novels reclaim identity by creating agency for the marginalized, demonstrating that though silenced by dominant political and social systems, the subaltern can speak when given narrative space.

When discussing voice as a means of personal expression, multiplicity comes into focus. Although this method is employed by Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun* only, this narration allows characters within the novels articulate their own truth, emotions, thoughts and identities instead of being spoken for by a single controlling narrator giving room for multiple meaning, interpretation and perspective. Adichie in her TED Talk “The Danger of a Single Story” emphasizes that reducing people to a single narrative silences complexity and reinforces stereotypes. She argues that the antidote to single story is multiplicity. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* she uses multiple narratives to show three socially different characters' accounts of the Biafran war : Ugwu, Olanna and Richard. Ugwu captures the poor and uneducated, Olanna captures the traumas of war and gathered suffering while Richard represents the outsider’s (foreigner’s) gaze. Together their voices resist a single authoritative version of history and instead foreground diverse personal experiences of the Nigerian-Biafran war. Similarly, Amma Darko’s *Faceless* employs multiplicity, though through an omniscient third-person narrator. Baby T’s tragic history is reconstructed not from official reports but from fragmented recollections like Maa Tsuru’s narration of maternal helplessness that leads her to make decisions that change and affect the lives of her children especially Baby T, Fofu’s memories of Baby T’s struggles, and the gossip of the community. Each voice contributes to uncovering the poverty, gender oppression and social neglect behind Baby T’s death. This technique resists silencing and instead validates marginalized experiences. Unlike the single linear narrative that could erase complexity, the

multiplicity of voices in both novels preserves individuality and enables personal expression as a tool of resistance against systemic neglect and dominant political or social structures.

While *Half of a Yellow Sun* focuses its criticism on the devastation of war, ethnic division and the silencing of marginalized voices in postcolonial Nigeria, Amma Darko's *Faceless* focuses its social critique on the marginalization of street children in Ghana.

2.2. Silenced Subjects and Social Invisibility

Both Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Amma Darko's *Faceless* explore how marginalized figures are silenced by social, political, and patriarchal structures and how literature through narration can recover their voices. Through postcolonial theory, drawing on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's subaltern concept, both novels reveal how those marginalized within society such as street children, women, the poor and war victims are often unheard unless mediated through narrative (Spivak 70). By focusing on silenced subjects both authors highlight the tension between invisibility and representation in postcolonial societies.

In *Faceless*, the aspect of gender invisibility is portrayed through female characters like Baby T, Fofo and Maa Tsuru. Baby T's exploitation and murder epitomize subaltern silencing of young children especially girls whose lives are consumed by systemic neglect and sexual violence. Fofo also embodies silenced subjectivity. Initially, she runs away from Maa Tsuru's abusive household, joining the ranks of the "street children" whose lives are erased from public discourse. She lives in fear yet her willingness to testify to Kabria demonstrates literature's capacity to restore agency to silenced voices as through MUTE Fofo is rehabilitated. Maa Tsuru herself represents generational silencing, as she becomes a victim of both poverty and patriarchal curses that mark her as a "woman without a husband," causing her generational invisibility that reduces her life to childbearing and poverty, rendering her socially invisible. Gendered

invisibility in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is quite different but similar to that of *Faceless* as Adichie changes the historical narrative on gender invisibility, she retells history by giving voice to women through characters like Kainene who during the war ran a refugee camp alongside her twin sister Olanna where she helped displaced Biafrans, providing them with shelter and food. In this way Adichie gives visibility to women by transforming them from background figures to agents of resistance and humanitarian aids.

Beyond gender, there is also economic invisibility, as the lives of street children, hawkers, scavengers, and prostitutes are ignored except when criminalized. Darko observes that “nobody cared to know where they slept”, this statement underscores the indifference of society and state institutions towards the marginalized. Scholars like Florence Stratton note that African women writers “write against silence” by reconstructing female subjectivity in oppressive societies (Stratton 1994), a role Darko fulfills by bringing Baby T’s silenced story to light, through Kabria and MUTE’s investigations Baby T’s social invisibility is reclaimed and narrated posthumously, forcing recognition of what society sought to suppress.

In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, silence also permeates wartime experience. Olanna’s muteness after witnessing the Kano massacre of Igbo civilians highlights trauma’s unspeakable nature. Adichie states “She wanted to tell Odenigbo what she had seen, but the words would not come”. This instance exemplifies Cathy Caruth’s concept that trauma is experienced belatedly, as an event that resists immediate narration (Caruth 1996). Her silence is not weakness but a means of carrying the extreme weight of loss beyond language.

Ugwu too, embodies the silenced subjects whose transformation resists invisibility. As a houseboy, his early silence reflects his subordination, yet the war thrusts him into a state of moral entanglement when he is drawn into the gang rape of a bar girl. Afterward, his memory of

the incident “filled him with shame” which turned him silent as he feared how he would be seen especially by the women in his life, silence in this case functions as shame and moral reckoning which shapes his growth into a narrator. Ultimately, when he becomes the author of *The World Was Silent When We Died*, his act of writing breaks his silence, transforming personal guilt into collective narrative. Both Darko and Adichie demonstrate that silence, whether born from trauma, shame or structural oppression, is not merely absence but a political space. Literature transforms these silences into narratives that reclaim memory and resist historical erasure. As Nwahunanya notes, “silence becomes an archive of pain that literature translates into collective memory” (Nwahunanya 2011). In this sense, the silenced subjects of both novels emerge not as passive victims but as crucial bearers of history whose invisibility is undone by narrative.

In conclusion, both *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Faceless* demonstrate how voice serves as a powerful tool for political and personal expression, allowing the marginalized to challenge silence and injustice. By turning social invisibility into narrative, Darko and Adichie ensure that the marginalized are not only remembered but also repositioned at the center of historical and cultural memory. By bringing the silenced and invisible into the center of their narratives, both authors do not only reclaim lost identities but also call for empathy, awareness and transformation. Thereby, affirming that giving voice to the voiceless is an act of resistance and a step toward social change.

CHAPTER THREE

THE POLITICS OF MEMORY

Memory, according to Cambridge dictionary, is the ability to remember information, experiences and people. Memory in itself is an important aspect of human experience and in African literature, it functions as both a personal and collective record that shapes identity and history. It influences an individual's identity, decisions, opinions and perceptions of the world. For African writers, memory serves as a tool for cultural preservation and a means of addressing the emotional scars left by war, colonialism and social injustice. It helps shape identity, recover lost histories and give recognition to marginalized experiences. In this sense, the politics of memory is the use of a society's or group's collective memory of the past, including historical events, trauma and identity to question power, recover silenced voices and redefine cultural identity. It involves examining how certain narratives are promoted while others are downplayed or suppressed and how literature becomes a space where these struggles are explored. In literature this can be seen in how authors choose to represent history, what they emphasize, how they use memory to shape characters identities or comment on power dynamics. Memory becomes political when it is tied to power, identity and resistance. Thus in postcolonial African literature, memory becomes a political force that reconstructs history, preserves culture and identity and also challenges forgetting, revealing how power determines what is remembered or erased.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, memory is used as a tool for reconstructing history, particularly the memory of the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970) which arose from political, economic and ethnic power struggles, religious tensions and the imbalance within Nigeria's federal structure after independence in 1960. The war was fought between the Nigerian government and the

secessionist state of Biafra, representing the Igbo ethnic group spearheaded by General Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. The conflict ended with Biafra's surrender after a federal blockade led to widespread starvation and the death of millions. Adichie retells this war not through the lens of official history but through the personal experiences of five major characters from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, Ugwu (a houseboy), Olanna and Kainene (privileged, Western-educated twin sisters) Odenigbo (a revolutionary professor) and Richard (a British writer sympathetic to the Biafran cause). Through these different perspectives, Adichie reconstructs the memory of the Biafran War by focusing not on political and military events, but on the human, social and psychological impact of the conflict. She moves beyond abstract historical accounts to reveal the brutal realities of war and its enduring emotional consequences. Also, in her *Author's Note* in the novel, Adichie reveals that her understanding of the Biafran War was shaped by the recollections and narratives of Nigerian authors, family members and friends. She acknowledges that these shared memories deeply influenced her representation of the war, noting that while the story is fictional, it draws inspiration from real people, lived experiences and the silenced victims of the Biafran conflict. Adichie states that her aim is to remember and give voice to those who were forgotten.

“This book is based on the Nigeria-Biafra War of 1967– 70. While some of the characters are based on actual persons, their portrayals are fictitious as are the events surrounding them. I have listed below the books (most use the anglicized spelling Ibo for Igbo) that helped in my research. I owe much thanks to their authors. In particular, Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* and Flora Nwapa's *Never Again* were indispensable in creating the mood of middle-class Biafra; Christopher Okigbo's own life and *Labyrinths* inspired the character of Okeoma;

while Alexander Madiebo's *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War* was central to the character of Colonel Madu..." (Adichie 447)

Although Adichie fictionalizes the Nigerian Civil War, she does so through a compelling narrative built on memories that intimately reveal the daily lives of Biafrans during the war, their experiences of loss, sickness, starvation, dehumanization and other devastating effects of war and also shows how memory shapes identity and culture, showing that to remember is to resist the forces that seek to bury history as she ends her *Author's Note* in a declaration " May we always remember "(Adichie 448).

Similarly in Amma Darko's *Faceless*, the politics of memory is portrayed in how the novel exposes what society chooses to remember, forget or silence especially regarding the suffering of street children, women and the urban poor. The novel reveals that the Ghanaian society often forgets or ignores the experiences of marginalized people, most especially street children like Fofo, Baby T, Odarly and the countless other street children and abused women. Their pain is socially "forgotten," showing how memory is controlled by power of the privileged in society who decides which stories matter. An example of this is clearly seen in the sexual abuse of girls like Baby T and Fofo. Their suffering is ignored by society, showing how memory is controlled by the powerful and privileged, who choose which stories are worth remembering. Baby T's rape and exploitation is treated as forgettable secret and quickly forgotten by Baby T and her family due to fear, shame and poverty while the community, the media and even the authorities treat such cases as common cases associated with street children. Baby T's death becomes just another statistic, while those responsible like the men who exploit and abuse young girls face no real punishment for their crimes. The silence surrounding Baby T's death symbolizes how society erases uncomfortable truths but Darko restores memory through voice

and narrative. Through characters like Kabria, the NGO (MUTE), Sylv Po and Good Morning Ghana (GMG), forgotten stories are recovered and retold. This act of remembering becomes political because it challenges social indifference and forces recognition of injustice.

3.1 Memory and Societal Injustices

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Faceless*, memory functions as a vivid witness to societal injustice, giving voice to suffering that would otherwise be erased by the pressures of silence or shame. In Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, memory is bound to the Biafran war, it becomes an indispensable foundation of voice, shaping how characters speak, act and resist erasure which is narrated not merely as a historical event but as a lived trauma that exposes the emotional and moral cost of conflict, ethnic divisions, failure of leadership and the devastating impact of political corruption. Memory allows characters to recall Injustice and speak about it, Characters such as Ugwu, Olanna, Odenigbo, Kainene and Madu embody different forms of memory, ranging from personal recollections of violence to the collective remembrance of an ethnic struggle. Olanna's traumatic recollection of "how awkwardly twisted Auntie Ifeeka's arm had looked, as she lay on the ground" (Adichie 176) continues to haunt her even after her horrifying experience of the Kano massacre, leaving her with intrusive thoughts and violent flashbacks. In the case of Colonel Madu, his experience of the war leaves him traumatized and afraid for his life. "I heard footsteps on the lid of the tank and thought it was all over. But they did not open it and we passed. It was only then I knew that I was alive and I would survive." (Adichie 153), this experience also leaves him in doubt of a 'one Nigeria' influencing his decisions and shaping his ideologies. In the case of collective remembrance, Odenigbo, Olanna and their circle of intellectual colleagues and friends like Special Julius, Okeoma, Professor Ekwenugo and the

likes share memories of the struggles faced by the Igbo people during the civil war, memories of loss, starvation, death and the struggle for survival.

Also in the case of Ugwu, his personal memories of the war transforms him into the author he becomes at the end of the novel. At the start Ugwu is introduced to readers as a village boy from “Opi” , who comes to Odenigbo’s house to be his houseboy with only a “Standard two” educational level, to ascertain his stay in his master Odenigbo’s house he claims to “learn everything fast”. At this stage, his memory becomes his education, he learns language (English), manners and politics by observing and remembering Odenigbo’s intellectual discussions with his friends and colleagues, this is evident in the narration in *Half of a Yellow Sun* that states “Some evenings, when the visitors left early, he would sit on the floor of the living room and listen to Master talk”. Memory here acts as a tool of self-formation, allowing Ugwu to grow beyond his class and background; these early memories mark the beginning of his intellectual and social awakening. During the war, Ugwu witnesses horrific violence and becomes involved in it, particularly the gang rape of a village girl, which becomes the most haunting part of his memory, it plants deep guilt and moral conflict in him. He also witnesses first hand at the war front the brutality and the injustices the war brought with it. The loss of human rights, the ethnic and political tension, the class inequality and exploitation, the sexual violence against women and the lasting effect of colonialism in Nigeria as a whole. Due to this guilt, in the aftermath of war, Ugwu channels his memories both personal and collective into writing *The World Was Silent When We Died*. He wanted the world to know what truly happened during the Civil War especially ‘the things that happened to the Biafrans’ not the Europeans suppressed news of the killings and brutality of the war especially against women and children. An example include “The BBC says they are killing Igbo officers in Kaduna”(Adichie 138) which is an

understatement of the actual Kano massacre of thousand igbos both military and civilians. Ugwu's eventual authorship symbolizes how remembering gives power to speak, which in turn gives voice, which creates agency.

A major use of memory in *Half of a Yellow Sun* can be seen in the postcolonial and political atmosphere of Nigeria before, during and after the Biafran War. The struggle over what is remembered, forgotten or silenced. The Political memory within the novel reveals how history is shaped by power, ideology and collective trauma. Adichie revisits the lingering effects of colonialism and the failures of postcolonial leadership that accompanied Nigeria's independence, exposing how colonial legacies of division, class hierarchy, and ethnic rivalry continued to influence political structures and social relations. Memory, therefore, becomes a means of interrogating how the promises of independence were betrayed by corruption, inequality, and the manipulation of historical truth. Through the memories of characters like Chief Ozobia and other politicians within the novel and their show of political corruption through bribery and other corrupt practices, Adichie reveals the destructive power of political corruption. Other social injustices within the novel include class division, gender inequality, ethnic discrimination, exploitation and the dehumanization during the war. Adichie reconstructs the silenced narratives of oppression and resilience, revealing how both colonial and postcolonial power perpetuate social injustice. By revisiting the past through personal and collective remembrance, Adichie positions memory as an act of resistance and moral recovery compelling Nigerian society to confront the political betrayals and human suffering that lie beneath its national identity.

Adichie presents memory as a contested space where official state narratives of unity and progress clash with personal and collective memories of violence, ethnic division and betrayal. Through characters like Ugwu, Olanna and Odenigbo, she reconstructs the lived experiences

erased from Nigeria's official history. The novel exposes the failure of postcolonial leadership, marked by corruption, ethnic politics and military coups that fracture national identity. By recovering Biafra's suppressed memory, Adichie resists and challenges the political silence surrounding the war. This in a way allows the marginalized (specially the Igbo people) to reclaim agency and voice even though still haunted by the unacknowledged wounds of colonialism and civil war.

In *Faceless*, Amma Darko employs memory as a central narrative and thematic device that gives voice to the silenced experiences of marginalized women and children. Memory functions as a means of exposing social injustices within Ghanaian society, particularly the systematic neglect of the poor and vulnerable. Through the important dynamics of family, resistance and the creation of a voice for the voiceless especially in relation to the street-children phenomenon Darko allows buried and forgotten truths to resurface in a society that often silences its most vulnerable members. Through recollections, testimonies and investigative storytelling, she constructs memory as both a personal and collective archive that reveals systemic neglect while restoring dignity and voice to the forgotten. Memory is also employed to expose the deep-rooted social decay within the Ghanaian urban landscape and to illuminate the consequences of institutional failure. It plays a major role in shaping the novel's narrative structure, uncovering the trauma that lies at the heart of the "street child phenomenon." Darko channels memory through multiple perspectives, some of which are the young voices of Fofu and Baby T (before her death), the adults Maa Tsuru and Kabria, the women of MUTE and the recollections of street children Odarly, Poison and other "Faceless" children about home and family. These memories collectively expose the harsh realities of poverty, neglect and abuse that push children to the streets and haunt them as they struggle to survive without the protection of family. Through these

recollections, Darko portrays the failure of social institutions of both the family and the state to uphold their moral responsibilities.

The memories of Fofo's early life, her hopes and losses, reveal more than her personal struggle for survival; they mirror society's collective failure to safeguard its most vulnerable citizens. Darko underscores the importance of a stable and functional family throughout the novel. In Chapter Thirteen, for instance, Ms. Kamame, speaking on Sylv Po's Good Morning Ghana (GMG) program, identifies the root causes of the street-child phenomenon as "poverty, absentee fathers, ignorance, distorted beliefs and perceptions, sheer irresponsibility and misplaced priorities" (Darko 108). She concludes her discussion by warning that the street-child problem "affects the entire society," urging collective responsibility to confront and correct these injustices. Through the act of remembering and retelling these neglected stories, Darko transforms memory into a moral force that exposes systemic failure and demands social reform. Another significant form of social injustice portrayed in *Faceless* is the social rejection and neglect experienced by Maa Tsuru, the mother of Baby T and Fofo. Her life is shaped by the absence of proper family structure and by the moral and cultural injustices embedded within society. From birth, she faces stigmatization and rejection, as she is labeled a "cursed" child and shunned by her community. This label follows her throughout her life, leading to emotional isolation and repeated abandonment by the men she bears children for, who believe she brings them misfortune. The internalization of this societal judgment becomes part of Maa Tsuru's subconscious memory, which influences her self-perception when she laments, "No man wants me. I was a cursed woman. But cursed or not, I was still a woman. I felt like a woman." (Adichie 157) this ideology shapes the terrible decisions she made over the years and her memories of

rejection and shame echo through her children's lives, shaping their experiences of abandonment, displacement and social exclusion, ultimately being a leading cause to Baby T's tragic death.

The fragmented recollections surrounding Baby T's death gradually reveal the harsh realities of street life, child exploitation and gender-based violence. Through these narrative memories, Darko exposes how systemic neglect and cultural stigma destroy vulnerable lives and how it influences mental change in an individual. It makes Fofu grow mentally beyond her age of fourteen years into an adult that she isn't. Fofu's confrontation with her mother "You offered us generously to the streets, mother. You made the street claim and own us" (Darko 159) captures the pain of intergenerational trauma, where the past continues to shape the present. Darko's use of memory here connects personal suffering to collective social conditions, demonstrating how individual pain mirrors broader societal failure. This intergenerational memory highlights the inseparability of the personal and the political, revealing how the cycles of neglect and injustice are reproduced within marginalized families across generations.

Also, memory functions as a form of resistance against social erasure and moral indifference. In a society where the poor and dispossessed are rendered invisible, the act of recalling and retelling their stories challenges dominant narratives of responsibility and progress. The reconstruction of Baby T's memory by social workers, journalists and family members becomes an act of reclaiming dignity and asserting visibility. Through this process, Darko presents memory as an instrument of social resistance. Also memory serves as a voice for the voiceless in a socially unjust society. The memories of Baby T and Maa Tsuru, filtered through the consciousness of Fofu and the narrative interventions of Kabria, MUTE, GMG and some other NGO's, become channels through which silenced women and street children speak. Memory thus grants posthumous voice to Baby T and symbolic agency to the numerous faceless

victims she represents. This act of remembering transforms the private suffering of the marginalized into public view, affirming Darko's commitment to representing the subaltern. Through the shared recollections and investigations led by Kabria and MUTE, Darko exposes the moral decay of urban life in Accra such as the indifference of institutions, the corruption of leadership and the involvement of society in sustaining inequality.

In essence, the remembrance of Baby T's life and death compels society to acknowledge the humanity of the faceless poor. Through the act of remembering, Darko not only memorializes the dead but also indicts the living for their silence. This deepens the novel's social critique and advances its postcolonial project of restoring visibility to the forgotten. By piecing together multiple memories, Darko constructs a collective voice that resists suppression.

Therefore, in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Faceless*, memory reveals the deep social injustices that shape individual and collective experiences. Showing how both authors use memory to expose suffering, silence and inequality within postcolonial African societies. Through remembering, Adichie and Darko call for empathy, transformation and the restoration of human dignity.

3.2. Political and emotional consequences:

Both *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Faceless* reveal that memory and voice are not only tools of remembrance but also catalysts for confronting the political and emotional consequences of oppression. Memory exacts emotional consequences such as trauma, grief and guilt but it also enables identity formation and in some cases, healing. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, characters are haunted by what they have witnessed or lost and the political aftermath of the Biafran War exposes corruption, ethnic conflict and the disillusionment of a nation struggling with failed leadership. These political realities leave deep emotional scars on individuals like Ugwu and

Olanna, whose experiences of loss and guilt mirror the collective trauma of a broken nation. For example, Olanna contends with the trauma of loss when she loses her family Uncle Mbaezi, Auntie Ifeka, Arinze, Mama and most especially her twin sister Kainene. She loses friends, her home, her sense of self and belonging. Likewise characters like Odenigbo, Kainene and Alice also suffer, Odenigbo loses his mother to the war which destabilizes him emotionally, Kainene goes missing and can't be found even after the war, Alice can be said to have suffered the most as she loses her whole family and kindred to the war leaving her alone and in emotional and physical turmoil. While Characters like Professor Ezeka and Chief Ogburn enjoy the privileges they get as the elite government officials. They are both able to elope to foreign countries during the war showing the strong contrast between the rich and the poor.

Similarly in *Faceless*, Darko portrays the emotional devastation of street life and social neglect as reflections of Ghana's political decay. Through characters like Fofo and Maa Tsuru, the narrative uncovers how political indifference perpetuates emotional suffering. Fofo's memories of her life before the street are emotionally burdensome. Fofo lives with shame, fear, longing but also with the need for justice. The emotional weight of memory is a catalyst for her action for demanding recognition, for speaking out, for refusing to be defined as "faceless." The anguish of Baby T's death is not simply a plot, but a force that shapes Fofo's identity, her sense of moral judgment and her reason for seeking justice.

Thus, both authors intertwine the personal and the political, showing that emotional healing cannot occur without confronting the political structures that cause pain.

3.3. Memory and healing

Healing is the process of restoring wholeness, emotionally, psychologically or socially through the acknowledgment, expression and transformation of pain or trauma into

understanding, acceptance and growth. Memory and healing are deeply and complexly intertwined and in literature, healing is subjective and is often explored through characters narratives, suffering and transformation.

Half of a Yellow Sun and *Faceless* utilize memory not merely as a recollection of pain but as a transformative force that bridges the gap between individual recovery and collective redemption and how individual recollections of trauma and suffering contribute to broader communal healing. Emphasizing that personal memory, when shared, becomes a means of reclaiming dignity, rebuilding identity, and fostering social renewal within postcolonial African societies.

It is clearly observed that memory occupies a central position in both novels, serving as a bridge between the personal and the collective, the past and the present and ultimately, between trauma and healing. In both texts, the act of remembering transforms individual pain into collective consciousness, suggesting that healing cannot occur in isolation but through shared remembrance. According to Maurice Halbwachs, memory is not an isolated mental act but a social process, one sustained by the frameworks of family, community and nation (Halbwachs). Both Adichie and Darko dramatize this interplay, revealing how personal recollection feeds into collective history.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie presents personal memory as both a burden and a means of redemption. For characters such as Ugwu, Olanna and Richard, remembering becomes a moral necessity after the devastation of the Nigerian Civil war/Biafran War. Ugwu's journey from a naive houseboy to a soldier whose involvement in the violence of war shows the struggle between guilt and recovery. His personal memories of the war, especially his sexual assault of the bar girl haunts him, yet they also compel him to bear witness through writing *The World Was*

Silent When We Died. By transforming his guilt into narrative, Ugwu achieves a measure of healing and his personal memory becomes part of the collective memory of a silenced people (The Biafrans). Similarly, Olanna's recollection of the Kano massacre, the sight of a baby's severed head in a calabash on the train becomes a traumatic imprint that links her individual pain to the collective suffering of Biafrans. Through storytelling and shared recollection, Adichie constructs a communal space where the wounded can heal through acknowledgment rather than suppression. Instances of this where individual suffering leads to a shared communal pain which leads to healing, are seen firstly, when Olanna goes to narrate and confirm to her extended family about the deaths of Uncle Mbaezi, Auntie Ifeka, Arinze and her husband in Kano, Adichie narrates Olanna's experience as "She had given those left behind a right to mourn and wear black and receive visitors who would come in, saying "Ndo nu." She had given them a right to move on after the mourning and count Arize and her husband and parents as gone forever"(Adichie 206). This excerpt gives a fine detail of what sharing a painful memory can bring, a sense of deeper connection, empathy and solidarity especially among affected members. Another instance in *Half of a Yellow sun* is when Olanna experiences the relief and understanding that comes with remembrance, not out of trauma but out of a form of healing

"Olanna was surprised, at first, by the question and then she realized that she clearly remembered how it was plaited and she began to describe the hairstyle, how some of the braids fell across the forehead. Then she described the head itself, the open eyes, the graying skin. Ugwu was writing as she spoke, and 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 about the train full of people who had cried and shouted and urinated on themselves”(Adichie 421),

This excerpt also shows that healing through talking, especially about the trauma or painful experiences one witnesses, gives voice or agency allowing individuals to confront, process and reframe painful memories instead of repressing them. This process can be referred to as ‘narrative healing’, it transforms private pain into a shared, meaningful story, enabling emotional release and reconstruction of identity. According to Dori Laub, a Holocaust survivor and psychoanalyst, Laub argues that “there is, in each survivor, an imperative need to tell and thus to come to know one’s story” because “the absence of an empathic listener leads to the collapse of witnessing” .In other words, speaking the trauma aloud transforms silence into agency, helping the survivor reclaim authorship over their experience such as in the case of Olanna, as sharing her story with Ugwu gives her story a sense of higher purpose and importance, while processing her pain and struggle of the horrific experience, her testimony serving as a call for historical justice.

For Richard Churchill, healing comes through memory, empathy, connection with others and love particularly through his relationship with Kainene. As a British man who witnesses the brutality of the Nigerian Civil War, Richard is burdened with guilt both as a foreigner whose country once colonized Nigeria and as someone who feels powerless amid the suffering around him. He constantly struggles with questions of identity and belonging, feeling like an outsider in both Britain and Nigeria. Healing begins for Richard when he shifts from being a passive observer to an active participant in telling the Biafran story. His decision to document the war, not as a foreigner but as someone emotionally involved and empathetic, allows him to process

the trauma he witnesses. Through writing, he begins to transform his guilt into a form of moral responsibility using his voice to preserve memory and bear witness to the suffering of others.

Similarly in *Faceless*, Amma Darko also foregrounds the role of memory as a tool for reclaiming lost humanity. Personal memory, especially as embodied in Fofu's search for her sister Baby T's story, becomes a form of moral restoration. Fofu's determination to uncover the truth about her sister's death reflects the desire to give voice to the voiceless and to bring justice to those society has forgotten. Through the efforts of Kabria, Sylv Po, and the MUTE organization, the stories of street children are recorded and circulated, turning individual memory into a collective act of witnessing. Memory thus becomes an ethical responsibility, a means by which the community restores dignity to its neglected members. In both novels, therefore, the personal is inseparable from the collective: the healing of individuals contributes to the moral awakening of society, while the acknowledgment of collective wounds enables personal reconciliation.

Also Amma Darko's *Faceless*, both personal and collective memory operate as powerful instruments for reclaiming lost identity, confronting social injustice and initiating healing in a society marked by silence and neglect. Through the experiences of individual characters and the broader community, Darko shows how memory serves not only as a record of trauma but also as a force for transformation and resistance. Personal memory in *Faceless* centers on the individual experiences of trauma, pain and survival, especially through characters like Fofu, Maa Tsuru, Baby T and Kabria. Fofu's fragmented memories of her mother, Maa Tsuru, and her sister, Baby T, represent a deeply personal struggle with loss and abandonment. Her recollections of her life when she says "When I float out of myself, I watch this poor girl who is I, and I feel great pity for both mother and me" clearly shows that she is haunted by violence, exploitation and societal

neglect, yet this also represents her search for truth and justice. Through remembering, Fofu confronts her pain and begins to piece together her identity, a process that shows how personal remembrance becomes an act of healing. As she retraces the past, her memory becomes a bridge between the silenced and the living, transforming trauma into awareness and purpose.

On the other hand, collective memory in *Faceless* emerges through the communal acknowledgment of the street children's suffering and the shared efforts of organizations like MUTE to give voice to the voiceless. The society's gradual recognition of the plight of girls like Baby T signifies the awakening of moral consciousness, a movement from indifference to empathy. Through figures such as Kabria, Dina and Aggie's collective memory takes shape as they document and retell the stories of marginalized girls, ensuring that these tragedies are neither forgotten nor repeated. This act of collective remembering confronts the social amnesia that allows injustice to persist.

Darko thus uses memory as both a personal and communal archive as a means of reclaiming silenced histories and demanding accountability. The recovery of memory becomes a political and moral act, linking individual trauma to the larger social fabric of Ghanaian urban life. As Fofu's personal story intertwines with the collective memory of her community, *Faceless* underscores the idea that healing and justice require not just individual remembrance but also collective acknowledgment of shared wounds.

In conclusion, this chapter highlights how memory functions as a vital force in confronting injustice, shaping emotions and identity and also fostering healing. It demonstrates that remembering the past is not merely an act of recollection but a path toward understanding, justice and restoration. Ultimately, memory bridges pain and hope, helping individuals and societies rebuild from the wounds of history.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This research establishes that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Amma Darko's *Faceless* employ themes of voice and memory to critique social injustice, interrogate politics of memory in individual and collective healing and give agency to the oppressed in postcolonial Africa. Grounded in Postcolonial theory particularly the strand of the Subaltern concept, this study has shown that both writers utilize voice and memory to recover suppressed experiences, challenge hegemonic structures and restore visibility to the marginalized and dispossessed within their societies.

This research was guided by several key research questions aimed at examining the thematic and structural depth of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Amma Darko's *Faceless*. It sought to determine how the themes of voice and memory function in both novels as a means of expressing postcolonial realities. The research also questioned how both writers critique social injustices and give expression to the silenced and marginalized in their societies and in addition, it explored how the politics of memory operates within the narratives to influence both individual and collective healing, as well as how memory functions as a tool for recovering suppressed histories and restoring agency to the oppressed. Finally, the study examined the relationship between memory and healing.

Through comparative analysis, this research confirms that both Adichie and Darko employ voice as a vehicle of agency and resistance. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, characters such as Ugwu and Olanna reclaim self-definition by narrating their lived experiences of the Biafran War,

their voices serving as moral counterpoints to political silence and historical distortion of the Nigerian Civil War. Similarly, in *Faceless*, the retrieval of Baby T's memory by Fofa, Kabria and members of MUTE and GMG constitutes an act of speaking for and with the marginalized. In doing so, Darko restores humanity and dignity to the "faceless" poor, exposing the structural failures of postcolonial Ghanaian society.

In addition, the study establishes that memory functions as a political and emotional force in both novels, showing that the interconnectedness of memory and voice creates agency, forms communal consciousness and fosters healing. Adichie employs the politics of memory to re-inscribe the suppressed history of the Nigerian Civil War, illustrating that remembrance is a necessary condition for justice and reconciliation. In Darko's narrative, memory assumes a social and moral dimension, acting as a collective sense of right and wrong that confronts issues of neglect, poverty and exploitation. Through the recovery of painful memories, Darko underscores the need for societal accountability and moral awakening. This research also reveals that memory and healing are intricately connected in both novels. In Adichie's work, remembrance facilitates the reconstruction of personal and national identity, offering a pathway toward emotional and collective healing. Similarly, Darko presents memory as a redemptive process that restores connection, belonging and dignity to those broken by social injustice. In both narratives, remembering becomes an act of survival and a precondition for transformation, suggesting that no genuine progress can be achieved without confronting the past.

Overall, this research finds that voice and memory intersect as essential mechanisms for reclaiming agency and rewriting history. Both Adichie and Darko transform the novel into a space of moral and historical re-evaluation, where marginalized experiences are recovered and

reinterpreted. Their works demonstrate that literature serves as a dynamic archive through which forgotten lives, silenced traumas and denied truths are preserved and rearticulated.

This research enriches the field of African postcolonial studies by affirming the significance of memory and voice as creative strategies of resistance and historical reclamation. It extends the discourse on Subalternity by revealing how individuals at the margins especially women, the poor and in the case of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, war victims assert visibility and self-representation through acts of remembrance and self-expression. Moreover, it underscores the continuing relevance of African fiction as a vehicle for social commentary, moral interrogation and cultural remembrance.

In essence, this study affirms that both *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Faceless* use voice and memory not just as artistic and thematic features but as vital means of expressing moral responsibility and reflecting postcolonial realities. Also, through the power of remembrance and the recovery of silenced voices, their novels resist erasure, challenge oppression and affirm resilience.

Works Cited

- Adebayo, Sakiru. "Writing about the Dead in the Present Tense: Half of a Yellow Sun as a Work of Postmemory." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 52, no. 1, 2021, pp. 84–103.
- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Knopf, 2006.
- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "The Danger of a Single Story." TED, July 2009, www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.
- Akinrinlola, Temidayo, et al. "MUTE's Responses to Facelessness: A Postcolonial Critical Discourse Reading of Amma Darko's Faceless." *African Identities*, vol. ahead-of-print, no. ahead-of-print, July 2025, pp. 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2025.2538651>.
- Akpome, Aghogho "Focalisation and Polyvocality in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun." *English Studies in Africa*, Vol.56, no. 2, 2013, Pp. 25–35. Taylor & Francis Online, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00138398.2013.856556>.
- Alfarhan, Ins. Eqbal A. "The Influence of Literature on the Society." *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, vol. 12, no. 1, Jan.–Mar. 2024, pp. 263–270. Research Publish Journals, doi:10.5281/zenodo.10886693.
- Awitor, Francis Etsè. "Social Tragedy in Amma Darko's Faceless: The Plight of Street Children." *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 4, no. 27, 2014, pp. 126–32.
- Bernard, Dickson C, and Kinggeorge Okoro Preye "History, Memory and the Politics of National Unity in Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun." *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature*, vol. 2, no. 5, 2014, pp. 121–126.
- Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1996.
- Capo-Chichi, Laure Clémence, and Koumagnon A. Djossou Agboadannon. "The Phenomenon of Street Children in Amma Darko's Faceless*." *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 18, 2015, pp. 175–180. IISTE, www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/RHSS/article/view/25748

Dadja-Tiou, Panaewazibiou, and Monfaye Koffi. "Aesthetics of Realism in Amma Darko's Faceless." 2021.

Darko, Amma. Faceless. Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2003.

Dickson, Bernard C., and Kinggeorge Okoro Preye. "History, Memory and the Politics of National Unity in Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun and Achebe's There Was a Country." *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, vol. 2, no. 5, May 2014, pp. 81–89. ARC Journals, www.arcjournals.org

Duce, violeta. "Questioning Standard Definitions of Trauma: Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun as Transmodern Narrative." *English Studies*, 2025.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, International Publishers, 1971.

Laub, Dori. "Bearing witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening". *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, edited by Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, Routledge, 1982, Pp. 57-74.

Iortyer, Manasseh Terwase. "Parental Negligence, Street Children and Rehabilitation in Amma Darko's Faceless." 2021.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, 1979.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, Columbia UP, 1994, pp. 66–111.

Suryanarayana, G. Ranga. "Memory, Trauma, and Healing in Chimamanda Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun." *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education (INT-JECSE)*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2022, pp. 4434.

Ogbeide, Victor O. "Streetism as a Social Tragedy in Amma Darko's Faceless." *Humanities and Social Sciences Letters*, 2015. vol. 3, no. 4, Pp145-156.

Okolo, Luke Nduki, and Nnenna Cecilia Ogebele. "The Girl-Child as a Victim: A Critical Reading of Amma Darko's Faceless." *Journal of Innovative Research in Management and Humanities*, vol. 5, no. 1, June 2024, pp. 162–172.

- Ouma, Christopher E. W. "Composite Consciousness and Memories of War in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*." *English Academy Review*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2011, pp. 15–30.
- Ouarodima, Maina. "Violence Against Women: A Reading of Amma Darko's *Faceless*." *International Journal of English, Literature and Social Sciences (IJELS)*, vol. 4, no. 6, Nov.–Dec. 2019, pp. 1699–1703.
- Ofosu, J. D. "The Feminist Voice in Contemporary Ghanaian Female Fiction: A Textual Analysis of Amma Darko's *Faceless* and *Not Without Flowers*." *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2013, pp. 178–188.
- Raimi, Akambi Fatiou. "Aesthetic Treatment and Symbolism of the Street in Amma Darko's *Faceless*." *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 8, 2017, pp. 35–43.
- Tchibozo-Laine, Ida. "Feminism Limitations through Mood and Modality Analysis in Amma Darko's *Faceless* (2003)." *Revue Internationale de Langue et Littérature*, 2020, pp. 199–214.
- Wosu, Ola. "Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* as a Civil War Fiction." *Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2018, pp. 158–172.
- Uzomah, Jacob S. C. "The Folly and Scourge of War in Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*." *Albertine Journal of Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2022.
- Young, Robert J. C. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Blackwell, 2001.
- Nwahunanya, Chinyere. "Literature, Memory, and the Challenges of Post-War Trauma in Adichie's Fiction." *African Literature Today*, vol. 29, 2011, pp. 53–70.
- Ouma, Christopher E. W. "Composite Consciousness and Memories of War in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*." *English Academy Review*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2011, pp. 15–30.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, U of Illinois P, 1988, pp. 271–313.

Stratton, Florence. *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*. Routledge, 1994.

Felman, Shoshana, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. Routledge, 1992.

Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Translated and edited by Lewis A. Coser, University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Ogbeide, O. Victor. "Streetism as a Social Tragedy in Amma Darko's *Faceless*." *Humanities and Social Sciences Letters*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2015, pp. 145–156. Conscientia Beam.

Cambridge Dictionary. University Press & Assessment 2025. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org>.