

Activating Continuity in Post-Conflict Environments for African and African American Communities in Toni Morrison's *Paradise* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

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□ ABSTRACT □

This essay addresses subversive female responses in certain African and African American texts which imagine a decolonial modernity and creatively perceive possibilities for realizing tradition and communal awareness in architecture. In this regard, *Paradise*, by African American critic and novelist Toni Morrison, envisions a persistent spatial bondage that is reflected in the design of modernity and ultimately suggests an architectural freedom that is realized through narratological activation of effaced historical continuity in the isolative modern design. On the other hand, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, by Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, presents the architecture of postcolonial modernity as precipitator of the warring African community's rift that blocks any cultural expression of collective agency. Adichie's narrative suggests a liberatory osmosis of domestic and educational architectures to disrupt the traumatic ideologies of class and gender and initiate communal healing. So, both Morrison's and Adichie's narratives propose a utopian possibility for renovating modern architecture to recognize continuity in culture and community.

Key Words: modernity, trauma, architecture, temporality, psychosis, continuity, community

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تفعيل رؤيا الإستمرارية في بيئات ما بعد الصراع لدى المجتمعات الإفريقية والأمريكية الإفريقية في سرديات "الجنة" للكاتبة توني موريسون و "نصف شمس صفراء" لتشيماماندا نغوزي أديتشي

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□ ملخص □

تتناول هذه المقالة المبادرات الأنثوية المقاومة في بعض النصوص الإفريقية والأمريكية من أصول إفريقية والتي تتصور حادثة خالية من التأثيرات الإستعمارية وتخلق إمكانيات تفعيل الوعي الثقافي والمجتمعي في البنية المعمارية. في هذا الصدد، تتناول سردية "الجنة" لتوني موريسون، الكاتبة والناقدة الأمريكية من أصل إفريقي، مشكلة عبودية المكان القائمة في تصميم الحادثة وتقتح في نهاية المطاف تفعيل الحرية المعمارية من خلال التنشيط السردى للإستمرارية التاريخية الواعية التي همّشت في التصميم الحديث المعزول. من ناحية أخرى، تقرأ سردية "نصف شمس صفراء"، للكاتبة النيجرية تشيماماندا نغوزي أديتشي، بنية حادثة ما بعد الإستعمار كعارض لذهان المجتمع الإفريقي المتحارب والذي يعرقل أي تعبير ثقافي عن النهوض المجتمعي. تقترح سردية أديتشي تصميماً تحريراً للبنى المنزلية والتعليمية لتعطيل ايديولوجيات البيولوجيا والطبقة الاجتماعية والشروع في الشفاء المجتمعي. لذا، فإن روايات موريسون وأديتشي تشير إلى إمكانية طوباوية لإنهاء تأثير الإستعمار في الهندسة المعمارية الحديثة والتماس الإستمرارية الثقافية والمجتمعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحادثة ، الصدمة ، البنية المعمارية ، الزمانية ، الذهان ، الإستمرارية ، المجتمع

I. Introduction:

Contemporary African American and African literatures present cases of post-conflict environments that maintain tensions and project hostilities. As certain narratives reveal, such violent environments are shaped by the lethal legacies of tenacious binaries of

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modernity/ tradition and modernity/community that ultimately impede complete realization of societal transformation and stability. For instance, conflict resolution in certain African American and African communities becomes contingent on both colonial modernity that is mobilized to construct the African and African American identity's sense of temporality and discontinuity and postcolonial modernity that generates the trauma of social and communal psychosis.

In this context, my essay addresses women's particular responses of resistance in certain African American and African texts which imagine a decolonial modernity that creatively perceives possibilities for sustaining tradition and communal awareness. In particular, *Paradise* (1998), by African American critic and novelist Toni Morrison, presents a persistent architectural bondage that is reflected in both the design of exclusiveness that shapes Ruby travelers' newly established Oven and the structure of insecurity in the traumatized women's renovated Convent. So, the narrative envisions an architectural freedom that is established through narratological activation of effaced historical continuity in the isolative modern design. Such reconnection with historical structures would, for example, imagine a liberatory structure in the Oven and Convent. On the other hand, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), by Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, reads the architecture of postcolonial modernity as precipitator of the warring African community's psychosis that blocks any cultural expression of collective agency. Adichie's narrative suggests liberatory osmosis of domestic and educational architectures to suspend the traumatic ideologies of class and gender and initiate communal healing. So, both Morrison's and Adichie's narratives suggest a utopian possibility for renovating modern architecture to realize continuity in culture and community.

II. Theoretical Framework and Methodology:

In postcolonial utopianism and most contemporary utopian theories, utopia is no longer a place but a construct of hope. Postcolonial critics, such as Bill Ashcroft, present the imagining of utopia as "the most consistent expression of the anticipatory consciousness that characterizes human thinking" (Ashcroft, 1989: 2). According to Marxist philosophers, such as Ernst Bloch, utopia involves "anticipatory illumination" or the revelation of "possibilities for rearranging social and political relations" (Ashcroft, 1989: xxxiii) through which the present becomes a crucial site of constant motion and freedom. Such neo-understanding of utopia is located in the modern vision of anti-colonial and decolonial projects. Ultimately, decolonization, for modern subjects, becomes grounded in the realization of utopia that involves a continual process of liberation that engages with the tenacious binaries of modernity/tradition and modernity/community. The manifestations of this tension are colonial modernity that is mobilized to construct the Black identity's sense of temporality and discontinuity, and postcolonial modernity that generates the social trauma of communal psychosis in African communities. The response of decolonization in certain African American and African texts has imagined a decolonial modernity that creatively perceives possibilities of realizing tradition and communal awareness. In particular, decolonization has been located in the radical and transformative intervention in the black identity's ethos of liberation from the cultural artifact of modern architecture that is shaped by an isolative design and sustains disengagement and rupture. Such a design projects a contagious sense of destructive psychic disability that suspends both the colonized and postcolonial people's realization of the effaced repository of communal osmosis and cultural or historical continuity in modernity.

III. Discussion and Research Objectives:

Toni Morrison perceives modernity as a precipitator of the pathology of temporality that eventually projects self-isolation, disengagement, and restlessness (Conner, 2015: 20). In this respect, I would argue that Morrison's *Paradise* contests the architectural pathology of modern discontinuity by re-imagining a case of historically architectural facet of political instability and gendered isolation within an African American context. Morrison's *Paradise* showcases the fragmentation of American culture after World War I and the general dissolution of tradition, continuity, and community. *Paradise* presents a case of Black escape from modern Western culture's suppressive self-isolation that generated racial doctrines and gender categories. The manifestations of such isolation are related to the architectural designs which project fear and split that define racial and communal relations as revealed in the story of Haven's establishment by nine strong '8-rock' travelers from postbellum Louisiana and its later degeneration into a closed community in the Oklahoma territory. Their journey displays the onset of their modern design of discontinuity that is shaped by enforced interracial and intraracial enmity and forms of exclusion due to their caste and color, referred to as the "Disallowing, Part One." They were rejected by light-skinned blacks and ultimately denied entry to Fairly, Oklahoma. In response to such hostility, the dark-skinned travelers establish the black town of Haven in 1891 under the guidance of Zechariah Morgan, the founder of the community. The travelers design the town's Oven as a domestic space, being the community's kitchen and the black patriarchs' holistic alternative to the white kitchen, and a public space for communal discussions and gatherings. However, the experience of another rejection or "Disallowing, Part Two" that features denial of medical care to the black Ruby Morgan, Zechariah's daughter, creates a further closed community. In reaction, Haven's founders "broke up the Oven and loaded it into two trucks" (Morrison, 1998: 16). The relocation of the Oven entailed its uprooting from the founding soil for communal value: "There was no need to wonder if moving the Oven had been a mistake; whether it needed its original soil as foundation for the respect and wholesome utility that was its due" (Morrison, 1998: 112). Dismantling and transplanting the Oven also jeopardized Zechariah's hybrid design of joint public and domestic spaces. The reconstructed Oven starts to lose its culinary function: "Minus the baptisms the Oven had no real value. What was needed back in Haven's early days had never been needed in Ruby. The trucks they came in brought cookstoves as well. The meat they ate clucked in the yard, or fell on its knees under a hammer, or squealed through a slice in its throat" (Morrison, 1998: 103). So, the new Oven's discontinuity and schism become the current markers of the travelers' hard-won community—later named Ruby, after Ruby Morgan, in 1952 (Morrison, 1998: 112).

Ultimately, all Ruby's oppressed runaways are now submissive to the pathological aesthetics of their architecture that sustains anxiety, violence, and suppression. The persistent bondage that is reflected in the Oven's design of exclusiveness transforms Ruby into a locus of cultural and gendered insularity. Ruby travelers' newly established Oven develops discourses that narrativize the paranoia of their architectural modernity into monologues that project reactionary fear and produce discursive closure that reflects discontinuity in imagination. For instance, Ruby's old and new generations valorize the enforcement of separation and boundaries in the name of protection as the only interpretation of the Oven's motto "Beware the Furrow of His Brow." They also develop antagonistic sentiments against intruders who destabilize the tranquility and racial purity of

their community, such as the runaway women who live in the neighboring Convent. Ruby men's narrow mindset even features a semi-violent behavior as revealed in Deacon's frequent night visits to the Oven. Reverend Misner associates Deacon's checking of the Oven with hunting: "Hard to figure, but I don't like the way Deek's face looks when he's checking the Oven. He does it every day God sends now. More like hunting than checking" (Morrison, 1998:117). With the establishment of Ruby, the transplanted Oven gradually loses its culinary function and eventually effaces the presence of women in its valorized space. Symptomatic of the new Oven's exclusive structure is the physical confinement of Ruby's women to multiple prisons presented in the narrative as kitchens, private gardens, and bedrooms (Morrison, 1998: 100, 89, 187). The segregation of Ruby's women also caused their physical pathology presented as childbearing disability:

The women nodded when the men took the Oven apart, packed, moved and reassembled it. But privately they resented the truck space given over to it—rather than a few more sacks of seed, rather than shoats or even a child's crib [...] a good thing, she thought, as far as it went, but it went too far. A utility became a shrine. (103)

Apart from Ruby, the neighboring Convent is another architectural design that projects instability and fear as symptoms of psychic pathology. The Convent features structural metamorphosis and renovation, first from a decadent embezzler's mansion and later to a Catholic boarding school for Indian girls. After the death of some elderly nuns and the departure of others, a diverse group of runaway women take over the deserted convent. Consolata Sosa, Mavis Albright, Grace Gibson, Seneca, and Pallas Truelove have been victimized by the trauma of separation and abandonment and later demonized and targeted by the male elites of Ruby's community. The traumatized residents initially seek the erratic Convent as their sanctuary. However, the Convent women remain in bondage to the locus of spatial enclosure that projects insecurities. As such, they continue to grapple with their restlessness, resignation, and "drift" that Consolata worriedly detects in herself as well. Consolata observes that "the timbre of each of their voices told the same tale: disorder, deception and, what Sister Roberta warned the Indian girls against, drift. The three *d*'s that paved the road to perdition, and the greatest of these was drift" (Morrison, 1998: 222). Consolata's loss of Mary Magna and her failed love relation with the "living man," Deacon, provoke her feelings of emptiness and absence of definition: "Facing extinction, waiting to be evicted, wary of God, she felt like a curl of paper—nothing written on it—lying in the corner of an empty closet" (248). The other women who migrate to the Convent have also had their lives determined by abandonment and abuse caused by parents, men, and other women. For instance, Mavis has been traumatized by her abusive partner. Her distress becomes even more devastating after the death of her unattended twin babies in her hot car. Ultimately, newspapers and social workers condemn Mavis for her seeming irresponsibility and denounce her as an insane criminal. In a tragic response, Mavis internalizes the society's perceptions and calls her traumatized self "the dumbest bitch on the planet" (37). Grace arrives at the Convent wondering "whether there was anything at all the world had to say for itself (in rock, tree or water) that wasn't body bags or little boys spitting blood into their hands so as not to ruin their shoes" (68). Grace abandoned the Civil Rights' struggle after realizing that it would not be over "in a season or two" (257). Her reckless disloyalty to the goals of the Civil Rights' struggle provokes her long-time feelings of self-disapproval: "No, you stupid, stupid bitch. Because you weren't tough enough. Smart enough. Like with every other goddamn thing you got no staying power [...] You thought we were hot lava and when they broke us down into sand,

you ran” (257). Seneca is abandoned by her mother, sexually abused by her foster brother, and exploited by a wealthy woman who treats her “like a pet you wanted to be with for a while--a little while-- but not keep. Not love. Not name” (138). Pallas is struggling with the haunting scenes of her mother and lover’s betrayals and her rape by strangers (254-55). So, the traumas of the Convent women have trapped them in various repressive realities that block their elevation or perception of self-worth. Their individual traumas precipitate feelings of incompleteness and emptiness that cause resignation and violation of the self. In other words, the women’s drift blocks their awareness of “visionary” abilities (Elia, 2001: 144) and perception of continuity that could locate freedom in the structure of their Convent.

The Convent women are transformed into virtual prisoners of architectural discontinuity that activates pathological amnesia as their daily routine. Amnesia becomes a manifestation of contagious architectural discontinuity in *Paradise*. The Convent women follow sedentary rites that project disengagement and “escap[ing] cycles of abuse” (Kearly, 2000: 12) that obstruct their visionary imagination and collective healing. Consolata performs the opiumic ritual of discontinuity that aggravates her feelings of oblivion and desire for death through excessive drinking. The other residents also escape in ways that are dysfunctional and self-defeating. Mavis makes peace with the two suffocated toddlers, Merle and Pearl, by summoning and communicating with their apparitions. She ends up hallucinating and staging endless fantasy scenes of love and care: “When [Mavis and Pallas] were in front of Mavis’ bedroom door she didn’t open it. She froze. ‘Hear that? They’re happy’, she said, covering her laughing lips. ‘I knew it. They love that baby. Absolutely love it’. She turned to Pallas. ‘They like you too. They think you’re divine” (Morrison, 1998: 182). Grace names herself Gigi in order to evade the trauma connected to the name given by her mother. However, Gigi remains “so dependent on the approving gazes of men that she reduces herself to gaudy sexual flirtation” (Kearly, 2000:12). Seneca “induc[es] a serenity” (Morrison, 1998: 261) through the ritual of cutting and drawing maps of wounds: “Although she had moved the map from her arms to her thighs, she recognized with pleasure the traces of old roads, avenues that even Norma had been repelled by” (Morrison, 1998: 260). This obsessive scarring is intended to kill a “pain so wildly triumphant” (261) and “to have some sense of feeling to her body, using the physical sensation to substitute the emotional pain” (Kearly, 2000:12). Pallas is another traumatized resident of the Convent, whose opium ritual is projected in her constant food consumption that develops into an eating disorder in the form of bulimia. Consolata even perceives that the Convent women’s anxiety has developed into self-annihilation. She recognizes “disorder” and “deception” as the symptoms of their internal psychosis that “paved the road to perdition” (Morrison, 1998: 222)

However, the ethos of liberation from the contagious architecture of destructive insecurity is developed in Ruby and the Convent through the rite of concentration. The practice of concentration has been integral to female resistance, for it “has an immense appeal to subjugated peoples, as it gives them hope against the odds” (Elia, 2001: 141). In *Paradise*, Consolata locates resistance in the very act of “stepping in” (Morrison, 1998: 247) that effectively discloses effaced freedom in the supposed loci of exclusion. Consolata’s replication of the Convent’s structural doubleness is best theorized as a form of mimicry that involves “double articulation,” to use Homi Bhabha’s definition, and is based on a strategic repetition that exposes the effaced “ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate [...] hierarchy,

normalization, marginalization and so forth”(Bhabha, 2001:158). Consolata’s “stepping in” realizes effaced ambivalence in the closed structure of the Convent that supposedly conveys invisibility and death only and unveils its potential of visibility and regeneration. Ultimately, the psychically attuned and emotionally sensitive Consolata mimics the Convent’s disregard for time to counteract the women’s repressive insecurities. She directs the traumatized residents to follow her time frame that is shaped by the Convent’s irreverence to the outside world and initiate a time-consuming journey of self-discovery: “The table is set; the food placed. Consolata takes off her apron. With the aristocratic gaze of the blind she sweeps the women’s faces and says, ‘I call myself Consolata Sosa. If you want to be here you do what I say. Eat how I say. Sleep when I say’” (Morrison, 1998: 262). As a result, the women “came to see that they could not leave the one place they were free to leave” (262). So, they follow the Convent’s languor shaped by its “hiding places” (3) that initiate constant self-regeneration.

By stimulating irreverence and suspension of both internal and external concerns, Consolata then starts the healing process. She asks the women to draw their own templates on the floor of the Convent’s basement. The drawn stencils externalize the women’s bondage to animas that are shaped by insecurities and traumas indulged in the space of the Convent. Through Consolata’s direction, the women then narrativize the Convent’s structure—along with the secrets symbolized by their engraved templates—into liberatory stories that project suspension of isolation. Thus, the Convent women’s repressive memories are converted into indeterminate stories that are unregulated by a particular ending and transcend all insular boundaries of fear:

This is how loud dreaming began. How the stories rose in that place. Half-tales and the never-dreamed escaped from their lips to soar high above guttering candles, shifting dust from crates and bottles. And it was never important to know who said the dream or whether it had meaning. In spite of or because their bodies ache, they step easily into the dreamer’s tale. (Morrison, 1998: 264)

Such collective articulation of their traumas teaches the Convent women to recognize and love the unity or connection between them: “In loud dreaming, monologue is no different from a shriek; accusations directed to the dead and long gone are undone by murmurs of love. So, exhausted and enraged, they rise and go to their beds vowing never to submit to that again but knowing full well they will. And they do” (264). After this ritual, the Convent women reach a significant stage towards their sober discernment. Such initiation into sobriety is observed in the Convent residents’ sudden “little change” into “sociable and connecting” women: “But if a friend came by, her initial alarm at the sight the young women might be muted by their adult manner; how calmly themselves they seemed” (Morrison, 1998: 265-66). This sudden change reflects the traumatized women’s eradication of the “enemy” from “within” (Verdelle, 1998), and their defiance of exclusion that fixates Ruby’s residents: “unlike some people in Ruby, the Convent women were no longer haunted” (Morrison, 1998:266). So, unlike the insecure Rubyists who simulate the architecture of rejection and fear, the Convent women locate their security in the difference and open-endedness of the same Convent.

Consolata’s therapeutic “stepping in” is extended into a time-gaining rhetoric which destabilizes the urgency of the Rubyists’ narrative that replicates the urgency of their architecture. Ruby’s patriarchs project both a destructive and architectural need for domination and desire to control the behavior and discursive patterns of the town’s inhabitants. The designated “July day” deadline marks the urgency and violent framework

of “Ruby,” a closed narrative added to the Oven’s archive of exclusive debates. However, the narrator of *Paradise* performs Consolata’s “stepping in” that features postponement and delay in the planned attack on the Convent. So, “Ruby” narrative is transformed into a rhetorical facet of Consolata’s “stepping in” and architectural redesign. The therapeutic aspect of the Convent “stepping in” is also reflected in the women’s empowering amnesia of traumatization. The Convent women’s narration of their insecurities features therapeutic amnesia which transfers them into different realities that do not recognize closed spaces or impending violence. The Convent women reach a “recourse in transcendence, the perdurance of a hypothetical eternal” which transcends their historical and human disruptions (Harlow, 1987: 84), such as the threat of death. Thus, the Convent women’s realization of divine reality has trivialized and annihilated death, as symbolized by the washing rain: “They would have laughed, had enchantment not been so deep. If there were any recollections of a recent warning or intimations of harm, the irresistible rain washed them away” (Morrison, 1998:282). This theosophy of death-annihilation through the Convent women’s purification and transparency is reinforced by Morrison who envisions their ritual as a rite of spiritual crescent that transcends the threat of death:

Well, first they go through that ritual of Consolata’s, which has echoes of New Age and spiritual regeneration. And then, yes, they end up in a very powerful religious ecstasy. It’s interesting and important to me that once the women are coherent and strong and clean in their interior lives, they feel saved. They feel impenetrable. So that when they are warned of the attack on the Convent, they don’t believe it. (Marcus, 2003: par.25)

Ultimately, the readers of *Paradise* experience similar security and ensuing amnesia of the pathological obsession with Ruby’s closure.

Challenges to liberatory transition have also been located in the African culture’s artifact of modern architecture that becomes a colonial legacy through sustaining isolation, disengagement, and rupture. One focal example is *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) by contemporary Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The narrative addresses the collective trauma of civilians who witness the atrocities of the Biafran Civil War (1967-1970) and undergo fear and hunger. In particular, Olanna, a female professor at Nsukka University in the Igboland, witnesses the murder of some Igbo people, including her relatives, in Kano. The narrative reads the architecture of postcolonial modernity as precipitator of the warring African community’s psychosis that blocks any cultural expression of collective memory and agency. Such an isolative design projects a contagious sense of destructive psychic disability that suspends both the African people’s post-conflict realization of the effaced repository of communal osmosis and cultural or historical continuity in modernity. In particular, this focal war trauma narrative extends the symbolic presentation of culinary space to incorporate trauma and agency into cuisine-related psychoanalytic theory.

Psychoanalytic theories suggest that the significance of food practices is not only biological but also symbolic. Images of culinary spaces and rites go even far beyond culture and class to signify issues of body, gender, power, sexuality and others. As such, the culinary presence in literature does not only convey the authors’ attempts to incorporate a concrete description of everyday life. Such presentation is also utilized for metaphorical purposes. Mary Anne Schofield, for example, had explored the value of food practices in literature. “Food cooked, eaten, and thought about,” Schofield contends, “provides a metaphorical matrix, a language that allows us a way to get at the uncertainty, the ineffable qualities of life” (Schofield, 1989: 1). Psychoanalytic theory dealing with

food demonstrates that “formative feeding experiences are inscribed in the psyche; food and eating are essential to self-identity and are instrumental in the definition of family, class and ethnicity” (Sceats, 2000: 4). In her *Food, Consumption and the Body in Contemporary Women’s Fiction*, Sarah Sceats examines the complex significance of culinary symbols in the fiction of contemporary women writers. Sceats’s analysis demonstrates that food and its consumption are not simply fundamental to life but are inseparable from questions of gender, power, and control. Focusing on the work of Doris Lessing, Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood, Michele Roberts and Alice Thomas Ellis, Sceats makes powerful connections between food, love, motherhood, sexual desire, self-identity, and social behavior. However, the figurative association of food with war and trauma has been overlooked in scholarships on the function of food in literature. In particular, the tactic use of culinary activities and spaces as a strategy to work through trauma has not been recognized. In this regard, Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* revises the symbolic presentations of food and culinary space appearing in the psychoanalytic theory, to include a peculiar association with war and trauma.

The interpretation of food practices as a social, cultural, and psychological projection of class, identity, and behavior patterns and as an “essentially social signifier, a bearer of interpersonal and cultural meanings” (Sceats, 2000:125) is already realized in Adichie’s narrative. Anthropologists Peter Farb and George Armelagos claim that since eating is something we normally do every day, it is a major means of self-definition. Moreover, eating, they argue, is an important channel for the transmission of culture. Food interrelationships, as Farb and Armelagos explain, are emblematic of societal relationships: “The humans’ basic biological need to eat’ they note, “cannot be separated from symbols and metaphors of status, gift-giving, feasting, social and kin relations, and sacred ritual” (Farb, 1980: 94). The kinds of food one eats and the people with whom one eats, to whom one gives food, from whom one takes food all these things strictly, if not always consciously, expose varied social structures. In this regard, Adichie’s narrative more particularly protests how the culinary space becomes to project a communal psychosis precipitated by the warring Nigerian class system that underlies shallow social standings. Such protest is enunciated in the way Kainene, Olanna’s twin sister, defines the new Nigerian upper class as “a collection of illiterates who read nothing and eat food they dislike at overpriced Lebanese restaurants” (Adichie, 2006: 64).

Most importantly, the beginning of Adichie’s narrative establishes the culinary space of the kitchen as a colonial design of traumatic boundaries that sustain isolation and rupture within the community along social and class lines. Such rupture is tolerated by Ugwu, the houseboy of Odenigbo (Olanna’s revolutionary lover), who designs dining tables that reinforce social, class, and cultural differences. While cleaning the dining table, Ugwu would tell who sat where even if he has not sneaked a look at the guests as they ate. Ugwu could tell from the plates, as the “Master’s plate was always the most rice-strewn...Okeoma ate everything with a spoon, his fork and knife pushed aside... Miss Adebayo left onion slices in her bowl. And Mr. Richard never chewed his chicken bones” (83). The pathological design of the colonial kitchen even becomes symptomatic of all dichotomies that maintain either blind imitation or hatred for a specific culture and dictate “the hostile acceptability of particular foods and what they signify [as] part of cultural identity” (Sceats, 2000:125). This is clear through the attitudes of Richard, Kainene’s English lover, and Harrison, the Nigerian houseboy, to the Nigerian and European food. Harrison does not cook native food and insists on cooking foreign recipes in an attempt to

imitate the English culture. On the contrary, Richard prefers Nigerian food and hates the food of his childhood. So, Richard dislikes the sharp-tasting kippers that are full of bones and “the porridge with the appalling thick skin on top like a waterproof lining” (Adichie, 2006: 73).

More specifically, the culinary space becomes trapped in the structure of the civil war’s traumatic psychosis. Traumatic otherness and the failure of the outsider to fully comprehend the experience of the traumatized other become systematic of the psychotic kitchen. The lack of both cultural and transcultural awareness is sustained through the attitude of the two American journalists when they see a group of children in the refugee camp roasting two rats around a fire. They comment that “[n]iggers are never choosy about what they eat” (Adichie, 2006: 365). They wonder how they eat everything, and how “[e]very fucking green leaf has become a vegetable” (Adichie, 2006: 366). Paradoxically, the scene takes place while one of the journalists, the plump one, has been bringing out a large chocolate bar from his pocket and taking bites. Moreover, the difficulty to comprehend the traumatic experience of the other is reflected through the items sent by Mohammed, Olanna’s Muslim friend, to her: handkerchiefs, crisp white underwear, bars of Lux soap, and Swiss chocolate. Mohammed sends Olanna Swiss chocolate while they cannot afford to buy salt and garri and are desperately in need for what can keep them alive. His letter along with the chocolate upsets Olanna and makes her feel offended: She turned a chocolate bar around in her hand, stared at the made in Switzerland, fiddled with the silver foil. Then she flung the bar across the room. Mohammed’s letter incensed her; it insulted her reality. But he could not possibly know that they had no salt and Odenigbo drank kai-kai every day and Ugwu was conscripted and she had sold her wig. (Adichie, 2006: 372)

The isolative design of the kitchen even projects a contagious sense of destructive psychic disability in educational and military spaces to become symptomatic of wartime trauma. The Nigerian war causes shortage in food items which leads to the prioritization of certain foods and entails disengagement and a contagious sense of disability. In particular, the urgent need to find salt and garri causes an educational disability that becomes analogous to physical disability. Mrs. Muokelu, a teacher at Akwakuma Elementary school, for example, leaves teaching to go to the front line carrying Nigerian coins to buy salt and garri as she has twelve people to feed after her husband “has returned from the war front with one leg” (Adichie, 2006: 288). Soldiers even suffer from ethical disability and start to hijack the food lorries and keep all the salt to trade. Because of its significance, salt now stands for the Biafran economic trauma that generates communal disability. This is why when Olanna expresses her anticipation that His Excellency would declare the war over and proclaim a free Biafra, she articulates her belief by hoping that he “would come back with justice and with salt” (Adichie, 2006: 404). The psychotic kitchen is even extended to separate kitchens that embrace the hostility of classifications and categorizations. When the Red Cross sends donations to Olanna and her family, they seem very picky about items sent. Thus, the Red Cross donations sustain prioritizations in the name of vital food items that can help relieve suffering and starvation, such as squat cans of condensed milk, slender tin of Ovaltine and packet of salt (Adichie, 2006: 276). In the same way, the aid package sent by Professor Ezeka, a friend of Olanna and Odenigbo, selectively contains cans of dried milk, tea, biscuits, Ovaltine, sardines, cartons of sugar, bags of salt and toilet tissue (Adichie, 2006: 328). All of these donations maintain communal tensions dictated by the constant espousal of social and class differences.

However, Adichie's narrative suggests radical and transformative intervention presented as liberatory osmosis of domestic and educational architectures to disrupt the post-conflict traumatic ideologies and initiate communal healing. The narrative celebrates the realization of communal continuity that discards all human, social, and class boundaries. So, the Biafrans initiate liberatory strategies for both post-conflict survival and healing. Such strategies involve erasing all colonial memories that sustain dichotomies and initiating a communal kitchen instead. The communal reconciliation involves the rejection of prioritization and the circulation of food as "win the war" community. So, reptiles, insects, and leaves are examples of a hostile diet that blocks cultural awareness. Roasted crickets, for example, become Harrison's new specialty. He "seemed to know just where to dig for them in the dry earth and how to break them up into bits after roasting, so that they lasted a bit longer" (Adichie, 2006: 397). People watch the goats to "see what they are eating, and after seeing they are boiling the same leaves and giving their children to drink" (Adichie, 2006: 298). Mama Adanna, Olanna's neighbor, cooks soup with the meat of her dog as she can find nothing to feed her sick daughter. Hawkers start to sell roasted lizards on the streets. Even Kainene lets Baby, Odenigbo's daughter, eat a lizard leg as she believes that Baby "should see life as it is" (Adichie, 2006: 383) and should not be too much protected from life. Thus, the alternative communal kitchen changes the interpretation of food as a practical post-conflict necessity to become a communal assertion of collective empowerment and reconciliation.

Ultimately, the communal kitchen initiates agency and mobility as it engages all military and educational spaces that feature healing from isolation and disengagement. The communal kitchen plays an essential role in supporting the cause of the war. Historically speaking, "Food Will Win the War!" has been the slogan used during World War I to encourage farmers in America to produce more food and to conserve essential commodities. In 1942, when Claude R. Wickard, Secretary of Agriculture of the United States, has announced the rationing of processed food, he has highlighted the significance of food as one of the most important fighting assets. Wickard proclaims that "the way we manage our food supply will have a lot to do with how soon we win this war" (1942). He asserts that food is "a weapon-a most powerful weapon. And the food we consume here at home is just as much a material of war as the food we send abroad to our soldiers and fighting allies" (1942). The same slogan has been used again by many governments during World War II. The British government, for instance, has launched "The Dig for Victory" campaign that urged everybody in Britain to use gardens and every spare piece of land, such as parks, golf clubs, and tennis courts, to grow crops and vegetables and keep farm animals and birds. In Adichie's narrative, food and drinks are now used as part of the coordinated mobilization of the society's resources to support the military objectives and contribute actively to winning the war and ending the conflict as a community. Yams have been given away to soldiers; the win-the-war rice has been cooked with some palm oil and little else; (Adichie, 2006: 355) and liquor has been locally made and sold in old beer bottles as "part of the win-the-war effort" (299). Farming, as the kitchen's resource, has also been used as a strategy for self-sufficiency, a fact Odenigbo notes before the outbreak of war. Odenigbo feels the need for the government to focus on irrigation technology as farming can help feed the country easily and overcome the "colonial dependence on imports" (Adichie, 2006: 88). This is also why Kainene starts a farm at the refugee camp and works as a food supplier.

The realization of a communal kitchen even transforms food and culinary practices into liberatory initiatives of working through other traumas. Food provides Olanna with a positive force for persistence and a stimulus for agency. After the explosion that spoils her wedding, Olanna, in the mid of the mess, starts to eat cakes. Eating provides Olanna with the means of tolerance. She eats to bear with the difficult situations. When she hurts the feelings of her neighbor, Edna, she feels biting hunger. She eats and eats, but doesn't feel satisfied:

Edna first looked surprised, then disgusted, before she turned and walked out of the flat. Olanna watched her go, sorry to have said what she said. But she would not apologize yet. She would give Edna a day or two. She felt suddenly hungry, bitingly hungry; her insides had been emptied out by her tears. She did not let her leftover jollof rice warm properly but ate it all from the pot, drank two cold bottles of beer, and still did not feel sated. She ate the biscuits in the cup. (Adichie, 2006: 228)

Also, cooking has been one of many other strategies carried out by Olanna to work through her sexual trauma. Olanna's traumatic response has been initiated upon realizing that Odenigbo has slept with Amala, his mother's village girl, "after only three weeks away from her" (Adichie, 2006: 221). However, as cooking is a creative outlet for stress, frustration, and traumatic memories, fixing long meals has become a part of the healing mechanism that Olanna maintains to work through her sexual trauma after returning to Nsukka from Kano.

Moreover, in Adichie's narrative, the osmosis of the culinary and artistic spaces terminates historical and cultural discontinuity. Written testimony, which is one of various strategies to work through trauma, has a strong connection with food and cooking. Such kind of connection is examined in Schofield's *Cooking by the Book: Food in Literature and Culture*. Schofield reveals how food is being read as a language in both literature and culture. G.K. Chesterton's "Fiction as Food" also extends this connection to suggest that food is a narrative strategy and the recipe, or the giving of it, is a form of embedded discourse (1964). Underscoring this symbiotic relationship between food and the written word, Chesterton remarks that every "healthy person at some period must feed on fiction as well as fact" (Chesterton, 1964: 30). This suggested connection between cooking and writing is realized in Adichie's communal kitchen that recommends healing through the osmosis of cooking and writing. So, culinary therapy and scriptotherapy become interchangeable in terms of their role and effect with respect to post-conflict trauma. Cooking, just as in writing, is a creative expression. It satisfies both the physical and psychological needs. So, *Half of a Yellow Sun* locates the narrative of post-conflict Nigeria in Ugwu's kitchen that renounces tensions to celebrate architectural osmosis. Ugwu now alternates cooking and writing to survive his traumatization. When he stops cooking, Ugwu resorts to the realm of scriptotherapy for further comfort. The emotional purging he gains through writing alleviates the symptomology of depression resulting from violence he observed during his conscription:

Ugwu thanked him and shook his head and realized that he would never be able to capture that child on paper, never be able to describe well enough the fear that dulled the eyes of mothers in the refugee camp when the bomber planes charged out of the sky. He would never be able to depict the very bleakness of bombing hungry people. But he tried, and the more he wrote the less he dreamed. (Adichie, 2006: 398)

In the end, it is Ugwu, the cook, himself who writes the "Narrative of the Life of a Country" that narrates his country's survival from violent conflicts.

IV. Conclusion:

To conclude, Morrison's and Adichie's narratives suggest a liberatory vision of utopian possibility in redesigning modern architecture to sustain continuity in culture and community. Morrison's *Paradise* strategically integrates liberatory narration that projects open-endedness and embraces continuity. Ultimately, what results is that Morrison's complex novel cultivates, from a modern space of isolation as literary experimentation, a site of continuity that generates healing and ultimate empowerment. On the other hand, Adichie's narrative suggests radical and transformative intervention presented as liberatory osmosis of architectures to disrupt the post-conflict traumatic ideologies and initiate communal healing.

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