



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***WAR AND TRAUMA IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S HALF OF A  
YELLOW SUN AND CHRIS ABANI'S SONG FOR NIGHT***

**INNA MALISSA BTE CHE JAMAL**

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**By**

**INNA MALISSA BTE CHE JAMAL**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in  
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts**

**September 2015**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the Requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

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**Chair: Hardev Kaur Jujar Singh, PhD**

**Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication**

*Half of a Yellow Sun* written by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and *Song for Night* by Chris Abani are two Nigerian civil war novels filled with tragedy, human disputes and survival. From the horrors of war and to the violence inflicted by a member of the family, trauma affects a person not only physically but also psychologically. This study attempts to elucidate the trauma concept of 'acting-out' and 'working-through' by Dominick LaCapra of the main characters of the selected Nigerian texts. Recounting the horrors of the civil war between two regions of Africa, the chosen literary texts portray the sufferings and changes that the characters undergo through pre, during and post war. the war had brought suffering and had disturbed them terribly which caused recurring psychological distress. This research explores the extent of trauma that the characters of both novels go through in a war torn country. It is also to see whether they were able to heal from their pain or delve deeper into their trauma and have no sense in coming back to face the real world. People are ignorant to the horrors that a distressing event may come to affect a person unless they are experiencing it. The concepts of 'acting-out' and 'working-through' by the theorist Dominick LaCapra with the support of works on trauma by Cathy Caruth were utilized in order to understand the characters' trauma. The findings from the research show that the selected characters studied went through various ways of 'acting-out' and 'working-through' their trauma. Therefore, trauma affects people differently and the way that they cope with it also differs. It can be concluded that, this study enlightens readers on how both Adichie and Abani depict trauma as a force that affects the human lives based on their characters.

Abstrak thesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia  
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sastera

**PERANG DAN TRAUMA DI DALAM *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN* OLEH  
CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE DAN *SONG FOR NIGHT* OLEH CHRIS  
ABANI**

Oleh

**INNA MALISSA BTE CHE JAMAL**

**September 2015**

**Pengerusi: Hardev Kaur Jujar Singh, PhD**  
**Fakulti: Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi**

*Half of a Yellow Sun* yang ditulis oleh Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie dan *Song for Night* hasil tulisan Chris Abani merupakan dua buah karya sastera dari Perang Saudara Nigeria yang sarat dengan tragedy, pertikaian sesama manusia dan kesanggupan dalam meneruskan kehidupan menghadapi konflik peperangan tersebut. Dari keperitan yang terpaksa dihadapi akibat peperangan sehingga keganasan yang berlaku dikalangan ahli keluarga, trauma bukan sahaja mendatangkan kesan yang mendalam terhadap fizikal malahan psikologi seseorang individu itu. Kajian ini bertujuan menghuraikan serta menjelaskan secara terperinci trauma yang dihadapi oleh watak yang dipilih dalam mendefinisikan konsep 'acting-out' dan 'working-through' yang diperkenalkan oleh Dominick LaCapra. Mengimbas kembali akan keperitan serta kesengsaraan yang dihadapi akibat Perang Saudara yang berlaku diantara dua rantau Afrika ini, kedua-dua buah novel ini menghuraikan dan menggambarkan perubahan yang terpaksa dihadapi oleh watak dalam fasa sebelum, semasa, dan selepas peperangan. Peperangan yang meletus telah membawa kesengsaraan dan mengakibatkan watak menghadapi tekanan serta gangguan psikologi yang melampau. Kajian ini akan menghuraikan dengan lebih mendalam dimanakah tahap trauma yang dihadapi oleh watak didalam kedua-dua novel ini terhadap Negara yang berperang. Ia juga adalah untuk melihat samada mereka berupaya untuk membiasakan diri dan keluar dari kesengsaraan atau lebih terjerumus ke dalam trauma dan tidak berupaya untuk kembali menjalani kehidupan seperti biasa. Seseorang individu itu tidak akan benar-benar memahami akan keadaan serta tekanan yang boleh mempengaruhi mereka, sehinggalah mereka sendiri menghadapi situasi tersebut. Konsep 'acting-out' dan 'working-through' oleh Dominick LaCapra selain teori yang berkaitan trauma oleh Cathy Caruth telah digunakan. Focus terhadap novel menggunakan teori trauma akan lebih memudahkan dalam memahami kesengsaraan akibat trauma. Hasil penemuan daripada kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa watak-watak yang dipilih telah melalui beberapa cara 'acting-out' dan 'working-through' trauma yang telah mereka hadapi. Trauma member kesan yang berbeza kepada seseorang dan cara menghadapinya turut berbeza. Oleh itu, kajian ini akan menghuraikan kedua-dua

penulis Adichie dan Abani menjadikan trauma sebagai suatu medium yang memberi kesan terhadap kehidupan watak.



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Last but not least, I would like to thank all my thesis examination committee for their time, their careful reading of this thesis and sound judgment.

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 8 September 2015 to conduct the final examination of Inna Malissa bte Che Jamal on her thesis entitled War and Trauma in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Chris Abani's *Song for Night* in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Arts.

Members of the Thesis Examination Committee were as follows:

**Rosli Talif, PhD**

Associate Professor  
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Chairman)

**Arbaayah Ali Termizi, PhD**

Senior Lecturer  
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Internal Examiner)

**Umar Abdurrahman, PhD**

Associate Professor  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(External Examiner)

---

(ZULKARNAIN ZAINAL, PHD)  
Professor and Deputy Dean  
School of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:



This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

**Hardev Kaur Jujar Singh, PhD**

Senior Lecturer  
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Chairperson)

**Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya, PhD**

Associate Professor  
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Member)

---

**BUJANG KIM HUAT, PhD**

Professor and Dean  
School of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

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Name of Chairman of Supervisory Committee:  
Dr. Hardev Kaur Jujar Singh

Signature: .....

Name of Member of Supervisory Committee:  
Associate Professor Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the historical background of the study. The researcher has stated the problem of the study as well as the objectives that has been set forth. This chapter will also include the brief description of the conceptual framework used as well as the explanation on the significance of the study. The scope and limitation of the study has been stated briefly which is then followed by a discussion of the research methodology. This chapter ends with the description of the thesis organization.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Trauma can be defined generally as severe emotional anxiety or mental distress caused by an experience such as accident, war, strife, violence or natural calamities. The recurring nightmares that haunt an individual are a manifestation of trauma which can disable one from moving forward in his or her normal daily lives. Trauma inevitably alters lives and livelihood of people.

Caruth defines trauma “as a reaction to an overpowering event resulting in psychological damage” (1). Additionally, in studies relating to trauma, the psychological injuries are characterized as “unrepresentability, inexpressibility, and its inability to be assimilated into narrative” (Rye 1). Rye’s claim means that one who is traumatized is incapable of expressing one’s fears to another; however, Whitehead counters Rhye’s claim by stating that narrative fiction is a medium where people can express what “cannot be presented by conventional historical, cultural and autobiographical narratives” (83).

An individual can experience different types of trauma, but no two individuals have the same coping mechanism or healing time. Trauma is experienced en-masse by people from war torn countries like Iraq, Germany, and Nigeria. For Nigeria, the Biafran War had etched deep scars within every Nigerian which left them severely traumatized.

Nigeria has gone through many adverse situations; her people enslaved by the Europeans pre 1960s, their lives taken over by foreign powers that imposed their ideologies and religion upon them. Soon after gaining independence, Nigeria underwent another devastating blow which killed a majority of her people. This was the civil war between Nigeria and the self-established state of Biafra, which raged for three years. Its long history of violence left a deep impact on the country’s economy and the citizens. The African society has always piqued the interest of researchers to study the mistreatment of its people and the gripping terror of violence that swept the nation. Issues regarding black slavery, colonisation and civil war were some of the main issues that captured many researchers’ interests. For this particular research, a study of the novels revolving around the era of the civil war was undertaken in order to observe the presence of trauma and how the characters were traumatized in each respective novel.

Nigeria gained independence from the British colonists in 1960. However, it was far from being a free country, due to on-going conflicts within. This was evidenced by the

eruption of civil war seven years after independence. The war erupted on the historical date of 6<sup>th</sup> July 1967, after a series of attacks by rebel forces intent on overthrowing the government. Nigeria was essentially a nation comprising various ethnicities, divided in their loyalty to the governing powers. This had caused a wide rift between the regions, with the Eastern region waging war against the other regions that were pro-government.

The self-appointed leader of the Eastern region of Nigeria, Col. Ojukwu felt indignant when the government divided the four original regions of Nigeria into twelve states. This leader felt that the government had acted unjustly and without consensus. He then announced that the Eastern region of Nigeria would be re-established as the Republic of Biafra, which then was based in Lagos. The federal government declared that this was illegal and caused an uproar.

After several failed attempts at trying to unite with Biafra by holding meetings and conferences, a strategic change resulted in the forceful takeover of Biafra which led to the Nigeria-Biafra War. The civil war ended when Biafra surrendered and was taken over by the military; Col. Ojukwu was ousted and one million civilian lives were lost in this carnage and its aftermath in which severe malnutrition led to death of its people.

The civil war between Nigeria and the Biafra was not only triggered by political upheaval but also from religious turmoil between two main religions in Nigeria. This nation enjoyed a diversity of traditions, ethnicity and religious beliefs. The fight between the two main religious groups contributed to the Biafran War. This was caused by the fact that there were claims of fraud during the elections of 1965 where the 'Nigerian National Alliance of the Muslim North faced the 'United Progressive Grand Alliance of the Christian east which resulted in the latter as the winner (Brunberg, 2015). A military coup was created by the Christians which was then countered by the Muslims with General Yakubu Gowon as the leader. This led to the increase of ethnic strain and evolved as Muslim Hausas from the Northern region launched an attack on the Christian Igbos, leading the latter to flee for their lives to the Eastern region where their ethnic group was more dominant (Brunberg, 2015). These growing tensions between the ethnic groups had influenced the East's decision for secession and become the Republic of Biafra as mentioned in the previous paragraphs, which then led to the eruption of the Nigerian-Biafran civil war.

After three and a half long years of civil war, the war torn Nigeria had yet to taste the true meaning of peace and unification as till this very day, there remains fighting and violence. There has been a continuous uprising by the Islamic militant group called Boko Haram which started in mid 2009 and still continues until today. The latest documented attack on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 2015 (BBC news online) reported that young girls were used as suicide bombers and were detonated in a village and also a market, killing 4 people and injuring many, adding to the previous death toll of 19 in Borno and Yobe states.

The Boko Haram group are perpetrators of much violence that had happened in Nigeria. They are hell-bent on reconstructing an Islamic empire in Northern Nigeria. Southern Nigeria is predominantly Christian territory so the Boko Haram is surely encroaching into this area to 'cleanse' it of Christians. It can be concluded that since gaining independence from the British fifty three years ago, Nigeria has not experienced true freedom. It is a country mired in chaos, strife and violence till today.



Nigeria's long history of violence and bloodshed has fostered much trauma, with women and children suffering the most. From colonisation to slavery to civil war, each phase bringing along with it untold hardship, violence and carnage, the citizens of Nigeria needed to come to grips with their trauma and bury the ghosts of their past. They needed to move on with their lives and tell their story. Thus, novels and texts pertaining to these tragedies were borne out of the ink of prominent African writers such as Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Sefi Atta, Chris Abani to name a few. Their literary works portray the lives of the African society, the devastating tragedies of colonisation and also civil war. For Hardev Kaur, "[h]istory should be studied to learn from the injustices of the past and the past should be removed from the present" so that the process of identifying and healing the trauma can take place. It was to be a reminder to the citizens regarding the tragedy and also to learn from the past especially for the younger generation. Additionally, these literary texts are a way of exposing to the world the hardships that victims of war had to endure through the years. This is similar to what has been said by Kaur:

It is through literature that these voices can be heard as literature can be considered a medium in which a society with all its good and evil can be assessed, and in which the marginalized are given a voice to speak about their anguish and ill treatment. (156)

Acclaimed authors have inserted their experience, knowledge and creativity into their writings, to make history real for the readers to feel the pain that the civil war has brought. *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Song for Night* are two works that have been selected as the subject of study for this particular research. These are novels written by two prominent Nigerian born writers namely Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Chris Abani. Both novels are set in Nigeria and revolve around the political instability that the country was then going through. This political turmoil then led to the eruption of the Biafra-Nigeria civil war that brought mayhem into the lives of the citizens. This tragedy plagued them until the end of their lives. The horrors portrayed in the novels are so vivid that readers are left enthralled. These novels were written based on the writers' outlook on the tragedies of Nigeria-Biafra civil war.

For this particular research, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Chris Abani's *Song for Night* have been selected to examine the presence of trauma. Abani's *Song for Night* and Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* have had their fair share of acknowledgements and awards respectively. For both these novels, Adichie was awarded the Orange Broadband Prize for fiction in the year of 2007 while Abani's work was awarded the PEN Beyond the Margins Award in 2008.

The novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* focuses on the atrocities and aftermath of civil war between Nigeria and Biafra. It is a chilling portrayal of how carnage destroys the very fabric of life and the horrors and trauma that would forever haunt a nation. It depicts the lives of the main characters for a period that spans pre-war, war and post-war. Within this time frame, we are able to glimpse how their lives went from comfort to chaos, from peace to peril and from abundance to ashes. Their lives cross paths under dire circumstances and force them to survive amid squalor and abject poverty.

Chris Abani's *Song for Night* is set in post-colonial Nigeria against a backdrop of political turmoil and economic difficulties. This story is told from the point of view of



the main character, a teenager named My Luck, and his struggles, along with others like him. He has only ever known a life of violence and hate for having been brought up in a society divided by ethnicity and religion.

It was dangerous to be living in that period as tensions between Christians and Muslims were high, punctuated by violence, brutality and death. Throughout the novel, My Luck experiences circumstances that profoundly affect him: from being a child soldier to a landmine diffuser. His is a life of violence and trauma where he is forced to kill or be killed. He experiences a horrifying incident which took the lives of his parents.

For this study, the theory of trauma has been chosen to explicate the two novels written by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Chris Abani. The researcher will look into Cathy Caruth's definition and elements of trauma to form the framework of this study. Subsequently, Dominick LaCapra's concepts of trauma theory which are acting out and working through will also be utilised in order to analyse the two literary works. Additionally, the works of Cathy Caruth on trauma will be incorporated when exploring the trauma theory experienced by the characters in the two chosen novels.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

People are known to take things in life for granted and are sometimes oblivious to the horrors that can befall them, such as natural or man-made disasters. Those who have never experienced a traumatic event in their life will not be able to empathize with the victims unless they undergo the experience themselves. There are two types of reaction to trauma, the first, refers to a person's first-hand experience of an actual event and the second, is a person's reaction to the story of traumatic event.

Considerably, the focus of past studies on trauma had been on the Western world, wherein these horrific experiences had been documented into texts, novels and memoirs. The events of the 9/11 tragedy, the Cold War, Holocaust, World Wars and other Western tragedies had been given more focus in the field of research. However, literary texts of African and Nigerian origin did not merit the same attention and focus in studies for they are regarded with lesser importance to that of other countries.

Past studies on these two texts employed the postcolonial, historical and feminist theories, as the stories were mostly set in that period. For instance, a thesis looking at the text from the lens of a feminist is written by Ehijele Femi Eromosele in which the author looked at how Adichie had used sexuality as a factor that strengthens a relationship especially in times of need and traumatizing experiences. In another study, J.A. Kearney had focused on how child soldiers had been represented in several African fictions, including Abani's text. However, the studies on trauma faced by the characters merely showed the cause of trauma. These studies lacked the in-depth research into the actual trauma, which is the process of reliving it and eventually healing from it. These very crucial elements of trauma were neglected, thereby depriving readers from empathizing with the suffering characters.

Trauma can hold people in its vicious grip, disallowing them from moving forward in their daily lives. Their troubled past keeps recurring in their minds and renders them incapable of functioning as normal. To this day, there is hardly any evidence, so far, to suggest that research has been undertaken to analyse these two texts together using trauma theory by Dominick LaCapra and Cathy Caruth. Past research merely illustrates

Nigeria's post-colonial history of political upheaval, unrest and violence. The people of Nigeria were not able to escape their violent past, but actually sunk deeper into it, as they were inexperienced in governing a country.

The exploration of these two novels chosen for this study will enlighten readers on how trauma inflicts pain and changes the lives of the characters. This study wishes to investigate whether the trauma, however deeply embedded, can be reduced or ultimately healed. Therefore, this paper will focus on the traumas experienced by the chosen characters in the two novels, itemize each type of trauma and find out if the characters were healed from their trauma.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

Three objectives have been listed by the researcher of the current study. One of the objectives of the study would be to identify the author's representation of characters who are traumatized in both *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Song for Night*. After experiencing a horrific event, a person is known to face some form of trauma. Trauma affects people differently, hence the objective of this paper is to study and categorise the traumatic events and the characters' coping mechanism.

The next objective is aimed to elucidate the effects of trauma in the characters' daily lives and the changes in their personality and ideology, by using the trauma concept of acting-out. A traumatic incident will change a person's life and the normal life that they were once familiar with becomes a distant memory. Change often occurs not only in their daily routine but also in their personality. Therefore, examining the chosen characters' lives after the traumatic events are significant to the research.

This will lead to the final objective of this research, which is to study whether the characters manage to overcome their trauma by using the concept of working-through. It is known that traumatized victims experience the process of acting-out but may or may not subject themselves to the process of working-through. The researcher will study the personalities of the characters from each respective novel from the beginning till the end to achieve all the outlined objectives.

### **1.4 Conceptual Framework**

The main focus of this research is to explore the trauma concept of acting-out and working-through by the selected characters of the novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Song for Night*. This will be further enforced by the aforementioned research objectives to give a better understanding to this research as well as provide further insight into the use of trauma theory.

Trauma theory is a theory that is relatively contemporary, which has not been used as extensively as other known theories such as post colonialism, psychoanalysis or feminism in literary researches. This theory can be applied to the two chosen novels, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Song for Night* as both deal with the horrors of war, conflict and carnage. According to Cathy Caruth, trauma can be defined as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (Caruth, 11).

Two concepts from trauma theory have been chosen to be used in the textual analysis. These concepts are acting-out and working through, chosen to explicate the two literary works by Nigerian authors. Both concepts are interrelated and required in order to overcome trauma. Acting-out, as defined by Kate Schick is a “compulsive and repetitive re-living of the trauma” (2011), while working through is an “articulatory practice that gradually enables one to make distinctions between past, present, and future” as defined by Dominick LaCapra (qtd. in Vashem 2). This research will refer to the studies done by Dominick LaCapra and Cathy Caruth in applying the concepts of acting-out and working-through.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study attempts to discover how trauma affected the selected characters and focuses on identifying the concept of acting out displayed by the characters in these novels and whether they managed to work-through their trauma. It is hoped that the use of the trauma theory will expound trauma studies in Nigerian war literature. Trauma theory, as opposed to postcolonial theory, has hardly been researched to this effect, unlike the latter which has been extensively and exhaustively studied.

It must be reiterated that the tragedies of the Western world such as the Holocaust, Cold War and the tragedy of 9/11 received untold attention and focus than the Nigerian-Biafran civil war ever did. Scarcely any study has been done using Adichie’s and Abani’s work together to explore trauma concept. Similarities and differences found in the handling of trauma by the selected characters in this study, will serve as additional knowledge to other existing trauma related literary texts. Therefore, close reading of both literary texts will shed light on understanding the horrors of trauma.

This research differs slightly from others in that it utilizes the trauma concepts by Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra together. By using the concepts of acting out and working through, it is hoped that trauma related issues will gain further exposure and awareness. Additionally, this research will uncover the extent to which trauma affects these characters. It will illustrate the different ways that each of the characters experience trauma and how they cope with it. By exploring their trauma and endeavours to overcome the same, we will be able to establish whether or not they were able to heal their pain. It will also enrich the scholarship of both Adichie and especially Abani’s novel. This research will also enrich the existing knowledge on trauma literature, war literature and Nigerian literature. It will enlighten readers towards understanding trauma that exists in contemporary fiction.

### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study will be using two novels which have been selected based on specific criteria such as thematic of the Biafran-Nigerian civil war and authored by Nigerian born writers. The publishing date of these novels also had to be contemporary: *Half of a Yellow Sun* was published in the year 2006 and *Song for Night* in 2007. This study will be using the theory of trauma which best suits the genre of the novels.

### **1.7 Limitation of the Study**

The trauma theory concepts of acting out and working through by Dominick LaCapra and Cathy Caruth will be utilized. The researcher faced some drawbacks as there were limited resources on the subject being researched from the libraries visited at Universiti

Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Malaya and also Wisata Minda in Universiti Putra Malaysia. There are many novels on the Biafran-Nigerian civil war, however the researcher had decided on the two said novels in order to achieve the set objectives. This research will focus on the selected characters' traumatic experiences from the civil war in the two stated novels.

### **1.8 Research Methodology**

A close reading of two contemporary Nigerian novels by two Nigerian authors, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and *Song for Night* by Chris Abani will be done for this research. Nigeria has long been embroiled in war which took a heavy toll on lives and one only needs to look into its history in order to understand the reasons behind the untold violence and trauma suffered by the characters in these novels. After exploring the historical background, the researcher will examine how the authors represent the concepts of trauma. This research will refer to the current standpoint of trauma theory upon analysing the two novels chosen. There will be three characters chosen from Adichie's novel and one main character and an overall analysis on the minor characters from Abani's novel. These characters will be the main focus, alongside the minor characters which will be examined for their presented trauma.

This research will utilize the definition of trauma and its elements by Cathy Caruth and two trauma concepts by Dominick LaCapra, to explain the trauma faced by the analysed characters. Additional information and support by other theorists and researchers will also be used to support the textual analysis done. The chaotic setting during the Nigeria-Biafra civil war amid the stark backdrop of political turmoil, violence, death and suffering will lend significantly towards the analysis of this research.

This research will be based on the qualitative study of the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Adichie and *Song for Night* by Abani and supported with trauma theory. Thus, several methods of retrieving and gathering resources and information were employed for this research paper, such as library research, reading online journals, and browsing through internet websites. Library research entailed the sourcing of information from books, journals and other trauma based theses. The online library journals also proved vital in this research.

The last method of browsing internet websites also proved invaluable as the countless websites surfed unearthed important and relevant information that helped to complete this research.

### **1.9 Thesis Organization**

The overall structure of this thesis comprises of six chapters, inclusive of this introductory chapter. The outline of the other remaining chapters for this research includes Chapter 2 which discusses past studies by researchers using the theory of trauma in the literary field. This chapter also discusses the reviews and past studies on the novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Song for Night*. The reviews pertaining to the authors, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Chris Abani will also be briefly discussed. The following will be Chapter 3, dedicated to the explanation of theoretical framework. The definition and application of trauma theory will be discussed in this

chapter. The concepts of acting out and working through, definition, and methods of application will be elaborated with the support of past studies from scholars and critics.

Chapter 4 focuses on the first chosen novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. An analysis of the selected text will be done using the concepts of acting out and working through. Subsequently, Chapter 5 will be dedicated to the second selected novel, *Song for Night* by Chris Abani. Textual analysis will be done in order to discover the process of acting out and working through for the second novel. The final chapter for this study is Chapter 6 which elaborates the overall conclusion from the textual analysis done from both *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Song for Night*. The similarities and the differences that were found from comparing both novels will be stated in this chapter. A restatement of the main points and the result will also be given in this chapter.

### 1.10 Definition of Terms

**Trauma** is “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (Caruth 11).

**Trauma Fiction** is considered as a “means of bearing witness to, enacting, and to some extent, working over and through trauma whether personally experiences, transmitted from intimates, or sensed in one’s larger social and cultural setting” (LaCapra 105).

**Acting-outis** “related to repetition, and even the repetition-compulsion” which is “the tendency to repeat something compulsively”. This is a phenomenon where traumatized people “have a tendency to relive the past, to exist in the present as if they were still fully in the past, with no distance from it. They tend to relive occurrences, or at least find that those occurrences intrude on their present existence” (LaCapra qtd. in Vashem 2).

**Working-through** is defined as the “articulatory practice that gradually enables one to make distinctions between past, present, and future.”The victim of trauma “tries to gain critical distance on a problem, to be able to distinguish between the past, present and future.” This is where they are able to admit that “Yes, that happened to me back then. It was distressing, overwhelming, perhaps I can’t entirely disengage myself from it, but I’m existing here and now, and this is different from back then” (LaCapra qtd. in Vashem 2-3).



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