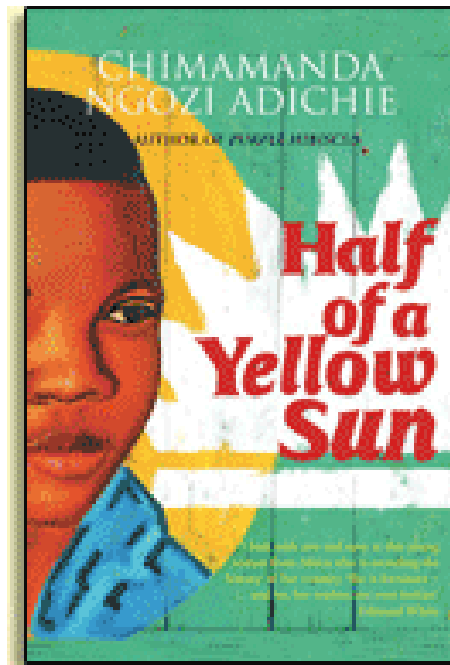


Half of a Yellow Sun (film 2013)

Love and Race/Class Relations as the Seeds of War and its Resolution

2006



Joyce Chen and Kate Liu,
Fall, 2017

Outline

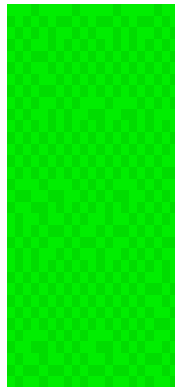
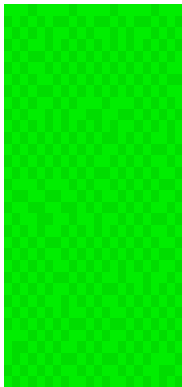
I. Introduction:

- Nigeria-Biafra war (an example of **nation as a “black man’s burden”**)
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the novel & the film

II. Discussion Questions

III. Next Time

Nigeria-Biafra War (1967-1970)



Joyce

Nigeria— Basic Data



Nigeria—

Before Colonization

- **circa 11th century onwards** - Formation of city states, kingdoms and empires.
- **1472** - **Portuguese** navigators reach Nigerian coast.
- **16-18th centuries** - Slave trade
- **1809** - **Single Islamic state** - Sokoto caliphate - is founded in north
- **1850s** - **British** establish presence around **Lagos**.

Nigeria—

Colonization to independence

- **1861-1914** - Britain consolidates its hold over what it calls the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria, governs by "**indirect rule**" through local leaders.
- **1923**-Western-educated elites established the first political party NNDP; **the rise of independence movement**
- **1960** - Independence, with Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa leading a coalition government.
- **1964**-First national election

Nigeria-Biafra War—Causes

- Race-Religion: Tribalism to regionalism
 - Religion and Ethnic differences
 - **Hausa-Fulani**: feudal society governed by Muslim Sharia. Conservative, under-developed, yet most populous
 - **Yoruba**: feudal society governed by *oba* (monarch)
 - **Igbo**: republic system, governed by “titled men”. Convert to Christianity and enjoy the highest literacy in English during colonization
- Economy: the discovery of oil reserves
- Direct cause:
 - Coup in 1966
 - genocide in the north –30,000 people of Ibo/Igbo ethnic origin were killed

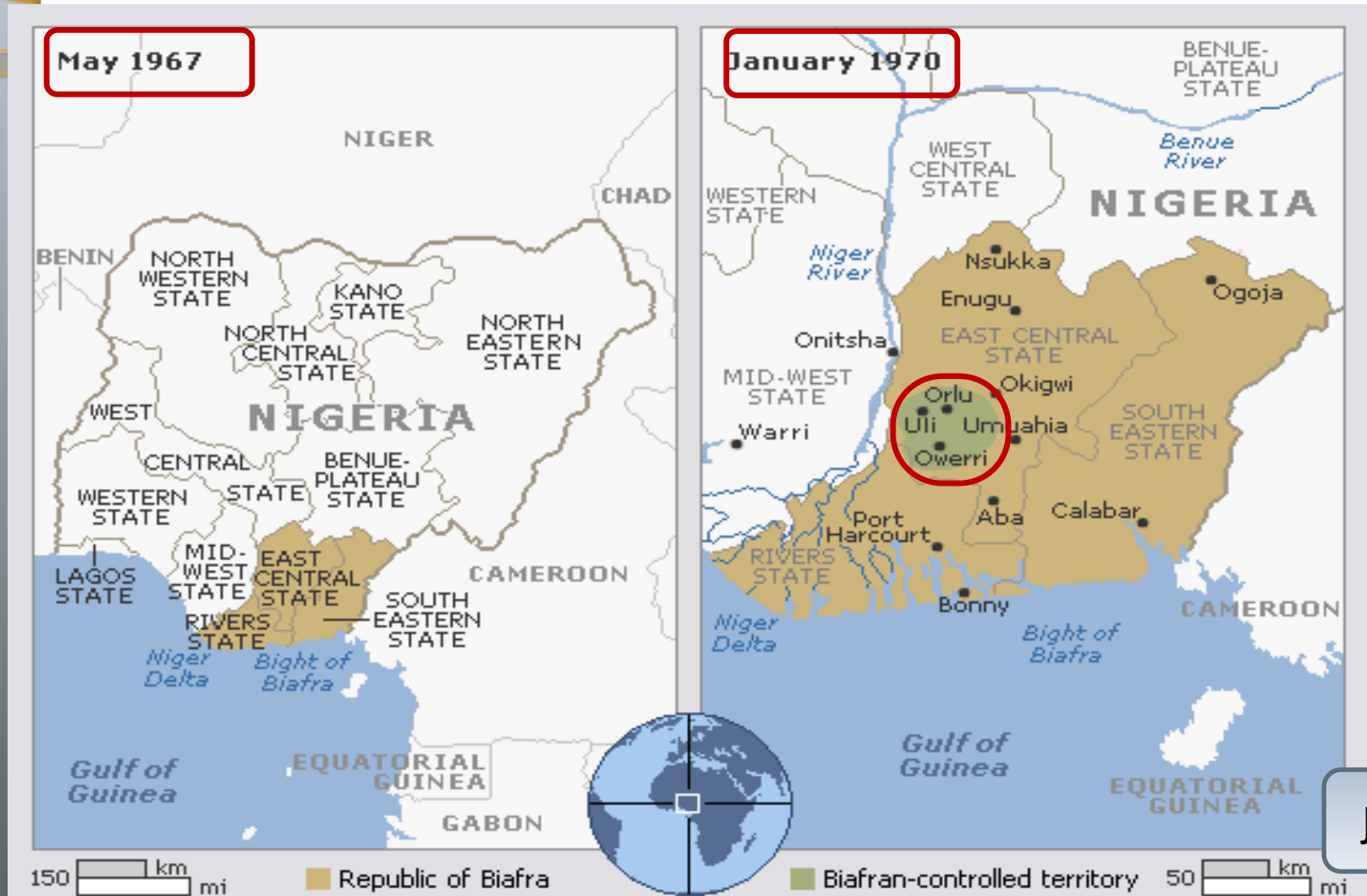
Part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3ReFoFp0Gs>
1:45 – propaganda war; 3:46 – three tribes

Nigeria-Biafra War— International Intervention

- **Recognition by only a few nations:** Gabon, Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire, Tanzania (the first) and Zambia
- A continuous power wrestling between ex- colonizers
 - Interest of oil
 - Fear of Balkanization (seccesionism) – **part 5: 4:50; part 6: beginning**

Part 4: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eppgEVwxCfk&feature=related>
4:12 starvation

The end of the War: Air raid, blockade, Starvation, and Ojukwu's exile to Côte d'Ivoire



Joyce

Questions

- Civil war: meaningful or meaningless?
- Why/ How do we (non-Nigerians) study the war?
- How is the war presented differently—by American films such as *Blood Diamond*, *The Last King of Scotland*, and by African novels, films and documentaries such as *War/Dance*?
- HYS: *War, Nation and Love* (btw *Lovers*, *Sisters*, and *Master/Servant*)

End of the war:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZTpuVIKJ_Q&feature=related part 6: 6:00

Nation & War

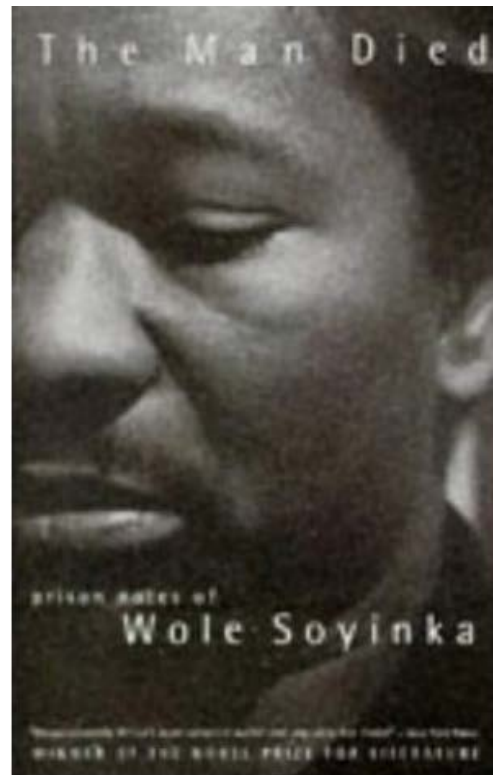
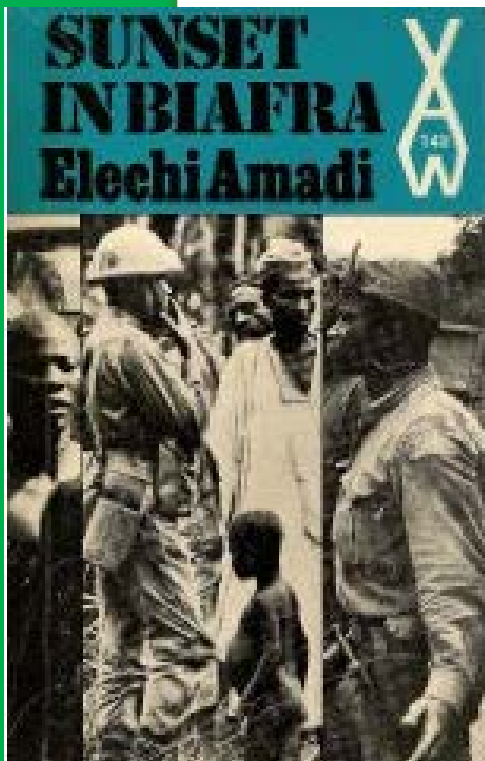
- “Nation” as the Black Man’s Burden

‘As Basil Davidson pointedly puts it, the “nation” that follows colonialism is usually not much of a gift; throughout Africa, in fact, it has been more akin to “the black man’s burden,” a problematic assemblage of peoples who frequently enough have little more in common than proximity. Reflecting on this irony, Imre Szeman notes that “the central insight into the phenomenon of the nation that is shared by all of the recent critical writing on the subject has been that all nations must

- be seen as essentially arbitrary configurations of culture and power, which the phenomenon of nationalism tries to obscure and make timeless and natural” (117).’ (Hawley 16)

Literary Presentation of the war— Earlier Generation

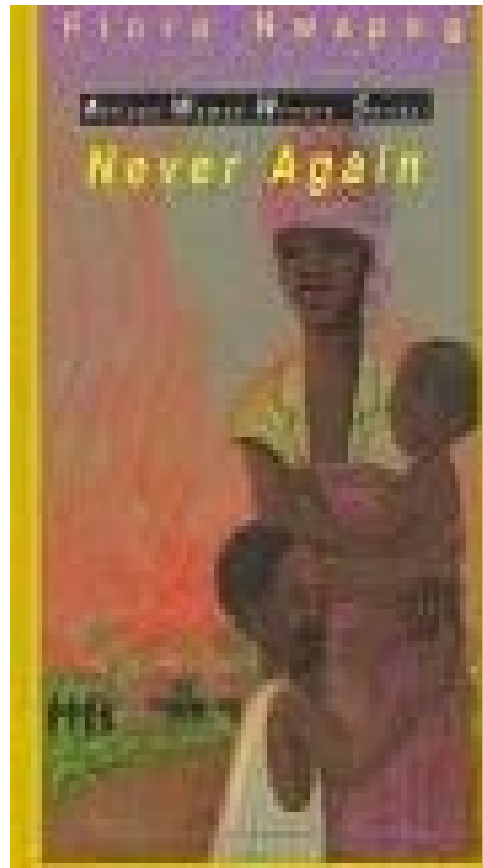
- **Witness: memoirs / diaries**
--less imaginative



- **Wole Soyinka (1934-)**
 - *The man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka*
- **Elechi Amadi (1934-)**
 - *Sunset in Biafra: A Civil War Diary*
- **Ken Saro-Wiwa (1941-95)**
 - *On a Darkling Plain: An Account of the Nigerian Civil War.*

Literary Presentation of the war— Earlier Generation

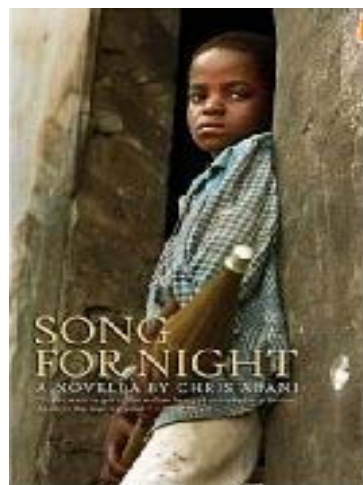
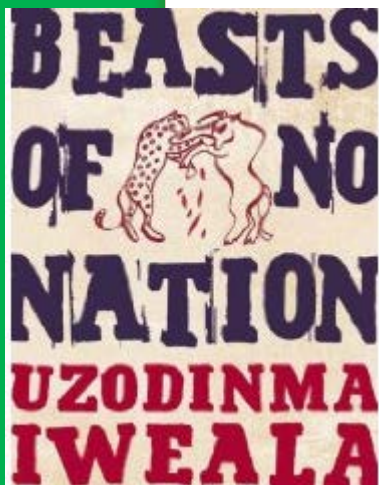
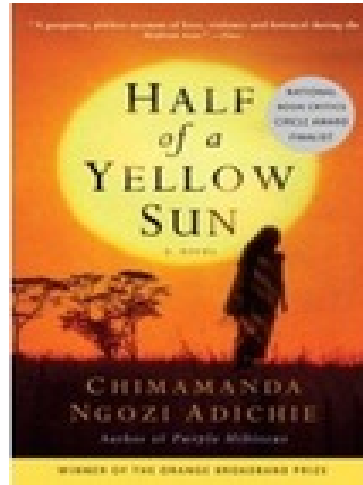
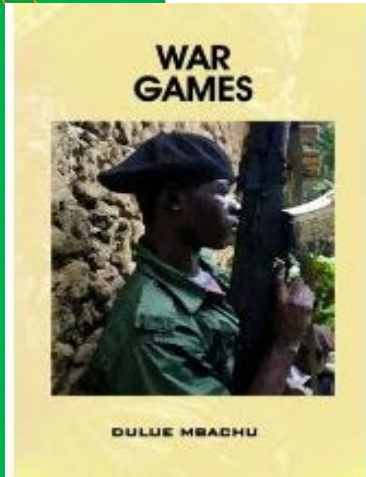
- Allegory/fictions/ Poems



- **Chinua Achebe(1930-)**
 - *Girls at War (Chike's School Days)*
 - *Christmas in Biafra and other poems*
- Christopher Okigbo(1932-67)
 - *Labyrinths with Path of Thunder*
- Flora Nwapa (1931-93)
 - *Wives at War and Other Stories.*
 - *Never Again.*
- Buchi Emecheta (1944-)
 - *Destination Biafra:*

Joyce

Literary Presentation of the war— Younger Generation



- Dulue Mbachu
 - *War Games*
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
 - *Half of a Yellow Sun*
- Uzodinma Iweala
 - *Beasts of No Nation* → film
- Chris Abani
 - *Song for Night*



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

- born (after Biafra war) in 1977
- the family's ancestral hometown is Abba (where Odenigbo comes from)
- grew up in Nsukka,
- **left for the United States at the age of 19**
- Got her BA degree in communication and political science at **Eastern Connecticut State University**, her master's degree in creative writing at **Johns Hopkins University**
- *Purple Hibiscus* (2005)
- *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) –
Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction 2007

Source: <http://www.l3.ulg.ac.be/adichie/>

Two Talks at TED: 1) We should all be feminists
2) The Danger of a Single Story



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Why write?

- because I wanted to write about love and war,
- because I grew up in the shadow of Biafra,
- because I lost both grandfathers in the Nigeria-Biafra war,
- because I wanted to engage with my history in order to make sense of my present, many of the issues that led to the war remain unresolved in Nigeria today,
- because [my family] **my father has tears in his eyes when he speaks of losing his father, because my mother still cannot speak at length about losing her father in a refugee camp,**
- because the brutal bequests of colonialism make me angry,
- because the thought of the egos and indifference of men leading to the unnecessary deaths of men and women and children enrages me, because I don't ever want to forget.



(source; youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QO8ZEtyuiZM>)

Half of a Yellow Sun

- Three major characters:

Olanna – born of an upper-class family, a teacher at Nsukka U. before the war

U[u]gwu – O'denigbo's household servant from the village

Richard Churchill – a British **writer** and journalist, lover of Kainene [kaineinei]



Why the title *Half of a Yellow Sun*

1. Commemorates Biafra
2. The sun can be a rising sun, or a falling sun.
3. Who and what can survive the war?

The Novel and the war

(I) The characters as witnesses

- **Olanna** -- witnesses the killing of Igbos in the streets of **Kano**, including some of her family (her uncle and aunt); her wedding in **Umuahia** disturbed by air raid.
 - **Richard** -- sees the killing of Igbos in the airport while waiting for a plane;
 - **Ugwu** – forced to serve in the army, where he witnesses and gets involved in the violence of wartime (e.g. raping a woman).
- heard that the Nigerian soldiers had promised to kill five percent of Nsukka academics.

Structure & the Theme of War and Love

Parallel between two time lines:

- Early Sixties: Part I, III (climax)--breaking up of family and lovers by betrayal in sex;
- Late Sixties: Part II (massacre → war breaking out), IV
- 8 chapters end with a fragment from *The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died*

→ Two kinds of [family and national] wars, trauma, and how to survive both.

→ (2) The characters as survivors and/or “writers.”

The Book in the Novel

Historical Analysis: e.g. “At Independence in 1960, Nigeria was a collection of fragments held in a fragile clasp.”
(195)

e.g. “Nigeria did not have an economy until Independence...But the new Nigerian leaders were too optimistic...

- Who wrote it?
- Title from Richard (“This war isn’t my story to tell, really” 530)
- A poem modeled after Okeama’s poems
- **Ugwu wrote his dedication: “For Master, my good man.”**



7. THE BOOK: The World Was Silent When We Died

For the epilogue, he
writes a poem,
modelled after one of
Okeoma's poems. He
calls it:

"WERE YOU SILENT WHEN WE DIED?"

Did you see photos in sixty-eight
Of Children with their hair becoming rust:
Sickly patches nestled on those small heads,
Then falling off, like rotten leaves on dust?

Imagine children with arms like toothpicks,
With footballs for bellies and skin stretched thin.
It was kwashiorkor—difficult word,
A word that was not quite ugly enough, a sin.

You needn' t imagine. There were photos
Displayed in gloss-filled pages of your Life.
Did you see? Did you feel sorry briefly,
Then turn round to hold your lover or wife?

Their skin had turned the tawny of weak tea
And showed cobwebs of vein and brittle bone:
Naked children laughing, as if the man
Would not take photos and then leave, alone (470).



8. THE BOOK:
The World Was Silent When We Died

UGWU WRITES HIS
DEDICATION LAST: **FOR
MASTER, MY GOOD MAN.**



The Film's Closing Credits

UGWU IS NOW A WRITER.

CHIAMAKA (AKA BABY) IS NOW A MEDICAL DOCTOR.



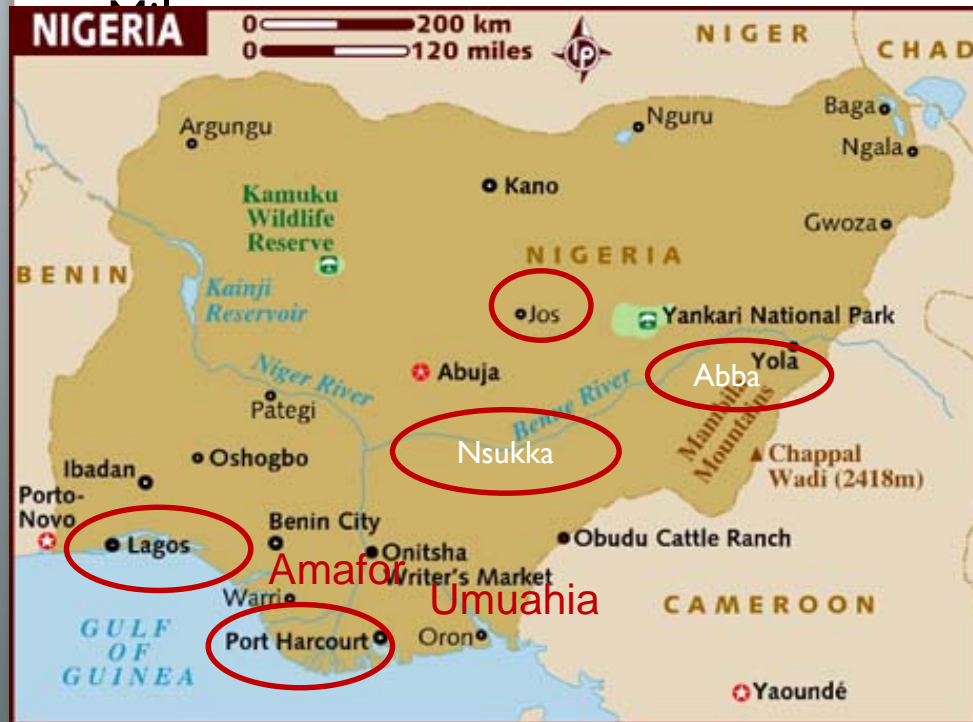
Half of a Yellow Sun (2013)

Director Biyi Bandele

- 1) Nigeria's **most expensive** production to date
- 2) won **the 2014 Golden Dhow in the Zanzibar International Film Festival**, marking also the emergence of Nollywood on the international stage
- 3) **Film release suspended** till August, 2013, in Nigeria “due not to questions of propriety but to ‘national security concerns’” (Akudinobi 137).

WG & HYS: Place Names ...

- *Half of the Yellow Sun*: Nsukka → Lagos → Kano
- (Kainene – Port Harcourt, running her father's business);
- Odenigbo from Abba
- [When War started] Nsukka → Abba → Umuahia → Orlu → Ninth



War Game—
Jos → Amafor—
Enugu
→ Umuahia* --
Amafor

Official History & Personal History (I): Independence

A Naughty Little Flea



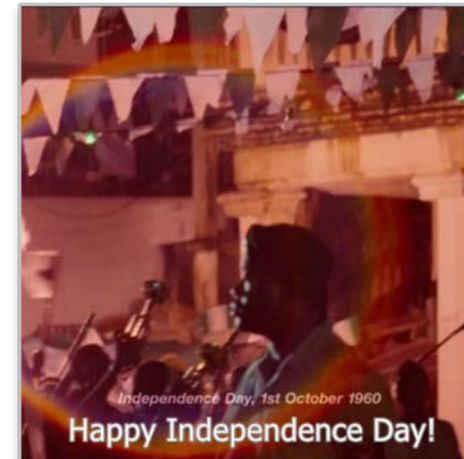
Queen



Kainene's contribution



Independence Day



Official History & Personal History (2-1): (Igbo) **Coup** to End Corruption

Igbo Coup discussed

Colonel Okonji killed—read by
O



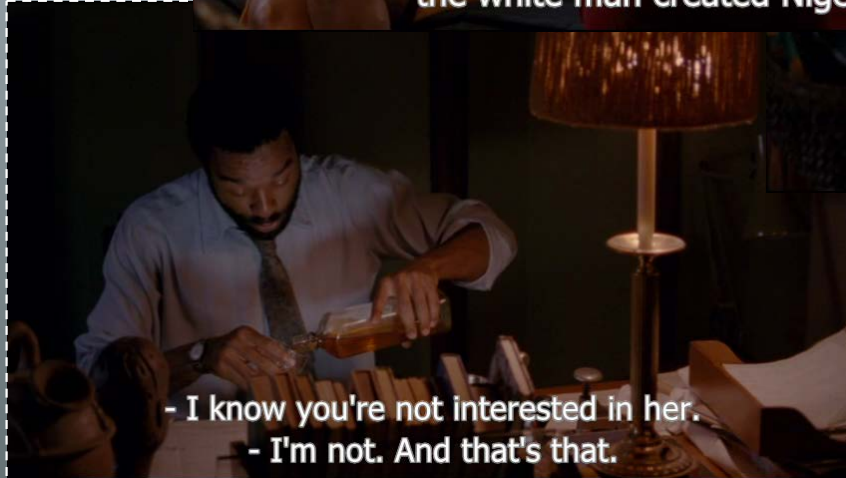
Igbo General General
Ironsi in Control

Mama in Action



Adabayo seducing Odenigbo

Odenigbo having sex w/ Amala



First Climax

Olanna depressed;
Seducing Richard

The sisters breaking up;
O adopts Baby



First Conflict Resolution

Official History & Personal History (2-2)

Hausa's Discontent to Massacre

O returns from London

Igbo Authority stepped down



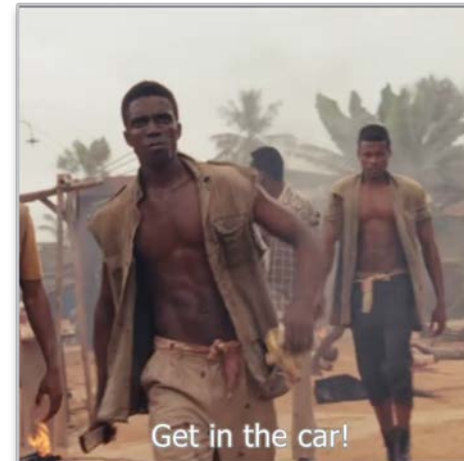
News on killing



Killing at Nsuka airport



Kano



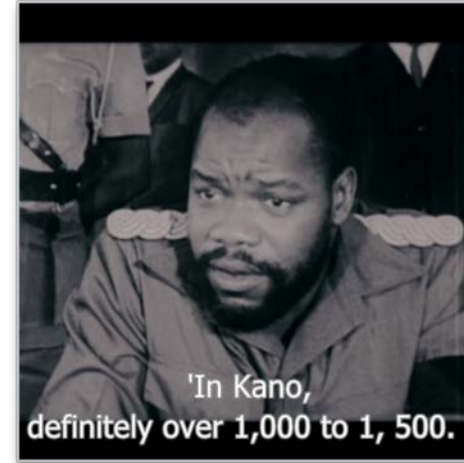
Official History & Personal History

(2-3) Massacre to Secession

Kano masacre: witness by
○



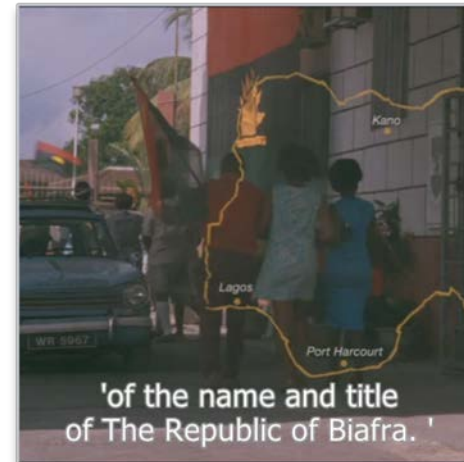
Ojukwu on massacre



Kainene asks R back



Biafra's Independence



History & Personal History (2-4)

the War

Ppl on the other side surprised



Olanna taken by surprise



Civil War



Wedding



Deaths of Okeoma & Mama



- H for?
- House.

Ogwu growing up

K: There are some things that are so unforgivable...that they make other things easily forgivable.



History & Personal History (2-5)

Fighting Harder: **Child Soldiers & Bush Rat**

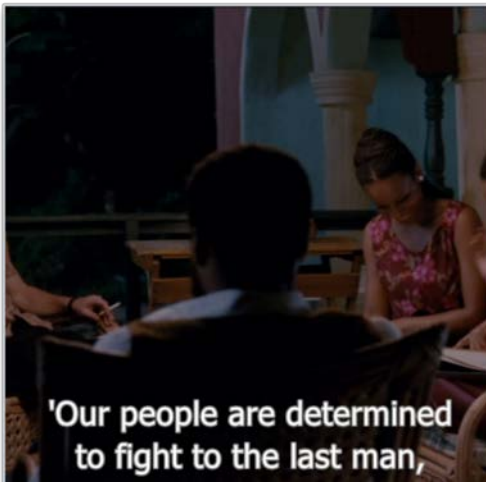
Enlisting children



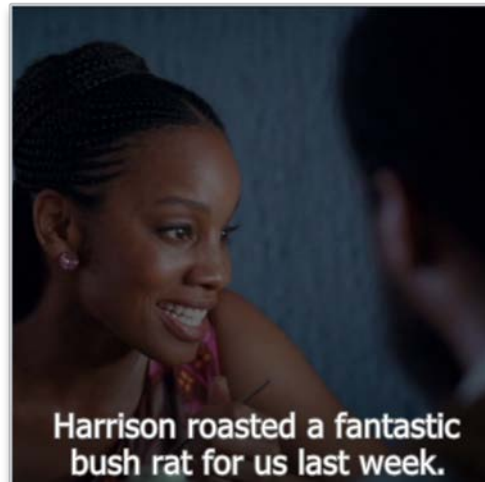
Ogwu included



Fight to the Last Man



Roasted a fantastic rat



Kainene missing

History & Personal History (2-6)

Surrender

Ojukwu leaving



War Over, but K not found



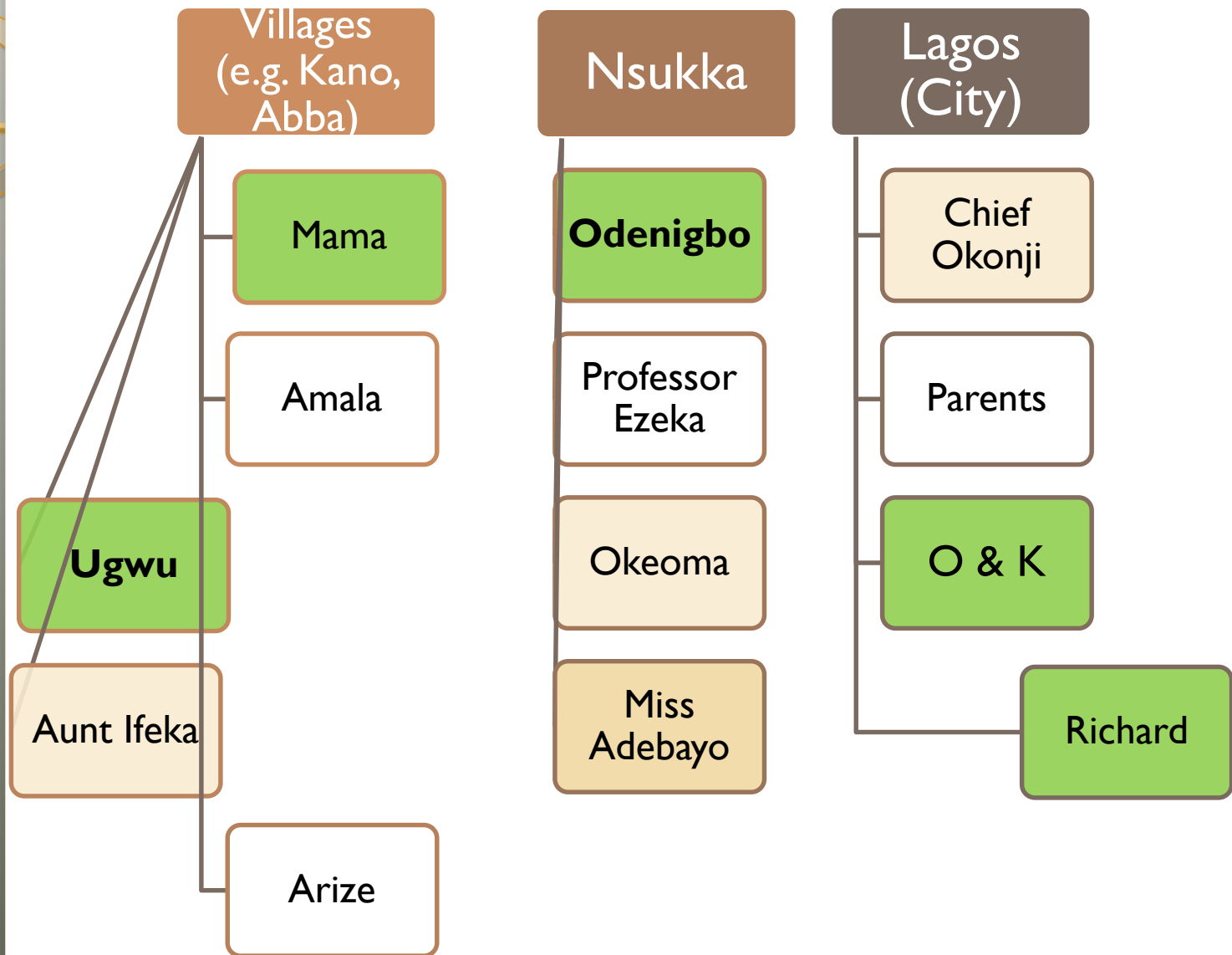
Returning Home



Returning Home



Characters in Different Places & Social Positions



Discussion Questions

- Why does the film start with lovers' and sisters' betrayal? How is personal history related to official history in the film?
- Intellectuals, Businessmen/women and “Peasants”
 - 1) How is **Odenigbo** presented as an intellectual and a “revolutionary”?
 - 2) Why does “**Mama**” dislike **Olanna**? Why does she use dibia on Odenigbo?
 - 3) How is Olanna related to her family in Lagos and her uncle's in Kano?
 - 4) How is **Kainene** characterized? How does she behave differently from her mother on the one hand, and Olanna on the other?

Ugwu as a houseboy

Ugwu in the film -- personally involved

- he cares about both Odenigbo and Olanna.
- attentive to their interactions
- tries to ask Olanna back
- takes care of Baby
- Stay as a houseboy or a family member (unlike Ugwu in the novel)



Olanna's Family— rich but cold and distanced from one another

- Well-known and glamorous
- *Kainene has her photo in Lagos Life*
- *The parents associated with Chief Okonji (Finance Minister).*
- the father has a construction company, which usu. gives the government 10% as a bribery.
 - They want her to marry one of these famous people in order to improve their business
- Parents: escape when the war breaks out.

Kainene vs. Olanna

- Kainene: critical/acerbic (尖酸嚴苛), sharp and detached
 - Calls her a sex bait; “So will you be spreading your legs for that elephant in exchange for Daddy’s contract”
 - Calls Odenigbo Olanna’s “revolutionary lover”

Olanna and her uncle and aunt

- Uncle Mbaezi – light-complexioned, earthy (47), admired by Olanna because of his differences from her mother
- Aunt Ifeka – breastfeeding O and K; always kills a hen when O visits
- Arize – (49) gives her an excited hug,
- a Hausa friend gives her a pair of slippers friendly. Olanna's parents look artificial by comparison.
- The whole household: noisy, lively and intimate;
- Olanna—avoids looking at the cockroach eggs or worrying about the choking smoke (51)

Reference

- <http://www.historians.org/TI/LessonPlans/nc/Trausk/study.htm>
- <http://www.nathanieltturner.com/rememberingbiafraaliteraryreview.htm>
- Hawley, John. "Biafra as Heritage and Symbol: Adichie, Mbachu, and Iweala." *Research in African Literatures* 39.2 (2008): 15-26. Print.
- Akudinobi, Jude. "Nollywood: Prisms and Paradigms." *Cinema Journal* 54. 2 (Winter 2015): 133-140.



Next Time

- *The Descendants of The Eunuch Admiral .*

