

Identity as Life & Death in *My Name Is Okoro*

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Abstract

History provides the framework for literary production and the corroboration of historical controversies. Identity is implicated in the controversy of My Name is Okoro. This paper, through the application of new criticism as an analytic framework, examines identity as a thin line between life and death in My Name is Okoro. It further examines how identity is self-definition and survival. Many scholars have focused their literary analysis on the effects of the Nigerian Civil War without paying attention to the role of naming and identification during the war. This study also highlights that in times of crisis, identity protect the individuals who are associated with the side that wills more physical and military power. Identity is factor that affects the survival of individual in the society. This paper concludes that those of minority extraction as well as the Igbo of the Eastern region suffered greatly as a result of their identity in My Name is Okoro.

Keywords: *Identity, denial, new criticism, minority, majority, ethnicity.*

INTRODUCTION

In the event of civil unrest or political Insurgency, identity is the thin line between life and death of the individual caught in the flame of such unrest. Identity is a definition of self and it is what characterises visibility and survival for individuals in society. National literature is an identity narrative, chronicling the experience of the people. Augustin Uka Nwanyanwu & Okwudiri Anasiudu (2019) affirms the foregoing that; “The national narrative captures the struggle and experience of ethnic nationalities in specific historical moments” (p. 26). This affirms that Omatseye’s *My name is Okoro*, the creative literature of national minorities affirming memorial of the minorities killed. Onyekachi Peter Onuoha (2018a) accounting for the functionality of history in literature, submit that; “There is a nexus between self, literature and history and it’s a commonplace to submit that the writer appropriate from history in the creation of a literary text” (p. 17). The fluidity in the above mentioned concepts of self, literature and history are all premised on the functionality of memory in the creation of literary text.

Onuoha (2018b) theorising identity submit; “Identity which is self in Nigeria is constructed through the framework of gender and culture” (p. 36). Name and naming in Nigeria in the past represents ethnic identities, and has the full weight of various interpretations with regards to the Nigeria Civil War. The United Nations defines minorities based on “national, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity...” (p. 2). *My name is Okoro* is a minority literature burdening on identity of life and death during the Nigeria Civil war. *My Name is Okoro* depicts the functionality of the name during the time of civil war. Chibuike Smarts Mbarachi & Esther (2018) writing about names affirms that; “Names

are a reflection of people’s language and culture...” (p. 29). Name is a sort-code of identity and reality construction. Lilian Onyinye Ohanyere & Bassey Oben refer to this as an identity crisis as it begins with a change of name, while reiterating on the importance of name, they affirm that there is no identification without a name as name portrays existence. The denial of name is also a denial of existence. The denial of the minority rights and identity started with the British creation of Nigerian for administrative purposes. Nigeria was an economic construction of the British enterprise which did not take into consideration various ethnic nationalities but followed a simplistic deduction of lumping them together.

Although British government was aware of the possibilities of conflict of these ethnic multiplicities and decided to emphasize three regions based on various constitutional amendment but still sticks to the three geopolitical zones. The ethnic identities of minorities were submerged in a false inclusion. The British by their actions view ethnic minorities as a political appendage of the bigger ethnic majorities in Nigeria. Joseph C. Ebegbulem (2011) corroborated the foregoing thus:

In Africa, colonial administrations and imperial occupations carved up boundaries that divided territories inhabited by indigenous societies and brought together a diversity of ethnic communities within unitary administrative structures. In Nigeria, between 1914 and 1915, British colonial administrators created the three regional territories that explain “ethno-genesis” and later “ethno-tensions”: The Northern region was occupied by Hausa/Fulani, the Eastern region inhabited by the Igbos and the Western region by the Yorubas (p. 2). What this means is that the majority ethnic groups become the definition of the existence or non-existence of the minorities depending on the benevolent of the majority group in question. The name of the tribe of the ethnic group becomes the identity of the minority irrespective of their differences (Osonwa & Duke, 2018). Ebegbulem (2011) further acknowledge what British decision did to Nigeria when he highlighted that:

Within this divisive colonial structure, ethnic tensions emerged between these unequally developed groups primarily in the 1950s. The colonial tripartite division of Nigeria prevented a Nigerian nationalistic movement, manipulating geographical boundaries to reinforce separation between ethnic groups and transforming ethnicity into an identity by which to gain political power; this structure along with other administrative decisions emphasized ethnic nationalism and regional politics, resulting from significant uneven development within each region. The colonial division of Nigeria that reinforced ethnic groups, the rise of ethno-political consciousness, and the development of ethnic/regional political parties demonstrated that the British administration intentionally prevented the rise and success of Nigerian nationalism, instead promoting ethnic nationalism as a means to gain political power (p. 2).

This marks the origin of ethnic tension in Nigeria. New Historicism emphasizes the relationship between a text and the society. It looks at the historical condition that gave rise to a text as a means of interpretation of what the text represents in its analysis. New Historicism is of the view that writers can internally articulate the worldview and historical issue of the period they live or have studied. New Historicism sees the work of literature as another form of social construct which is produced by participants in the society. It argues that literature contains historical elements of belief, wars among others. Greenblatt (1989) sees New Historicism as “...a practice-practice rather than a doctrine... (p. 1). In his explanation of New Historicism he submitted that the historical context that gave rise to a text must be acknowledged in the criticism and analysis of the text. Greenblatt (1989)

argues that “...literary criticism has a familiar set of terms for the relationship between a work of art and the historical events to which it refers: we speak of allusion, symbolization, allegorization, representation, and above all mimesis” (p. 23). The writer is an imitator who copied from existing realities which might be present or past and remediate it through the strength of language and medium as argued by Aristotle to create what is new.

Greenblatt (1989) quotes Baxandall to make a case for New Historicism when he noted that “modification” which is considered necessary in parts of one’s “information”. This “modification” can be clearly seen in “My name is Okoro” as a product of the writer’s meddling with the historical material to suit his political and artistic intention. Craft modifies the history of the society based on the writer’s intention. This paper examines Omatseye’s *My name is Okoro* appropriation of history for literary entertainment. Greenblatt (1989) suggests how history functions in creative literature thus: “It is imperative that we acknowledge the modification and find a way to measure its degree, for it is only in such measurement that we can hope to chart the relationship between art and society” (p. 23). The delineation of characters and the depiction of the effects of the war in *My name is Okoro* give us the measurement to ascertain the effect of the Nigerian Civil War and the degree of the actions and the inactions of those that were involved during the war. Greenblatt (1989) affirms the foregoing when he observes that:

...methodological self consciousness is one of the distinguishing marks of new historicism in cultural studies as opposed to a historicism based upon faith in the transparency of signs and interpretative procedures-but it must be supplemented by an understanding that the work of art is not itself a pure flame that lies at the source of our speculations. Rather the work of art is itself product of manipulations, some of them our own... (p. 24).

Omatseye’s *My name is Okoro* represents Nigerian Civil War as a fictional narrative pointing at the period of the war. The work attempts to highlight the plight of the minorities during the war. The work gives literary presentation of the war as a contrast to historical events of the time. The appropriation of historical facts in a factionalised narrative to capture the plights of the minorities during the war as victims. Greenblatt (1989) affirms our conviction when he submits that : “... the work of art is a product of negotiation between a creator... equipped with a complex, communally shared repertory of conviction, and the institution of the society” (p. 24).

The communally shared repertory in this context is the Nigerian Civil War that provides the historical material for literary remediation for aesthetic purposes. *My Name is Okoro* is about a young man whose name is Samson Okoro whom the author of the novel uses his travel to the north as a historical sojourn into the Nigerian Civil war and to x-ray what happened to the Igbo and minorities during the build up to the war. Name provides a medium for the survival of Okoro in the novel. This is in line with Ernest Nneji Emenyonu’s (1973) submission that; “The Nigerian Civil war now a matter of history. The Republic of Biafra now lives in the pages of books...” (p. 77). And *My Name is Okoro* is now part of a creative historical narrative. It depicts the ethnic controversies and the murder of people as a result of identity construction.

METHOD

This paper, through the application of new criticism as an analytic framework, examines identity as a thin line between life and death in *My Name is Okoro*. New Criticism is a method of teaching literature that analyses a work only on the basis of its text. In other words, this theory analyses simply what is there in a literary work and does not consider

the author or the work's historical and cultural relevance. While proponents of this view do not fully dismiss the author or the author's history, they do believe that everything necessary to comprehend the work is contained within it and that the other elements have little impact on or significance to the meaning of literature. In America and Great Britain, New Criticism arose around the turn of the twentieth century. This approach employs a careful reading of a text, which involves disassembling a text and analysing its aspects, such as symbols and metaphors, to determine its meaning. Instead of examining the author or their history, as many critics had done before, the New Critics analysed the book only in terms of its techniques.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Identity as Life and Death

The impact of war on the people of eastern region have been comprehensively addressed in the Nigeria civil war memorial literature. However, the effect of the war on the minorities in Nigeria have not been given enough creative and critical attention as part of the narratives of the Nigeria Civil war literature. The war between Nigeria and Eastern region has as casualties some minority ethnic groups among the region who were affected as a result of the war. Arua Oko Omaka (2014) affirms the plight of the minorities that; "The gory experiences suffered by the Biafran minorities have largely been neglected in the historiography of the Biafra war" (p. 25). In recent times minorities are telling their stories. They highlight the remote killings of the Igbo in the Northern region. In this pogrom, minority ethnic groups are affected, sometimes caught between crossfire. For instance:

Their machetes and daggers blazed in an unequal alloy of red and brown. Their starched uniform, cheap perfume, sudden heat conquered the room. He was trying to make sense of the pageant. They began to chant throatily. Their melodies blared out of faces smoking with smirks and shows. Okoro's heart jumped out of place. They wore green khaki shirts and trousers and looked like soldiers. They were not soldiers because the soldiers of the Federal Republic were outfitted in a different colour, he thought. But he was wrong. A whiplash shot through Okoro. He inhaled their odour, a subversive chemistry of human offal, earth and cheap perfume. The boys formed a ring around him. "Wetin ya name?" asked a voice. Okoro could not see now (p. 6).

Okoro is caught in the ranging civil unrest that is targeted against the Igbo. The mob asked him of his name as a medium of identification. Okoro responded; "My name is Fox, John Fox," he said in a tremulous voice. (...). He wondered why he did not tell them the truth" (p. 7). Okoro's denial of his name is a process of identity reconstruction and survival in the face of civil unrest. The mob continues the process of establishing Okoro's identity which will determine whether he is left alive or to be killed. Okoro's life is threatened as the mob interrogates him. "Say toro," he thundered. Toro meant three pence in Yoruba language. Okoro obeyed. His answer did not put him in any ethnic bracket. "You foreigner?" "Yes," he intoned quickly. "I am American." The light-skinned fellow hesitated and turned away to his gang. Like lightning, he swiveled back and slapped him on the jaw. "Shege!" He cursed at Okoro and, within a minute, he led the boys away (p. 7). Okoro had to change his name just to survive the mob action. Even when he passed all their tests, as a minority he is still abused by the mob. "Okoro touched his left cheek and felt for any bruises from the slap. His fingers trembled but felt nothing. He could not tell if he had bruises but it did not matter. The slap had returned him to a temporary blindness...(p. 7).

In the face of conflict by the majority ethnic groups, the minority also bears the brunt even if he escape as a result of identity reconstruction. This is seen in the relationship between Okoro and Musa where he had lodge that very day before the outbreak of the uprising. “Okoro tried to mask his anxiety, although in a casual conversation, Musa had told him that he was from the Midwest, like him. He hails from a place called Agenebode, but he evinced all the cultural traits of a Hausa Fulani. He was an assimilated southerner, who easily passed for a northerner. He recalled that both their languages-his and Okoro’s -called God Oghene” (p. 39). Musa how to exist under an assimilated identity to stay alive because the East classification submerges his identity as Igbo where as he is not. Those from the south but whose assimilated identity of being a northerner holds dear to the norms of such assimilation because their lives dependen on it. Musa a minority identifies with the north as northerners so as to preserve his life. In fact denial of relationship or friendship is adopted by Musa at first and as a means of preserving his own life. He denied his origin, he denied and disassociated himself from Okoro. “Oga, you know say your name is Okoro. How can I fit explain say I no dey hide yanmiri for the hotel?” (p. 39). The foregoing demonstrated how Musa disassociated himself from Okoro even when both of them came from the same ethnic group. The desire for him to live made him to reconstruct his ethnic identity having nothing to do with the Midwest because his assailant could not identify the difference. “Oga,” Musa said and opened the door. “Make you go now. Somebody come ask whether you dey here. I say no. E be like say he no believe me. Please leave or you and me go die tonight. Me self want go home and close down” (p. 40). This is a means of Musa to protect himself and his boss investment by disassociating him with a perceived minority even when he is one.

Chief Subomi is willing to help, but he does not want to risk the lives of his family and that of his, for the Igbos. So disassociation and renouncing every affiliation with the Igbos becomes a rejection of a particular identity that is synonymous to death in the time of crisis. “Okoro understood that the chief did not want to risk his presence around the hotel for fear of being tagged a conspirator hiding the Igbos. A few of his kinsmen had either died or had been mauled by the irate boys” (p. 42). This captures the functionality of identity as a means for survival from death occasioned by ethnic identity.

The minority attempting to educate the advancing forces of the Nigeria Army wrote on the walls of their houses to define their identity because most of the Nigeria soldiers did not know the difference between the Igbo and some minority ethnic groups. They wrote; “THIS IS NOT IGBO HOUSE, or THIS IS URHOBHO HOUSE, or THIS IS ITSEKIRI HOUSE, or THIS IS ISOKO HOUSE, etc” (196). This is a medium of identity creation and an attempt to preserve their lives from the Nigeria military force. Even some who are Igbos denied it to preserve their lives. For instance:

...a man who was picked up for being an Igbo man. He had denied. He said he was from Calabar. The man was arrested and hauled into a van on the way to the river. The man chanted: “I no be yanmiri I be Calabar.” (I am not yanmiri, I am Calabar.) The man was killed, but the children turned his chant into a play song. “Yanmiri” was a slur of word for Igbo. He was killed alone. Others were ordered to stand in the river in rows, those behind would place their hands on the shoulders of those in front of them. The soldiers eliminated them in a staccato of gunfire (p. 198).

Denial does not at all times save those involved when the assailants have fixed the identity category of such individuals as the excerpt illustrate. Identity becomes the man’s offence even when he is denied such a tribal tag. Egodi Uchendu (2010) states that; “The soldiers who entered Agbor did not only molest women: they also harassed men. When the local

people refused to come out of hiding, they promised not to harm them but requested to be formally welcomed. (...). People were killed indiscriminately in the area soon after they came out of their hideouts...” (p. 80). The people were killed because of their identity even when they are minority.

By virtue of identity ascribed, women and children were murdered. “The woman, probably twenty five, was without her clothes, and her underwear seemed to have been forced on her by a bloodstained hand. The boy was in her arms” (p. 12). The woman is sexually exploited and killed including her child as a result of her identity, even little children were not spared of the killings. They also killed men and looted their goods while the ladies were raped and killed as a result of their identity and the hatred associated to such identity. For instance; “...De Choice, and his son was slaughtered in front of his supermarket. The son Uche, a stocky twenty-nine-year-old, had run to the store when he heard that the angry crowd had reached there and had slaughtered every Igbo person on the payroll. When he arrived there, the boys had made away with some of the goods. Amidst swearing, he decided to lock up the place” (p. 43). This is how extensive the power of identity hatred and how destructive it can be to a group of people in times of crisis as illustrated in *My Name is Okoro*. The issue of identity is synonymous to life in a society where ethnicity strives. Identity is a form of total protection depending on the ethnic group that have military, political and economic power. Identity is goodwill that protect individuals investment in a society in a collective sense, those not having such identity tag loss their lives and properties as clearly re-enacted in *My Name is Okoro*. Uche’s plight corroborate the above submissions. The looters did not go away from Uche’s father’s shop, they went to drop their spoils of war and went for more. Uche’s illustrates the power of identity in time of ethnic crisis, thus:

Uche decided to leave the bodies inside and lock up the place. (...) ...he locked two of the doors before he proceeded to the smallest door through which the staff entered and left the building. But before he inserted the key into the last padlock, the boys had returned. They told him in Hausa to open the shop and he asked them in English what they wanted. ...they pounds on Uche... He died looking at the knife in his stomach. The boys hacked away the padlock on the big doors open amidst chants and entered the shop. They looted for close to thirty minutes, making away with milk, bread, sardine, meat pies, tea and sugar as much as they could carry....(p. 45).

The youths in the north in *My Name is Okoro* abused ethnic nationalities different from their tribe. They loot their goods and killed them in the process.

Identity associated by a particular tribe also led to the death of those who bear the name tag. Naming becomes a medium of survival for those who are from the ethnic group on rampage, even the innocent ones among a particular ethnic group are killed by virtue of their names:

His right hand was trapped in a mesh of flesh. He looked and recognised it as the intestines of Ogwu, the secretary who had left to call his boss, John Madueke, who was on the following street. The eyes of the young man were looking at his. Glassy, bloodless eyes. The same eyes into which he had applied eye drops barely two hours earlier. Madueke was an Igbo man, and he was slain outside. Madueke and his assistant were not asked to say toro (p. 8).

Ogwu and Madueke were killed because of their identity and a minority is traumatized by the gory sight. Ogwu who was a child was not spared the fate of his people and he was

killed alongside his boss. There were many which Okoro the main character in the novel could not identify but had a common fate with other characters as result of identity and this traumatised Okoro. “Okoro felt again like a live animal on a butcher’s slaughter slab, waiting to join the companions of the slain.

Knowledge of the dead around him paralysed his limbs” (p. 10). Okoro feared for his life on seeing what happened to the other characters of the eastern region before him. As he moves along the street, he would witness the ones that did not take place in his presence but the certainty of them all was death. For Okoro Survived based on his denial of identity that would have been associated with the Igbos. As a result of classifying minorities under three dominant ethnic groups. Karen E. Rosenblum et al (1996) writing about classification submit that; “Classification schemes are by definition systems for naming categories of people...” (p. 6). The naming of categories in *My Name is Okoro* is a determinant whether an individual survives the unrest before the war the person gets killed.

This category makes those who bear what sound like Igbo name to die by mass action. The problem is a continuation of British perception that the three ethnic groups are representation of the multi nationalities in Nigeria. This issue of identity led to death of mean in which Okoro the narrator bears witness to. The character development of Okoro takes us gradually to the carnage of the pogrom in the north as a result of naming and ethnicity.

When he stepped out of the door, he took a good look at the two bodies, picked up his blood-stained black jacket, slipped it He froze at the gate, gazing at the bodies of a woman and a little boy. The woman, probably twenty five, was without her clothes, and her underwear seemed to have been forced on her by bloodstained hands. The boy was in her arms. Okoro did not look twice before he stepped over him (p.12).

Mother and children were killed as a result of their identity. The women were raped while the children were killed in cold blood. The pogrom emphasizes ethnic affiliation in the world of the novel. It further divided the country into a geopolitical entity and many appeal to it to make statements either of assistance or of survival. “We are Yoruba people, not Hausa,” the boy said. “The Hausa boys hunted for the Igbos,” he added, as though Okoro did not know. Okoro recognised the boy’s accent. He sounded like the Yoruba people who hailed from the Western Region of the country” (p. 15). Ethnic identity and characteristics were emphasized as a premise for assistance even by those who did not engage in the fight or were lucky to have suffered from the trauma of killings. Okoro narrates how he survived “I did not hide. They asked me to say toro and their leader slapped me on the jaw and left”. He explained. “They asked everyone. That is how they identify the Igbo people. They say the word differently because of their accent. If they were looking for people of my ethnic group, it would have been easy to identify me because of my tribal marks,” The tribal marks were important at one time in the previous century... (p. 17). The insignificant difference of the people were emphasized as a model of death and survival.

In the battle of ethnic identities, ethnic identification becomes a means of survival depending on the side of the assailant- the rightful choice of ethnic and the ability to prove it becomes a means of survival. Some whose tribe had been excluded from the war in *My Name Is Okoro* also were affected indirectly and this is clearly illustrated in the situation of Dele.

They saw corpses, chopped-off hands and legs, along the way. They appeared distinct in spite of diminishing visibility when they reached a light-brown. Bungalow on their left, one of the boys shuddered and yelled “aiye mi o!” and melted into tears, his two hands on his head. He

had just seen the naked body of a girl. The exclamation was an expression of surprise in Yoruba language. Okoro shuddered too, but wondered what the boy, Dele said. There was a signature of intimacy in his cry “He was her friend,” explained Bayo (p. 17).

Dele a Yoruba boy was actually affected indirectly by the unrest. Although at first he could not feel it because the people were not related to him anywhere and to him that might have appeared as a victim of the situation but that of Nneka a person, he has romantic feelings for her affects him psychologically.

The girl’s name was Ify, and Dele had been wooing her furtively for the past eight months. Her parents caught them together once and had not approved, but she had flirted with him enough to keep his interest alive. ...Dele knew that was not how he wanted to see Ify’s womanhood, defiled, stabbed, desecrated, her clear and brilliant skin bloodied on a veranda. Her assailants hacked a machete into her neck. So that she conjured the image of a goat half slaughtered. Her two hands were on her treasures as though she was alive and trying to guarantee her womanly pride even in death. Yet her hands did not conceal her pubic hair from the public glare (p. 18).

The only thing Dele could do is to curse those who have done that to his girlfriend. He is shaken at the loss of the one he loves. He is embittered and he grieves for his loss. Psychologically Dele becomes depressed about his situation. “My God will punish them and their mothers and their fathers and their sisters. Will never see joy in their lives” (18). Dele wept for that is all he could do about his situation. The pogrom against the Igbos also affected other minorities ethnic groups who were together killed. Even when they tried to appeal and make a case for themselves the mob did not want to hear because of wrong classification. A classification that states that all those from the east are Igbo. This is seen through Chief Subomi memory thus:

Chief Subomi recalled an incident that happened earlier in the day in front of the house of Madam Salami, a slight but imperious Yoruba woman known to all her kinsmen and women in Kano. During the murderous rampage, a young man was shouting “I am Midwest, not Igbo,” his two hands spread out. He was husky and light skinned. He could, in another setting or circumstance, have looked regal. (...) one of them wielded a pickaxe and plunged it through the Midwesterner’s Black (pp. 20-21).

This is a highlight of the weight of identity during “ethnic” crisis and how minorities are implicated in a regional construction that excluded their identity and lopped them together. The majorities identity becomes an extension of minorities identities. Those from the eastern region with different identities were not spared in the killings. The mob assumed that since they were coming from the eastern region they were Igbos having a common ancestry.

Okoro survived the pogrom and escaped to the east and even in the east he had to deny his identity in attempt to survive. With the declaration of Independence by Ojukwu squaring the people and their territory as independent state of Biafra as political reconstruction of alternative identity, the people had to emphasize their identity to pass through checkpoints. Many easterners in *My Name is Okoro* sees the secession as an identity definition and survival.

Discussion

The declaration of Independence in *My Name is Okoro* resulted in war which started as police action, many of the Igbos saw the war as a means to life and protection of their lives and properties which are tied to their identity. Some engaged in the war as a means of preserving their identity which is an extension of their lives. Most people from the eastern region in *My Name is Okoro* sees the war as a means of survival, a process of identity affirmation. For instance; “I am going to defend Igbo land as though somebody wants to kill my mother,” he said with a glitter in his eyes. “Many mothers have died these past months,” J.P. interjected. “Many are threatened as we speak.” Unam’s host even elicited from the priest and Okoro tales of first-hand experience of the killings of the Igbo and other southerners. Okezie could not live down the story of Okoro’s in-law” (p. 78). Okezie who did not experience the pogrom in the north but heard what the northerners did to the easterners in the north is willing and dedicated to fight as a medium of identification of with the course of his people. The Igbos went into the war hoping that the international community would support and pressure Nigeria to grant them identification Biafrans.

Okezie observes why the eastern people were going to war when he noted. “As a people, we have been pushed to the wall. We cannot move forward without pushing out the enemy. Ask these men who just escaped whether what happened in the north did not amount to a declaration of war” (p. 80). Even when J.P argued that the Igbos should wait a little and garner enough intelligence and train enough men and acquire enough ammunition for battle (80), the people refused. So the war was weighed based on assumptions and hope that the Igbos would get sympathy from the international community to have the right to be an independent people on their own. “We already have the sympathy of the world. Once we start the war, the world will line up behind us. More importantly, we beat all Nigeria in the officer’s corps. We have the brain of battle, they have the brawn. Wars are won on the strategy table. It is not the numbers of feet but the millions of brain cells that make war machines,” pontificated Okezie as his face glittered” (p. 80). There was no plan for the war except emotional decision in solidarity with their ethnic identity. The war disintegrated the society, it redefined values and characters. Okoro a minority also bears the brunt of the war. He could not locate his family because the uncertainty of Nneka’s mother Ngozi made her travel to the village in search of her mother even when she was not sure that she would see her mother again. The letter she left for her husband chronicled her plight and anxiety.

...I am sure you will and God has spared your life for me from the hands of the wicked Hausa. I should have waited for you to come back, but I have to rush home to ascertain that Mama made it back through the trains. I got a letter from Udeze and he explained to me all that happened. He said he too will head east. But I am very worried about Mama. I heard they killed many in the trains. They ambushed them after the train had left (p. 82).

The narrative also alludes to ethnic actions by non state actors. Many were as a result of ethnic war while those who are alive bear their memories.

CONCLUSION

Regionalization is a process of inclusion and subversion as clearly illustrated in *My name is Okoro*. This process of inclusion emphasizes the majority and use majority tag as a medium for the classification of the minorities based on majority mannerism. From the study we have seen that identity is an integral part for the survival of people in a multi ethnic society. This study also highlight that in times of crisis, identity protect the individuals who are associated with the side that wills more physical and military power.

Identity is factor that affects the survival of individual in the society. Identity is collectively constructed and administered as a tool for exploitation and subjugation as illustrated in *My Name is Okoro*. The study indicates that there are many minorities killed due to the faulty classification of assuming that all those coming from the east are Igbo. It emphasizes that, identity denial was method adopted by some of the characters to stay alive. The denial of identity is rebirth that assures life in *My Name is Okoro*. At the outbreak of the pogrom, Okoro was very insightful to reject his identity and coming from the east. He rejected his name Okoro and with the “death” of his name, he stayed alive.

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