

# Children in War Situations: A Study of Ngugi's *Weep Not Child* and Onyekwelu's *Fugitive in Biafra*

Nkechi Ezenwamadu

Department of English, Madonna University Nigeria, Okija Campus, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Received: 10 Oct 2020; Received in revised form: 12 Nov 2020; Accepted: 15 Nov 2020; Available online: 17 Nov 2020

**Abstract**— Children, the so-called future of every generation, have always been caught up in warfare. This is because they are innocent, helpless and have little choice but to experience the same horror as their parents as casualties or even combatants. Recent developments in warfare have significantly heightened the dangers for children. The past decades have recorded millions of children killed, disabled, orphaned, separated from their parents or dislocated from their homes. War and terrorism are man's perpetrated acts of violence that have emotionally and psychologically affected generation of children and young people for the rest of their lives. In the Nigerian situation at present, same is seen in the lives of children tormented by Fulani Herdsmen and Boko Haram menace on the populace. The hope of the nation for which this menace occurs continues to be bleak. This paper explores such trauma in children as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Onyekwelu Manankiti in their *Weep not Child* and *Fugitive in Biafra* respectively present it.

**Keywords**— War Situation, *Weep not Child*, *Fugitive in Biafra*.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Artists do not write in intellectual vacuum. The work of art is not separated from the social context that produces it. Therefore, there is close correspondence between the writer, history and social contexts of his people. The two writers under study are exposing the anomalies in the lives and times of their societies and mostly apprehensive of the young ones. They become the mouthpiece of numerous children who suffer the absurdities of war. Ngugi observes that:

A writer responds with his total personality to social environment, which changes all the time. Being the kind of sensitive needle, he registers with varying degree of accuracy and success of the conflict and tensions in his changing society. (45)

Together, they clamour that whether won or lost, war is a horrible phenomenon that tears the children and youths to shreds. Whether they are engaged in war or not, it leaves them with an experience that is emotionally painful, distressful or shocking, which often results in lasting mental and physical effects. Still if the war is lost, the

unborn generations would struggle among their opponents as fish in water treated with gammalin.

Using Ngugi's *Weep Not Child* and Onyekwelu's *Fugitive in Biafra*, the essay is poised to buttress this fact that war violates every right a child should have such as the right to life and right to be with the family and community. They are denied the right to health, the right to education, the right to the development of personality, the right to be protected etc. This combatant influence and involvement in conflict is a violation of the most basic ethical foundation of the society. This is exactly what occurs in the worlds of *Weep Not Child* and *Fugitive in Biafra*. They stand as the voice of numerous children who have been traumatized and victimized by war.

Festus Iyayi captures a good description of war situation on the first page of his second novel *Heroes*. It goes thus:

- It was the third year of the Civil War and it was the evening of the last Friday in the month of June. There was no light in the city for fear of the air raids and everywhere it was dark and uneasy and the soldiers were nervous as they paraded the dark streets, waiting, watching, anticipating (1).

That was a good depiction of the tension synonymous with war situations and children suffer it most. This is evident in Osime Iyere's response to his informants. He said "Don't let this information spread as the other one did. Ten people died then several children are still missing"(1). Although he was mocking them as rumor mongers, yet, those were the likely news of every war situation. Children suffer the most.

When the war commences proper in the world of *Fugitive in Biafra*, schools have to be closed down to avoid any casualties. Instead of engaging in reading and writing, Hamaka and the likes are recruited as soldiers. In his bid to save his life, he leaves the camp stealthily and is faced with dangerous journey across the weird Ezeudene Bridge alone, unprotected. In the same vein, Njoroge has to be withdrawn from school when his father falls a victim of war. So they watch the brutal killing of their parents or siblings. The young boys may serve as porters, spies, cooks or even messengers, hence in the Red Cross camp at Umuinem, John serves as a spy while Hamaka takes the part of a cook though he is soon bundled to the ditch after his lewd prank with Justina.

The children and youths who suffer violence are more prone to use violence in solving problems. Violence has negative effects on the children such as psychological trauma with symptoms as nightmares, mental health, quality of life and subsequent behaviour as adults. This is likened to why 'Oga kpatata' resolves to commit arson and rape if he ever gets free. In war-besieged children, there is inclination to sexual violence, which includes rape, sexual mutilation, forced prostitution and forced pregnancy. In *Fugitive in Biafra*, Hamaka reports that there is sexual laxity in the camp. Soldiers come to collect girls, spend all night and return in the morning. The camp is more of buying and selling of sexual immorality. War should be prevented in the first place, that is the best method to protect children from wars. If not, Hope's question should be answered; "Why doesn't the President just go there himself?"

Ngugi's *Weep Not Child*.

In Eastern part of Africa, we embrace one of the greatest novelists and playwrights in the person of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. His novel *Weep Not Child* was one of the first novels to make the literary world realize that writers in Africa were making a fresh and original contribution to world literature. Land is the obvious motive in most of Ngugi's works. Much of East Africa has mild tropical climate further made cool and beautiful by hills. The lands were fertile and ideal for the cultivation of such crops as tea, grain and fruits. There is facility for big game hunting.

East Africa is famous for a large variety of game. I don't think any other country has above attractions at its disposal more than East African Kenya. Consequently, Europeans have preferred the place for the settlement of a large number of disbanded soldiers even after making it one of her colonies. The settlers turned the original African owners into labourers in low wages. A continuous stream of settlers poured into Kenya that at the end of Second World War it became obvious that the large part of Kenyan population were a little bit above the level of slaves on "their fatherland. This resulted to birth of Mau Mau revolt. It is this heinous conflict that Ngugi tries to illuminate with *Weep Not Child*.

The novel emphasizes the evils of war and their effects on the growing children. Of course, this is the area this write up wants to illuminate. War is an evil wind that blows no one any good. It is a period when moral and social value of people is trampled underfoot. The whole populace is left without any hope.

There is total despair for the common man who is exploited and abused by the leaders of both sides. There is great threat to life and security of the masses by the invading enemy. Slaughter of the innocents is the order of the day. There is general atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion by which many innocents are proclaimed saboteurs and brutally eliminated. The cankerworm manifests itself through scandals, gossips and propaganda. Hence, the government of Kenya was on the verge of panic following the arrest of Jomo Kenyetta and others and subsequent declaration of emergency. This left Kenya in grip of terror for ten years; terror by Mau Mau as well as terror of government's brutality against suspects and emergency law-breakers.

Ngugi the author was in a day school at the core of this historic atmosphere, which he is reporting through this work. In those days he was not only fed with fear of walking to and fro school, rumours of deaths and detentions, hard sound of machinery guns but with disappearance of his elder brother into the forest which turned the government's ugly eyes on his family. Because of this, the government turned several members of his family including his mother into detainees for several months. It is Ngugi's experience that propelled *Weep Not Child*, as lime Ikeddeh puts it in his introduction to *the novel*: a "fiction based on a historical event recreated in human tears".

The novel has two dichotomies; part one is captioned "The Warning Light", the gradual decreasing light as the title suggests reflects on dissatisfaction over the lost land to the European settlers. Protest to these effects develops to a

strike, but before this, Ngotho's family lived a normal life pattern. When eventually the strike fails, Jomo is arrested, the light goes out to usher in part two when the "Darkness falls". This engulfed the whole society and Ngotho's family in particular. This second part records the activities of the Mau Mau revolt, activities of the government and the influence of these activities on the growing children, Njoroge and Mwhaki.

Ngotho, Njoroge's father was one of those selected to serve the white man during the First World War, returns home to discover that his land has been occupied by a white settler - Mr. Rowlands. He was humiliated to work for the white man hoping that it is the only way he would repossess the land that is when the white settlers must have decided to quit. He squats on Jacobo's land with his two wives and several children. During the Second World War, Ngotho's two sons, Boro and Mwangi, are conscripted into the army. At the end of the war only Boro comes back. The war has ripped him to shreds for many reasons; he is not compensated and his generation has surrendered their land to the white settlers. He has nowhere to settle down, he says; "we fought for them, we fought to save them from their white brothers". He is so frustrated, becomes a terrible boozier and sleeps outside often. He points accusing finger on his generation for disposing their land to white settlers. His situation is a slight on the face of Ngotho's peaceful polygamous family. For in Ngotho's family, children do not discriminate. They call the two women of the family elder or big mother and the other woman, mother. This presents Boro's accusation and the Ngotho's hopes for recovering their land from the whites have been shattered. He quickly realises that the only way out for the blacks is education; at least in retrieval of the land. He decides that one of his sons should be sent to school. Kori, one of his sons has crossed school age. Kamaic is learning carpentry work. So the question of going to school falls on Njoroge, the hero of the novel, the boy through whose eyes we see all that goes on in the work. His interest in education is shown early in the very way he welcomes his mother's news that he is to go to school;

O mother. I'll never bring shame to you.

Just let me get there, just let me...

Oh mother, you are an angel of God,  
you are, you; are... (3).

He has strong belief in the potentiality of being educated. At least it is a sure way of emancipating his people and their land from the usurpers. He begins to endow himself with the attributes of the Biblical Moses and other Bible heroes. The poverty and bondage of his family spur him on

ISSN: 2456-7620

<https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijels.56.6>

to be educated as the only way of freedom for his people and also a way to bring them to status of the rich.

Jomo's arrest somehow shatters his dreams but he hangs his hopes on the future. Jomo's return opened wide the eyes of the Africans. They became more conscious of their rights. They plan a strike to paralyze the economy of the white settlers. Some Africans on the pay of the whites sabotaged the strike and it failed. Jacobo, the stooge of the whites, was even against his fellow blacks. Ngotho is infuriated and he led an attack on the Chief. Confusion broke out and the white policemen came round and used the opportunity to put an end to the meeting. That was the end of the strike. Ngotho lost his right to squat on Jacobo's land and he is evicted with his family. He also lost his job with Howlands and his family is thrown into dark penury. Contrary is the ease for the children of the two warring families. Njoroge strikes up friendship with Mr. Jacobo's daughter, Mwhaki. There is great difference in their social statuses. Besides Mwhaki enjoys an added advantage for she has an elder sister who is also a teacher in their school. But Njoroge's brilliance raises his status to Mwhaki's, notwithstanding. This makes their relationship equal and makes it grow steadily. The unfortunate incident of the strike, Ngotho's attack on Jacobo and white police intervention occur just on the day Njoroge and Mwhaki are happiest in each other's company, both have passed their examination and they go home with their hands linked together. Their happiness was shattered at home because of the state of affairs. Apart from Mwhaki's movement to a boarding house, Njoroge- Mwhaki relationship is hampered by a state of emergency declared as black militants kill a prominent collaborationist. Besides, Jomo Kenyetta, the political leader of the blacks, is arrested.

Howlands becomes the District officer and Jacobo is made the chief of home guards. As a result of Kenyetta's imprisonment, violence multiplies. Boro joins the freedom fighters in the forest. Ngotho's family becomes a target for Howlands and Jacobo. Meanwhile, inconsiderate of the enmity existing between the two families, the two children meet on the plain after Sunday service and seal a bond of friendship. Mwhaki suggests elopement because she wants to be away from the ugly violence. She desires both of them to leave the scene of violence and to come back when the bloody violence ceases. But Njoroge would want them to stay back since they are most needed at home at the trying period. This trying moment is not easy to shoulder for many people are missing every day. The famous barber, Kipanga, teacher Ishaka and numerous others die violent deaths. Njoroge goes to secondary school while Mwhaki becomes a teacher's training college

student. At Siriama, Njoroge strikes friendship with Jacobo's son in a neighbouring white school. This union soon shatters by chaos at home. Jacobo arrests Ngotho and Rowlands brutalizes him. In his furious retaliation, Boro, Ngotho's son murders Jacobo. Njoroge's education is disturbed; he is recalled from school and is also brutalized. Boro again murders Rowlands and is also arrested.

As it were, the cruel atmosphere has swallowed both children's parents. This cruel situation instead of separating them even brought them closer. When they meet again fear has gripped

Njoroge, he suggests for elopement this time. He wants both of them to fly away. She wanted to sink in his arms and feel a man's strength around her weak body. She wanted to travel the road back to her childhood and grow up with him again. But she was no longer a child.

"Yes, we can go away from here as you have suggested when....."

"No! no!" she cried, in an agony of despair, interrupting him, "you must save me, please, Njorogo, I love you. (133)

### **Onyekwelu's *Fugitive in Biafra***

Menankiti Onyekwelu bares the impact of War on Children with *Fugitive in Biafra*. This is another novel that exposes the brutality of war and its concomitant effect on growing children. It is also a fiction which has its roots on history of disaster and misfortune in Nigeria -Nigerian civil War of (1967-1970). It is a period of chaos that lasted for a short time of three years as against Kenya's period of ten breathless years. It depicts a general atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion by which many innocent people were proclaimed saboteurs and brutally eliminated. The war was a political conflict caused by attempted secession of Southeastern provinces of Nigeria as a self-proclaimed Republic of Biafra. The underlining conflict is as a result of economic, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions among the various groups in Nigeria. The British initiated an artificial structure, which has neglected to consider religious, linguistic and ethnic differences. The major ethnic groups, the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo have differing political system. These three ethnic groups produced radically divergent customs and values. Hausa-Fulani group obeyed political decisions without Question to maintain Islamic conservative values. The Yorubas have comparable political system which consists of Monarchs being the Obas, but these monarchs unlike those in the North were less autocratic in dispensing their duties. There is disparity in the political structure of Igbos if compared

to the two other groups. They live in democratically organized villages. There were monarchs who were either hereditary or elected. They only function as figureheads. Contrary to the other groups; decisions among the Igbos were made by a general assembly in which every man could participate. These groups developed educationally according to their speed in accepting the missionaries. The Yorubas happen to be the first group in Nigeria to hug the missionaries who rapidly introduced Western forms of education. Sequel to this, they become the" first group in Nigeria to become modernized. As a result, they provided the first African civil servants, doctors, lawyers, and other technicians and professionals. In Igbo areas, the existence of highly autonomous villages hindered the missionaries' full control. But the Igbos later took education more seriously with an overwhelming adherence to Christianity. An intense desire for economic improvement and population pressure drove many Igbos to other parts of the nations.

As a result, many Igbos who resided in the North were massacred in a retaliatory combat that resulted from coup that bore no fruits which was organized mostly by Igbos. As an aftermath of the coup, Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbohead of Nigerian Army became the President of Nigeria and the first military Head of State. Ironsi alleged that democracy has failed and a cleanup is required before reversing to democracy. The Northerners executed a counter coup because they think that the first coup favoured and promoted many Igbos at the glaring expense of Yoruba and Hausa officers. This later coup brought Col. Yakubu Gowon into power. The tension caused by the coup and counter coup culminated large-scale massacres of the Christian Igbos living in Muslim North as aforementioned. Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, the then military governor of Igbo dominated southeast reacted against the northern massacres and electoral fraud. He announced the secession of the southeastern region from Nigeria as the Republic of Biafra on 30th May 1967. Though there were several peace accords, example Aburi/Ghana peace accord. All failed to succeed and war ensued. The war proper began on 6th July 1967.

It is this historical era that provided a window into Menankiti Onyekwelu's mind as he writes *Fugitive in Biafra*. The main character, Hamaka sees Biafran war as vehicle of growth into adulthood. The work is a flash back of Hamaka's childhood reminiscences. The story is recalled to Chike when both have become secondary school teachers. This historical war that started on 6th July, 1967 begins at the middle of the school term in Onyekwelu's work. During this period, Hamaka was in junior secondary school. Flora Nwapa recalls in her *Never*

Again the use of men in positions of power and authority for mass deception as an instrument of morale boosting while the true Biafran military position is hidden both from the masses and fighting soldiers. Such was the mission of teachers in Hamaka's school; they have this mission of boosting the children's morale by extolling the virtues and prowess of the new Biafran Head of state. The teachers sometimes compare Biafra to Israel- the God's chosen people. They made the students believe that war will be won in a question of days since God cannot abandon Biafrans as He didn't abandon the Israelites. News reached the school that His Excellency directed that the schools should be shut down for a while to avoid unwarranted casualties. The closure of schools gave some students opportunity they have been looking for to join the army to demonstrate love and patriotism for their newborn state. Hamaka happens to be one of those attracted to demonstrate their patriotism for the desire to fight but his true interest is on army uniform. In his enthusiasm, Hamaka tries several times to be enlisted in the service of the nation's army. He is disqualified because he is not yet grown. He then resigns to join the civil defense. One day at their civil Defense training ground, it dawned on him that war is not "a child's play". Three lorry-loads pulled up just before the amazing eyes of the civil Defense trainees;

The presence of the refugees was a constant reminder of the war and because the southwest sector of the war was less than fifty kilometers away; we clearly could hear the sound of artillery shells and bombardment. Each time we heard the noise of those frightful shell bombs, we imagined how soldiers were dying. (26)

The prowess of the Biafran head of state is still sung by the propaganda machinery. It is also becoming emphatically obvious that the war is going to be extended more than expected. People have started losing interest in the war. As this interest fades, soldiers withdraw while conscription becomes order of the day. The case is similar with Hamaka who withdraws from civil defense and rather chooses to receive training as a member of Red Cross. With this membership he would continue his patriotism by helping to rescue wounded soldiers. Reality of the war struck on the faces of Umuokam when the first Engineer produced by the community is shot dead during one of the raids. Though he is given a befitting burial but the youths of Umuokam are disappointed. It dawned on them that one must do something to survive the next minute. Military service must be avoided. The death of Nnamdi brought a radical change of attitude on the part of the people of Umuokam and their neighbours regarding the war. From

that moment they saw war as evil wind that blows well to no one.

As the soldiers who buried Nnamdi marched away, people shook their heads and regarded them as birds lured into the bird catcher's cage with baits. From that day on, military service was no longer a longed-for career, but something to be avoided. (32) The avoidance of military service gives much concern on the part of the new government. People desert for their dear life. This gives impetus for conscription of very under-aged boys into the army. Hamaka is nominated to join the army the very day his father is late to the meeting. This similar tension occurred when Ikemefiina in *Things Fall Apart* is taken to Umuofia to be sacrificed to the gods. That day, darkness struck the family and the mother cried bitterly but Ikemefiina failed to understand the situation.

In absence of his father's presence in the meeting, Hamaka is nominated to be conscripted. That evening he was taken away, his father watches helplessly while his mother wails bitterly as soldiers march Hamaka away to the military training depot at Ebenato. He becomes a recruit. They have his hair shaved clean just similar to the full moon. The quantity and quality of food they eat is never commensurate with early morning road walks, parade and tactical parade. It is all awful. The whole newly conscripted soldiers are looking for a way of escape. Hamaka's plan is triggered by his mother's visit to their camp. Though with mixed feelings his escape becomes obvious.

But he dared not make any mistake for if caught; he would be subjected to inhuman treatment that day. He and his colleagues have only been taught what a sentry should do; to stand on guard till dawn. Hamaka deceives his colleague by pretending to ease himself in a nearby bush and escaped. You can imagine a teenage boy walking alone in the thick night on a road dreaded even in the daytime; a road feared for human head hunting and highway robbers. Worst still, the road crosses a river called Ezeudene with its weird stories. Hamaka picks a race; he becomes a fugitive in his fatherland. His highest task is to cross the Ezeudene River; the river feared in the daylight by most "courageous men". Amidst goose pimples and numb body, he crosses the bridge and steps on Agumba town. This is an ordeal, which an innocent cannot be allowed to experience under normal circumstances. At the village, Hamaka could not hide long for the danger of being caught at home. The only option left for him is Nota where his senior sister is spending her marital life. The place is so remote that the conscriptors have not thought of the place.

Through the passage of marshy roads and crossing of four rivers he is at Nota. The place is quite accommodative if not the giant mosquitoes. He goes fishing with the rest of the boys from Nota. But soon the quiet terrain Nota used to be, changed drastically as the pressure of the war heightens'. As more people see Nota as a hiding place, a brigadier in charge of recruitment dispatched a squadron of conscriptors to Nota to round up all the run-away soldiers. Life toughens for Hamaka again. His sister allows him to hide in the ceiling made of bamboo materials. When the soldiers started searching the ceiling, Hamaka and his group resorted to sleep in the bush. Nowhere is safe for Biafran boys. The unsafe atmosphere brings Hamaka back to Umuakom through the bush paths. Though back safely but the future is still bleak. Hamaka couldn't move about easily because an enemy even in one's hamlet can report the person to the conscriptors.

Apart from the hazards of war, people played evil against one another. Those who want one's son's death would easily report for his conscription. The person can even make sure the boy is placed at the war front to assure his death. So war carries along with it heinous treachery. When Hamaka eventually found a hiding place under the Red Cross Society, again he is only exposed to danger by mere treachery. With the help of his friend; the branch secretary of Red Cross, he got posted to Umuinem where he served in the kitchen and helps to get food ready for members of the casualty. Each batch is replaced every month, but Hamaka renews his own tenure by a deal he struck with Goddy Lukana, his friend's confidant secretary. He made a new friend in camp whose name is John. Hamaka is oblivious that John is a military intelligence serving under the Red Cross as a spy. He emptied his past to John from his initial conscription to his sneaking away; unaware to Hamaka, John gathers the information until one day. In the camp-turned into Sodom, there is a girl who plays lewd pranks with Hamaka. Hamaka has never lived in close range with strange girls but in the camp it is the order of the day:

In the evenings, army officers came and carried off most of the girls, some of the girls spent the night with officers and come back early in the morning to join us in our daily chores. Life in the camp was really permissive. (76)

Such is the existing aura in the camp when Justina in her moral laxity entices Hamaka, as he is naked taking his bath of which both were only separated by a dwarf wall. Before Hamaka knew it, Justina leaned over the wall and shouted, "I have seen it! She has seen what Hamaka has been hiding. This embarrassed Hamaka so much for he has not

been initiated to such immoral games. When Hamaka embarks on his retaliatory journey and sees her nakedness over the same dwarf wall after two days, Justina did not find it funny, she wept bitterly, amazingly. This is more than what Hamaka envisaged. The news spread the whole camp like wild fire. With this harsh order "move or I move you" Hamaka is marched by John and two soldiers into waiting army jeep taken to brigade headquarters. There, Hamaka is bundled into fifteen feet deep ditch- the home of stragglers and war criminals. John is one of those the war has turned into heartless sadists. How could he treat his friend this way because of Justina whom Hamaka is not aware that they do funny things in the dark?

In the bunker, the real ordeal as a fugitive commences. The ditch is a wonder world of its own. He is first received with hot slap on his face. The bunker has a brutish hierarchy. At the highest hierarchy is "Oga kpata kpata". Then there is a facilitator, the local police or "korofo" as he is known in the ditch. The korofo orders Hamaka to look around the ditch. All he could see are half naked, aggressive looking inmates and besides:

The walls of the ditch were very dirty. There were visible marks of human wastes on the walls. The floor was littered with all sorts of rubbish. The inmates hardly bathed and it was horrible. I was forced to swallow my saliva, as spitting it out would have provoked them even more. Apparently the inmates were accustomed to the odour in the ditch. They did not seem to be bothered about it. (81)

After the looking round, the next order was to remove his shirt which is immediately collected by someone. The duty roster on the wall is shown to him the roster is obviously scribbled with human blood; the blood of new inmates who resisted orders during initiation. Hamaka is ordered to read out the orders thus;

First day cleaning Nyash; Second day, removal of kwarikwata; Third day, removal of shit; Fourth day, ikpo ubo (84).

It is too unfortunate, the state of degradation of human beings. They are reduced to mere animals wallowing in the quagmire of jungle justice. How can the inmate of that ditch adjust to normal life? One may ask. These are youths; the legacy of every race, those who bear the societal imprint in a formative sense. The youths who will carry societal ideals to the unforeseen future are tortured by war. They undergo a life of uncertainty, torture, risk, hunger, loss of innocence and embrace crime. Such a society struggles with most unholy and the most savage of

human animals full of treachery as a result of psychological wreck the youths undergo.

Unfortunate is the society that lives to absorb such outlet, the outlet of humiliating experience of waiting and watching a man stool after which his anus is cleaned for him by another youth. Even a sick man doesn't even find it easy to allow others to do this most private work for him. This is highest level of sickness, I guess. This is what war breeds. Its influence penetrates several generations and man is in great jeopardy. How can these inmates forgive the perpetrators of war and adjust to life of peace and justice having spent their life in most disgusting and unlawful way?

The ditch is a typical example of jungle justice. The 'Oga' changes any rule at will to suit his whims and caprices. He has become so disillusioned about life that he swings to the negative side of it. He hates decency. His language is most obscene. He has no scruples. He openly admits that he has no regard for law and order and swears that if he ever becomes free; his only business would be committing rape, arson, and stealing. He recounted with pride the number of rapes he had committed. He congratulates himself that his victims feel helpless. He laughs as he recounts how dejected his victims feel after their ordeals. War is the highest producer of law-breakers, sadists and those drunk in opium of crime. This is what Onyekwelu uses his *Fugitive in Biafra* to buttress through his hero, Hamaka. Although he succeeds in reconstructing his life into good adult life but his life is almost shattered as a result of intense frustration during his run away days, loss of trust in friends like John, loss of innocence and seduction at the camp, severe tortures, humiliation and overdose of jungle justice in the bunker. All these make Hamaka to grow into an experienced adult. It has helped him to combat even the last experience with Justina that brought him into the ditch, it has also helped him in a similar pressure from his female principal who is trying by all means to drag him into immoral quagmire. The same principal's pressure is what Chike cannot shoulder; this is the crisis that gives birth to Onyekwelu's long flash back style in which Hamaka retells his chequered life to console Chike.

## II. CONCLUSION

All human afflictions, hunger, disease, death, penury are multiplied at the period of war. During such time the children are the highest victims. They are exposed to disaster, horror, discomfort, tragedy, which harden their lives and bring them close to protracted undesirable behaviour. This is the primary motive of Ngugi and Onyekwelu in their works. The experience of children

during the war is generally abhorred. Though some lucky ones like Hamaka use the period to be more experienced in life. Hence Hamaka says;

I cannot say precisely whether such experiences were a blessing or curse. I am happy though that I had them. They made me see the other side of life. I had been enjoying a life of tranquility and sound morals. In the ditch, I was exposed to the way criminals reasoned and that put me in a better position to appreciate the world and the people and circumstance in it (88).

Perhaps our leaders are oblivious of how war can retard a populace. They are always well protected otherwise if they envisage or better experience what endorsement of war could cause the people, economy, education, peace etc they would always be ready to settle every dispute with dialogue and peace accord. Hamaka says;

Although life in the ditch was certainly undesirable, it may be good to expose some of our leaders and administrators to experience life in such places for at least one week... (88).

War retards the education of the children. This is exactly what happens to Njorogo and Mwihiaki, whose prolonged war lasted from their primary to secondary school days. At the height of war, Njorogo is recalled from school. The loss of the parents cannot promote their education in any way. Besides, the general atmosphere in the society is such that is infertile to the growth of education for any one. This has drastic effects on children that undergo such ordeal. War breeds criminals and such criminals spread into the society. They become hardened and swear to propagate evil such as arson, rape, prostitution, murder, treachery etc.

Such is the like of 'Oga kpatata kpatata' in the bunker;

He openly admitted that he had no regard for law and order and swore that if he ever became free; his only business would be committing rape, arson and stealing. He recounted with pride the number of rapes he had committed (89).

From this parlance one can conclude that Onyekwelu's Hamaka, though grows into adulthood but not without unwarranted torture, which would have turned him into a brute. That was affirmed by Julie Phelpo Dieche in the statement:

The real war ...can be seen to serve as a metaphor for difficulty, even the torture it is for some young men to have behind the dreams of childhood, to embrace their adult selves (200).

But does Ngugi's Njorogo grow up? His vision commenced with his mother's announcement that he is soon to start school. This is his childhood heart's desire. This followed with a vision likened to Moses to save his race. Instead of becoming a brave adult and aspire to accomplish his vision not minding the protracted war and its horror, he reduces himself to a child's behaviour and is rescued from suicide by his mother. War has denied him good personality development. It has turned him into a coward. His dreams of being the Moses of his people are drowned in cowardice because of the horror in the atmosphere. War turns its claws on the children, it hardly leaves them responsible citizens. This alone bundles a society into abyss. No correct thinking man would fold arms and allow war in his lifetime. This article fans the embers of our 21<sup>st</sup> century consciousness in the present day Nigeria which is bedeviled by imminent war as bloodshed and victimizations abound in the present dispensation of the Muhammadu Buhari's regime where the acts of violence are meted by the terrorist group of Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsmen to which he does nothing to put their evil actions to check. It is a call for retractions because the trend is seriously moving towards WAR which is an ill wind that blows no one good, especially the young in the society who are the future leaders. Worthy of note is the prophetic character of Nnamdi, in *Fugitive in Biafra* whose death brought a radical change in the people of Umuokam and their neighbours concerning the negative effect of war, which is a pointer to the reality in the Nigerian situation concerning Nnamdi Kanu, the 21<sup>st</sup> century Biafran leader in Nigeria, whose sudden disappearance caused heightened bitterness in the minds and attitudes of the Igbo youths within and in diaspora, which up till date harbours imminent war breed. Let us all make hay while the sun shines. The likes of Ngugi and Onyekwelu have blown the warning whistle.

The duo has challenged the government to provide the society with something more than pleasure, something that would help to redefine the society and make it a living place for all. They have proved to be socially conscious artists who urge the society from where it is to where it ought to be. That is one of the essences of literature.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann, 1965. Print.
- [2] Audrey, Chapman. *Civil War in Nigeria*, Midstream, Feb 1968. Print.
- [3] Dieche, Julie Phelps. 'Child of War' Askar in Nuru-ddin Forah's *Maps in Children and Literature in Africa*. 1992. Print.

- [4] Fuaad Mohammed Freh: <https://www.omicsonline.org/open-access/psychological-effects-of-war-and-violence-on-children-jpab-SI-e001.php?aid=68333>. Net.
- [5] Iyayi, Festus. *Heroes*. Ibadan: Longman Group Ltd, 1986. Print.
- [6] "War affected children", <http://children.com/gentinvolved/geeducated/waraffectedchildren.Htm> 0286-35070740-ITM adwar. html. Net.
- [7] "Children and war" <http://peace.mensline.org/childrenandwar.html> "Children and Adolescents in Violence and Disasters" *News date* Volume 2. Mar-June 2009. Net.
- [8] Ngugi, Wa Thiong' O. *Weep Not Child*. London: Heinemann, 1964. Print
- [9] ... *Home Coming*. London: Heinemann, 1977. Print.
- [10] Nwapa, Flora. *Never Again*. Enugu; Nwanyiibuife Publishers Limited, 1975. Print.
- [11] Onyekwelu, Menankiti. *Fugitive in Biafra*. Enugu: Macmena and Rose International, 1992. Print.