Publishing the Rebel: Heinemann African Writers Series and the Minoritization of Biafran Voices

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Introduction

Following the military coup in Nigeria on 15 January 1966, tensions escalated across the nation, particularly in the northern regions. Many in the North perceived the Igbo ethnic group as intent on dominating Nigeria, a suspicion fueled by longstanding inter-ethnic mistrust. These tensions intensified the existing divides, culminating in violent anti-Igbo pogroms between May and September 1966. During this period, over 50,000 Igbo and other southern Nigerians residing in the North were killed, their homes looted and destroyed, marking a tragic chapter in Nigeria's history driven by ethnic tensions and political upheaval. In response to the Igbo-targeted killings, a significant number of northerners living in the southern part of the country were also massacred in Port Harcourt and other parts of the East (Federal Research Division, 1991). The inability of the Nigerian Federal Government to guarantee the lives of the Igbo, and the continued attack on them as they fled homewards, eventually compelled Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, then Governor of the Eastern Region, to declare the secession of the East from Nigeria to form the independent Republic of Biafra on 30 May 1967. The response from the Federal Government to the secession was a three-year civil war that took the lives of many Igbo people.

Since the end of the war in 1970, the Biafran struggle for secession has continued in diverse ways, drawing attention to a continuity of trauma that is tied to a ruptured sense of belonging, but which also keeps returning to "interrupt the writing of national healing" (David 3). Notable African authors such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, S. O. Mezu, Elechi Amadi, Chukwuemeka Ike, Cyprian Ekwensi, Flora Nwapa, Isidore Okpewho, Buchi Emecheta, Chimamanda Adichie, and many more have engaged the trauma and memory of the war through creative writing, showing especially how Biafra is continually remembered. More so, a lot of work has been done in the critical examination of the various discourses on the war event. For instance, Soyinka has observed that "the factors that led to the war were neither ephemeral nor can be permanently exorcised" (32). For him, the culpable agency in the war is the genocide-consolidated dictatorship of the [Nigerian] Army which made both secession and war inevitable. While Festus Iyayi's *Heroes*—winner of the Commonwealth

Writers' Prize in 1986—denounces ethnicity as a prime factor leading to the conflict. It points, instead, to class inequality as the crucial social element that pushed for the country's disintegration:

> The inter-tribal warfare that informed the Civil War was instigated by a few powerful leaders on both sides who stood to gain both power and wealth from the war. Meanwhile, the common soldiers are manipulated by these leaders into slaughtering one another when in fact their real enemies are not the soldiers on the other side but the generals and the politicians instigating the war from both sides. (174)

In his civil war memoir *There Was A Country: A Personal History of Biafra* published in 2012, Achebe notes that "the internal rivalries that existed between Gowon and Ojukwu, and the pathological intra-ethnic dynamics that plagued the Nigerian military and wartime government, contributed in no small measure to the scale of the catastrophe that was the Nigeria-Biafra War" (123-124). He accuses international political science experts of not finding the "war baffling, because it deviated frustratingly from their much-vaunted models. But traditional Igbo philosophers, eyes ringed with white chalk and tongues dipped in the proverbial brew of prophecy, lay the scale and complexity of our situation at the feet of ethnic hatred and 'ekwolo' – manifold rivalries between the belligerents" (123). Achebe's claim that ethnic animosity was the cause of the war is rejected by critic Jeyifo, who argues instead that the war was caused by the interplay between class and ethnicity as well as the tensions between the Igbo-Biafrans and non-Igbo minorities (262).

In addition to examining the cause, critics have analyzed the war's traumatic effects and how literary artists have portrayed them. Emenyonu notes that the war inaugurated a new mode of writing in Nigeria as writers attempt to reconstruct in various genres the condition of people at war and to handle the dilemma of the choice between political commitment and dedication to art as a sacred duty. Identifying Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* as the most distinguished work on the war, he argues that there is a sense in which it could be said that the great Nigerian war novel did not exist until its publication. For Emenyonu, while the earlier writers on the war were too close to the events and the historical figures to be transparently objective, Adichie managed to distance herself from the narrative:

> Chimamanda was born on 15 September 1977 and so she did not witness the war. She brought tremendous impetus to bear on the integrity of the Nigerian Civil War writing—its content, narrative, and historical relevance—depicted as never before. This is what makes the book the great Nigerian Civil War novel. (8)

Katiyo supports the thesis of Adichie's dispassionate diagnosis of the war and her refusal to homogenize either victims or perpetrators of the war.

She notes that Adichie's novel foregrounds the idea that the "war left the people with the knowledge that they were a defeated people and with a feeling of collective shame" (115). Although she was born many years after the cessation of the war in the battlefield, Adichie understands what that war means to her people: "I was born seven years after the Nigeria-Biafra war ended, and the war is not mere history for me, it is also memory, for I grew up in the shadow of Biafra" (49-50). Despite aligning her argument with the configuration of Biafra's cultural legacy, Amadiume takes a broader look at the war's memory and unending business of mourning: "Biafra is still important in the national political discourse as a wound that has not healed, an issue of conscience in our collective memory" (46-47). In a larger sense, the traumatic history of the war experience has implications for both the Igbo and the non-Igbo Nigerians. Thus, it seems crucial to the Nigerian writers of the war to ask why there is an endless engagement with the issues of the war even by those who did not witness it but whose "lack of knowledge keeps the passion alive" (Adichie 53). This is because it is often impossible to understand social healing and reconstruction without understanding "what made it necessary in the first place" (Sivac-Bryant 2). Accusing fingers point to the refusal by successive Nigerian political leadership to address the issues surrounding the war as what fans the embers of their resistance. Specifically, Yakubu Gowon's victory speech at the end of the war in which he claimed that unity was the only way if Nigeria were to prosper seemed to deny the vanquished the possibility of expressing their grief and testifying to their suffering.

Unfortunately, while much of this body of literary scholarship on the war has been approached from the perspectives of published texts such as novels, plays, poems, autobiographies, and memoirs, less attention has been given to the unpublished materials on the war. Indeed, there is now a growing interest in what archival materials related to the publishing processes of those texts can tell us about the war. For instance, some archival-literary critics have sought to reaffirm the relevance of editorial materials to understanding both the authors and their work. As pioneer critic of African literature, Wren observes, we need to "look at the early material conditions" in which literature was produced to do "a secondary discourse again" (2). The "secondary discourse" refers to the archival re-reading of editorial materials which poignantly re-echoes the need to preserve the archives of African literature for future scholarship. After all, the material aspects of textual production function as an interpretive practice that gives insights into literature itself (Brouillette 6-7). In what appears to be a response to this call, Azuonye investigated the previously unpublished papers of Christopher Okigbo (1930-1967)—the widely acknowledged most outstanding postcolonial, Anglophone, African, modernist poet of the 20th century—and came up with a critical edition of the complete corpus of Okigbo's unpublished manuscripts. Arguing that more work is still needed, book historian Le Roux observes that several literary histories produced in the 1960s and 1970s were text-based, seldom

exploring the material aspects of the book or the context of its production and dissemination. This approach, marked by disciplinary tribalism, renders the unpublished perspectives illegible within the margins of the war historicity.

Moved also by the evidence of a complicated relationship between the publisher and author and how this might be understood concerning the creation, constitution, and reception of postcolonial African literature, Davis makes a case for a historically and geographically contextualized study of the establishment of African literature, which moves beyond an analysis of the text and the author to a consideration of the institutions and processes behind literature's production. Her work draws attention to a mode of literary criticism that is informed by material conditions and the publishing history of texts. Similarly, Ibironke privileges the importance of archival inquiry in his reconceptualization of how literary critical practice may benefit from "an archaeological excavation of material conditions first and foremost as a basis for a theory of literature" (vii). Ibironke's notion is generously acknowledged by Walsh and Odugbesan in their archival research on the materials relating to the Nigeria-Biafra war period at Reading Special Collections. Walsh and Odugbesan's research raises some vital questions on how these materials may enable the literary, archival, and publishing critic to understand the political persuasions surrounding "what editors do" (Ginna 1) and how they influence publishing decisions about fictional manuscripts. After all, Foley has noted that editing is often both "an artistic and political practice" even as criticism and the literature it studies "are often guided by the centripetal currents of the creative and capitalist economy" (1-2). Thus, Walsh and Odugbesan's work offers insight into the material history of some Biafran texts in a way that defines expectations and sets the angle by which we may approach Heinemann's publishing prerogatives.

The knowledge of the history and imperatives of the industries that produced books and the material conditions of their production as integral aspects of intellectual and cultural history helps to expand "the interpretive and evidentiary basis for reading and performing textual analysis" (Olabode iv). This article argues that the Nigeria-Biafan War texts and materials from Heinemann African Writers Series archives, such as editorial reviews, correspondence between publishers and authors, minutes of meetings, accounting records, and other miscellaneous issues relating to textual production, housed at the University of Reading Special Collections can serve as a rationale for interrogating the politics surrounding Heinemann's publishing disposition towards Biafra's perspectives of the war. It deploys a conflation of literary, archival, and publishing theoretical strategies in its examination of S. O. Mezu's *Behind the Rising Sun* (initially titled *Inside Biafra: Outside Biafra*) and Elechi Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* (originally named *Sunset in the East*) against the archival materials relating to their publication to show how Biafra was framed within Heinemann's Nigeria-Biafra war publishing engagement. This approach pays tribute to the collaborative practice between critics

and archivists "in curating materials, expanding metadata, and, most importantly, recovering marginalized voices in global literary history and the history of the book" (Wilson 2). In a broader context, the article speaks to the ongoing global conversations on neo-imperial politics and the history of publishing postcolonial African literature. Relying on evidence from the publishers' archives at the University of Reading Special Collections, and on S. O. Mezu's pro-Biafran novel *Behind the Rising Sun*, and Elechi Amadi's anti-Biafran memoir, *Sunset in Biafra* – both published by Heinemann, it argues that publishing decisions during the Nigeria-Biafra conflict reflect a selective minoritization of Biafran voices.

Heinemann AWS and the politics of Publishing the Nigeria-Biafra War

The Heinemann African Writers' Series (henceforth AWS) archive at the University of Reading Special Collections offers credible and original records of the general politics underlying the publishing of Biafran-focused writing during the Nigerian-Biafran war. Not only does it show "the editorial feelings and responses to what the authors bring to utterance in the act of creating their work" (Shillingsburg 4), but it also provides evidence of how the Heinemann's editorial policies were to shape the writing of the war. Heinemann's publishing history dating back to 1890 shows that its prime vision was to give voice to writers all over the world. At inception, the company published periodicals, and journals, but also British authors like John Galsworthy, Sommerset Maugham, and John Masefield. It also published non-European literature in translation such as the works of Bjornson and Ibsen, Gerhart Hauptmann, George Brandes, Guy de Maupassant, and Gabriele d'Annunzio (Clarke 2003). However, the revitalization of the educational division of Heinemann after World War II marked the single most important development for its economic history. This task, which was given to its General Manager, Alan Hill, in 1946, started with an annual sales revenue of approximately £15,000, but sales and profits were to accelerate over the next two decades.

With the UK population growing from 46 million to 56 million at the time, the raising of the school-leaving age to sixteen and, more importantly, the global expansion of English-language education in former colonies during a time of decolonization and independence, the two postwar decades would turn educational publishing into big business (Low 2020). The post-war "baby boom" had led to an unprecedented increase in home student population by 40% between 1960 and 1965, leading to the prediction by the 1963 Report of the Committee on Higher Education that the number of home and overseas students would treble between 1960 and 1980 (McKitterick 2004). Nonetheless, the British Empire had presented an open market for British publishers, one that was secured by the imposition of the British system of education throughout the colonies and strongly protected by the 1842 and 1911 Copyright Acts which ensured British publishers' monopoly on their titles throughout the colonies. More

so, the British Commonwealth Market Agreement of 1947 also protected British trade with the colonies by offering British publishers a privileged position over their American counterparts in the sale of books. Hill saw all of these as great opportunities that lay ahead for an enterprising publisher (Hill 1988).

In Ritter's 2021 study of three British institutions like the British Council, the publishing industry, and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), she argues that economic, political, and ideological structures enabled the persistence of British cultural dominance in Africa long after the formal end of imperial rule (Ritter; see also Boucher). In its conscious efforts at identifying the right export market Heinemann Educational Books (HEB) established branches in such distant overseas countries as Australia (1948), Canada (1949), South Africa (1951), and New Zealand (1955). The large, rich and literate communities of readers, who for obvious historical reasons, happened to be white, may have influenced Heinemann's decision to open their branches first only in these white-dominated countries (Bejjit 2018). The only branch it had in Africa, precisely South Africa, was merely for representation, rather than production. Yet, the anxiety over the dwindling economic landscape was evident in the decline in sales revenue. The drop in profits from £122,000 in 1952 to £13,000 in 1959, which meant that the pre-tax profit's percentage fell from 19.2% in 1952 to 2% in 1961,5 was an indication that Heinemann was heading toward bankruptcy. This apprehension was to contribute to Heinemann's sojourn to Africa and consequently to the birth of the African Writers Series (AWS).

At the surface of the creation of the AWS in 1962 was the desire to publish mostly African fiction, written by Africans, in English and in translation. However, as evident from the foregoing discussion, the birth of the series in a post-world war period when the UK was battling critical economic pressures played a pivotal role in its publishing decisions. Hill (1988) had leveraged the global expansion of English-language education in former colonies to convert the decolonization and nationalism projects into the company's assets, turning educational publishing into a big business, a new Empire which must be "profitable and politically expedient" (Sutcliffe 266). In his account of the vision that led to the emergence of the series, Hill notes:

> As I now discovered when I visited Nigeria for the first time in 1959, British Publishers operating within West Africa sold mainly textbooks and regarded the territory as a place where you sold books rather than a source for new writers. Moreover, the books sold were almost written by British authors and produced in Britain. They were taking profits out of West Africa and putting nothing back in the way of investment in local publishing and encouragement of local authors. (122)

While West Africa was easily identified as the largest and most accessible hitherto untapped market overseas, Southeast Asia was also singled out for particular attention. Hill also observed that education received a quarter of

Malaya's national income, while Nigeria's population of 55 million presented an especially attractive market for them. The numbers of both secondary school and university students in Nigeria had increased tremendously, the former from 166,000 in 1960 to 257,000 in 1961, and the latter, from 3,128 to 10,976 between 1961 and 1966:

> British West Africa (including Nigeria and Ghana) in 1958 was ranked overall 6th place in a Heinemann Educational export league of countries that included the United States of America and the old Dominions, such as Canada and Australia. In relation to its standing in Africa as a whole— British West Africa represented over half of all sales (£12,171) to the African continent (£21,677) in 1960, and was set to rise even more. (McKitterick 396)

To achieve his aim, Hill worked with a strong team made up of the company's then Overseas Managing Director Van Milne, the London Editors Keith Sambrook (1963-1967), and James Currey (1967-1984), and the Series Editorial Adviser Chinua Achebe (1963-1972). Others in the team included East African Representative in Nairobi Henry Chakava, HEB Nigerian Manager Aig Higo (Aigboje) who succeeded the late pioneer manager D. O. Fagunwa.

Hill's employment of Nigerians to handle the Nigerian office was in line with his thinking that local publishing and staffing would, in the long run, be of benefit to both the local region and the parent company. He recalled how they rejected little poodles sought after by multinational companies, and went after high-minded local citizens who were strong enough to stand on their own feet:

> We gave them dominion status instead of the colonial subordination preferred by some of our competitors. We realised that these countries would not be satisfied much longer with educational books imported from Britain. They wanted more of their own books, locally published and I appointed men who were capable of satisfying this demand. (Hill 209)

AWS editorial adviser Achebe had already established himself as a prominent writer emerging from Africa during that period. In the early stages of the series, Hill had noted that it was essential to retain him as a new African author, as his involvement would enhance the series' prestige within the Heinemann portfolio. Given their significant expansion in West Africa, it would have been inconceivable to let the region's foremost writer escape their grasp (Hill, letter to Jamie Michie, 1 October 1959). Achebe's association was expected to contribute to both the publicity of the series and the acquisition of new titles for it (Tony Beal, Letter to Daniel Fagunwa, 14 January 1963). Acknowledging that Chinua Achebe was instrumental in "re-shaping the literary map of Africa" (Petersen 159), Sambrook had cautioned that William Heinemann's delay in publishing Achebe's *Arrow of God* posed a significant risk for the company, especially in light of the competition for African writers from other publishers such as Overseas Education Department (Oxford University

Press), Macmillan, Longman, and Deutsch. He emphasized that William Heinemann needed to acknowledge Chinua Achebe as the most recognized and respected writer in Africa, who was "invited to absolutely everything," and who was increasingly gaining recognition beyond the continent.

Significantly, neo-colonial publishers had identified educational publishing as a commodity and a huge opportunity in an increasing global capitalist market. In his letter to Lionel Fraser in 1962, Hill noted that HEB "needed to rise to the challenge of global expansion; it was of 'vital necessity' that the company 'turn . . . attention outwards to the markets and authors' who awaited them from 'all over the world'" (Sambrook, letter to Hill and Tony Beal, 10 November 1963; Box 83: 1962-1964: Letters/Reports—Unsorted). Thus Sambrook, Currey, and Higo would drive Hill's ambition of steering the company to reap from "the world educational market" which had become "one part of the British book trade" that was "absolutely certain" of ever-increasing expansion and profitability. Within British absorbing interest, West Africa and South East Asia were specially designated as the largest and most accessible hitherto untapped markets overseas. Nigeria, with its population of 55 million, presented an especially attractive market for British publishers where the numbers of both secondary school and university students in the postwar period was to increase enormously from 3,128 to 10,976 between 1961 and 1966 ... 'British West Africa' (including Nigeria and Ghana) in 1958 was ranked overall 6th place in a Heinemann Educational export league of countries that included the United States of America and the old Dominions, such as Canada and Australia. In relation to its standing in Africa as a whole—British West Africa represented over half of all sales (£12,171) to the African continent (£21,677) in 1960, and was set to rise even more. Again, the turnover of the educational division of the company in 1949 was £16,000 and by 1959, it had approached £300,000.

Hill, thus, had self-consciously positioned HEB to create wealth, whether in times of war or in times of peace. In 1959, before the launch of the series, its Overseas Managing Director Milne had made his first trip to Nigeria as part of the company's competition with other metropolitan publishers in the scramble to win African authors, books, and audiences, what he described as a 'battle of books.' Milne, who had taught at the University College of the Gold Coast for two years prior to joining Nelson Publishers, was in the best position to make the trip, having already established familiarity with West Africa as both an educator and a publisher. For Hill, the trip was potentially profitable because Nigeria had proved to be a zone with great publishing prospects. He had carried out investigations into the political situations in Nigeria and other regions where the company intended to locate offices to understand how nationalism impacted the book trade and how the company might compete more effectively with other British and American publishing houses:

> We began in Nigeria. Having just gained independence in 1960, and with education developing rapidly, it was the richest and most exciting country in Black Africa. Following my first visit in 1959 and a lengthy tour in 1960 by James Watson, our indefatigable Scottish manager, we opened our first office in Ibadan a year later. (Hill 207)

As this competition for a slice of the Nigerian market of the book trade became stiffer, Sambrook made a follow-up visit in 1963. Sambrook's report offered a clear account of the intensity of the battle for the 'literary gold;' while the Oxford University Press, publishers of Three Crowns Series (henceforth OUP Three Crowns) courted African playwrights for their Three Crowns Series, André Deutsch, having contributed funds for the setting up of the African Universities Press and the East African Publishing House, flew in to see if there were business opportunities for his own metropolitan company. As part of the strategy to further reap from the decolonization project, HEB general manager and the second in command Tony Beal reasoned that having local offices and local staff to publish locally would give them great psychological and political advantages in the emerging book market in Africa.

The OUP Three Crowns Series was initially conceived and edited by Rex Collings as a paperback series published out of the Overseas Editorial Department of Oxford University Press as a general series that would provide reading material on all kinds of subjects for the educated African adult. Although it published other African drama, it was with the publication of playwrights such as Wole Soyinka and later Athol Fugard that the series established its reputation (Low 2020). Just as Achebe's work helped to project the AWS as the dream of many African fictional writers, Soyinka's and Fugard's work popularized the Three Crowns Series as a frontline publisher of African drama. So, while the AWS established itself as a publisher of novels, particularly but also non-fiction, poetry, and plays, the Three Crowns focused on drama, excluding contemporary novels from their imprint. However, due to its "alleged unprofitability," the latter folded in 1976, and OUP branches abroad were allowed to use it as a brand for their local creative publishing (Low 56). Thus, both the AWS and the Three Crowns Series were driven by the same measure of neo-colonial economic interest.

Thus, like the HEB, the accounts of OUP Nigeria, which indicated a 17.2% gross profit from imported OUP book sales in 1959 when it became a full branch showed an increase in profit margin to 26.5% (£17,000) in 1964, with local production; and to 31.8% (£46,920) in 1966:

> In East Africa, the branch trading account showed a modest profit of £8,258 in the first year of its operation (1963-1964) and increased rapidly to £30,916 and £88,925 for the succeeding two years. The annual turnover of the Overseas Education Department in 1940 was in the region of £10,000; this was to quadruple to £40,000 by 1945 and by 1961 had reached £1,000,000.13 The growing importance of the export market cannot be underestimated; by 1967, excluding

> American and other branch publications, the export of OUP books abroad amounted to 55% of all OUP sales and when American and other branch publications were included, 'sales overseas amounted to almost 75% of the total turnover in books. (Sutcliffe 268)

Despite these economic visions and financial statistics, both the HEB and the OUP tried to refute the claim that expatriate publishers were simply yet another example of neo-colonial exploitation. Although the launch of the African Writers Series was aimed at establishing a firm ground in the publication of African fiction, which appeared to be the most patronized among other literary genres at the time, both publishers noted that their mission was to bring books to the continent, to give Africans a voice, to find the best of African literature and to deliver it to a world market. Behind all of these was "a civilising mission that was always accompanied by domination" (Said 1). It was largely, if inadvertently, to "fulfil a colonial mission" (Clarke 163), with a strategy of political expediency that sought to "disguise the more nakedly commercial activities of the Press" (Davis 227-228).

Postcolonial Publishers and their African Clients

In his article titled "Disseminating Africa: Burdens of Representation and the African Writers Series," Clive Barnett draws on empirical materials from the African Writers Series (AWS) editorial archives at the University of Reading to argue that there are fundamental interactions between publishing, commodification, and educational networks. In a way, he affirms that literary publishing involves the exercise and reproduction of cultural power in which publishers play a crucial role not only in shaping the styles of narrative but also in maintaining control over what can be said. Sadly, postcolonial imagination and cultural dependency have shown that "there lies an unstated notion that the integrity of writing, literature, and thought is compromised by its dependence on various intermediaries such as publishers, printers, educationalists, reviewers and so on who are always presented as agents for enforcing a zero-sum exchange of literary value from the periphery to the centre" (Huggan 5). Within the relationship between authors and publishers, there seems to be a continuity between colonial and post-independence relationships of patronage. Heinemann's "directive and invasive publishing operations are not different from those of "missionary presses and the colonial publishing institutions" (Griffiths 153). Although it may not be wholly correct to argue that postcolonial publishing simply reproduced the earlier role of mission presses (Barnett; Barber), postcolonial publishing was also utterly politically expedient.

The desire to get published, and in a particular outlet by African writers follows the long history of ethnocentric conceptions that led to the colonial "denigration of African cultures, understood as standing outside of history on account of the projected absence of the means of historical

memorialization itself" (Barnett 239-251). Indeed, postcolonial publishing often serves as a "medium of differential, exclusionary colonial subject-formation, restricted to a small proportion of the total population" in British colonial Africa, "consistent with a broader rationale of governmentality that distinguished between citizen and subject, urbanity and rurality" (Mamdami qtd. in Barnett 6). The AWS as a post-imperialist regulated infrastructure easily became an elite-led cultural movement, one that was (initially at least) dependent on the continued dominance of international publishing capital, its circulation largely contained within a pattern of social relations and institutional infrastructures in which literacy has continued to function as a key dimension of socio-economic differentiation. Barnett observes that the effort at inscribing an African presence by the series also necessarily involved a re-inscription of difference which does not have to do with the bad faith of publishers or the lack of moral or political backbone of African writers but with the structural feature of the contexts in which it has operated with its imitators and competitors (240). This position seems to agree with the HEB's claim that the significance of the AWS lay less in its being a source of high revenue, but rather as an important 'loss-leader' for its broader educational publishing programme. Their aim was for the AWS to become, and remain an important source of credibility for Heinemann, a position it maintained over the years:

> The AWS is a backlist led list. Chinua Achebe is perceived as the most important author on our list by the outside world. As publishers of this list we have entry to African educational markets and a kudos that other multinationals do not have. (Internal Memorandum on AWS, 1994, HEB 56/6)

This revered status of the series was taken as a reason to continue to publish new titles in the series in the 1990s, even as its profit margins dwindled:

> As the publisher of the African Writers Series, we have entry into Ministries and a reputation and esteem in Africa which far exceeds our current market position. To stop publishing the series would have a huge negative effect and make entry into local publishing agreement much harder. We would be viewed as just another multinational but without the infrastructure and contacts that companies like Macmillan and Longman have. (Memo, 'The African and Caribbean Writers Series Performance Analysis', 21 August 1996, HEB 56/6)

However, archival evidence shows that, beyond political interests, postcolonial publishing institutions often tried to veil their profit motives in Africa partly through their geographical separation from the main profit centers in the former colonies, but also by producing a series of carefully constructed narratives to describe their cultural mission (Davis 2013). Their attempt to avoid revealing "the crudest forms of mercantilism" (Bourdieu 1) in postcolonial African publishing and abstaining from fully

revealing their self-interested goals is evident in the publishing history of Biafran war fiction.

Mezu's *Behind the Rising Sun* and Heinemann's Editorial Partisanship

Achebe's 1976 contention that "the publisher and the author must operate in the same historic and social continuum" (89) suggests that the production of the literary text is a collaborative endeavor between authors and publishers, editors and reviewers whose perspectives run silently through the text. There were noticeable restrictive and gate-keeping practices by the HEB editors in the publishing of the Nigeria-Biafran War narratives. To a large extent, Heinemann's status as a British publishing outlet for a series that was dominated by Igbo (Biafran) writers was to shape its publishing prerogatives in the war. It found itself in an "uneasy middle ground" in which it acted as both an outlet for and censorship of Biafran resistance (Walsh 2). However, the company's first consideration was to maintain a position that would allow it to remain in business.

Archival evidence shows how the general feeling about the war was interpreted in HEB's editorial approach to the pro-Biafran manuscripts at the time. In his report of the massacre of the Igbo in Northern Nigeria in 1966, which he sent to Hill, Sambrook argued that the Igbo "were victims of their miscalculated move to exploit their historical opportunities to dominate the rest of Nigerians …. Despite the claim by the Ibos [sic], there is no doubt on the evidence that Zik wanted to rule Nigeria, as an Ibo [sic], through the extensive network of Ibo [sic] civil servants already in Central Government in Lagos, with suitable yes-men in the other regions" (Sambrook, memo to Hill, November 1966). For Higo also, the Biafrans were culpable for fighting to destabilize the country. In his memo to Hill on 2 June 1967, he wrote:

> It has been clear here since March that neither peace committees and delegations nor offers of reparations will appease the Eastern region who since last year has been thirsting for blood. So, when the people of goodwill here sent some delegations to the East and got the Federal Military Government to retract some of the sterner economic measures against the East, there was in fact very little hope that the East would respond. (Higo, letter to Hill on 2 June 1967)

Higo had earlier on insisted that he would never use the name Biafra in his publishing correspondence, as that would dignify the Biafran cause. Instead, he preferred to use "the Eastern region" or "The East" to refer to the republic. Sambrook who made consistent use of the name told Higo in a memo on 9 June 1967 that he was using it, "for the time being anyway - as a realistic form of shorthand." In any case, Higo told Sambrook that "the Eastern Region was at fault," given that "although they had a very good case at the beginning … they have gone far beyond reason." In the

same memo, he reported that some people even went as far as to say that since the East precipitated the present crises by planning the January 1966 coup on a tribal basis, they should be prepared to endure the consequences of their action. However, from his assessment of the socio-political atmosphere, there was hope that the secession of the East would breed good publishing fortunes by opening up new markets in a region: "After the remours [sic] and threats, I think Nigeria will stay as one country. Certain subjects, perhaps more subjects, will go on the 'National List,' Education among them. As educational publishers, we should be in a strong position to cover the whole of the country" (Higo, letter to Hill on 2 June 1967). This underscores the naked overriding vision of the company.

The cracks created by the Nigeria-Biafra war often raise critical concern about how the Nigerian political atmosphere led to widespread profound moral and political dilemmas for the Igbo who consequently sought solace in a new republic known as Biafra but who would claim to have found themselves in what Bhabha calls 'the third space' (Bhabha 2009) that liminal space that gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning. This sense of positioning as "outsiders within" Nigeria, in which they appeared to "tremble in the balance" (Udumukwu 29-40) is a form of socio-political minoritization. Minoritization may include the process of making a person or group subordinate in status to a more dominant group or its members. It may also involve various forms of discrimination and marginalization, which may be social, economic, political or cultural. While exclusion may involve absence, minoritization is a form of ordinarification or commonization. Victims of minoritization are often sub-forms of a wider classification for the sake of convenience and can be termed cultural subordinates who are set off from the rest of the population by the two dimensions of cultural distinctiveness, on the one hand, and some form of subjection on the other (Schermerhorn 1964). The set-off could be in the form of underrepresentation, devaluation or denigration of cultural bodies including traditions, languages, and identities but also personal stories, feelings, positions, and experiences. They are in a present-absent status. This form of positioning is evident in HEB's publishing strategy of Biafrans and their narratives, especially in how significant sections of Biafran manuscripts were controlled, reshaped or altered.

In *Archival Fever,* Jacques Derrida argues that every political power seeks to control both the archive (narratives) and memory (history) (Derrida 1995). Thus, narratives and history are susceptible to political manipulation, which is why postcolonial scholars focus on their "absences and distortions" to locate the voices of the silenced natives within the marginal spaces of the literature produced by colonial powers (Manoff 35). The absences and distortions necessitated by political manipulation of the archive are still revealed by the same archive. While some sections of a manuscript are often removed during the editorial process for being politically sensitive, these removals or erasures are revealed through archival research. The subtle motive here is to protect the interest of the

hegemonic forces while burying the voices and perspectives of the ordinarified victims. This situation is what we see in HEB's editorial decisions on S. O. Mezu's *Behind the Rising Sun* which appear to minoritize the Biafran position.

Mezu's *Behind the Rising Sun* is one of the major pro-Biafran fictions published in the African Writers Series which faced many controversies in their journey to publication. In his editorial comments on the novel, Higo argued that the novel unnecessarily apotheosized Biafra while denouncing Nigeria as lacking the capacity to create a space for multi-ethnic relations. In his memo to Currey, he notes:

> Naturally, Mezu saw the war from one side- the Biafra. He saw Biafra in Biafra, Biafra in Europe, Biafra on the battlefield and in refugee camps. About Biafra, Mezu is knowledgeable and he writes with fervour and fellow-feeling. About Nigeria, Mezu knows little and says very little, much of this out of ignorance and resentment. (Higo, Memo to Currey, 1 February 1970).

Higo contended that Mezu could not have predicted the way the war ended, since the war was still on when Mezu was writing. This was for him, why the novel ended with the "apocalyptic view of a new Biafran generation, united and Biafran. I am saying that pages 279-307 have no value either in themselves or in the context of *Behind the Rising Sun*" (Higo, Memo to Currey, 1 February 1970). His intriguing description of potential Biafran victory as "an apocalyptic" outcome seems to deny the creative artist the freedom to envision and engage with his craft in diverse ways. It is equally curious to hear him mention "Biafra"—a word he hated to use. But we see underneath this reference a deep sense of unease that shows his unwillingness to imagine the reality of Biafra's existence.

The initial title of Mezu's novel *Inside Biafra, Outside Biafra* was later changed to *Behind the Rising Sun* by Heinemann, with a cover photo of the "rising sun" symbol on the Biafran flag. In a way, the change connects to the ban placed on the use of the word "Biafra" in official Nigerian discourse shortly after the defeat of Biafra in 1970 and the publication of the novel in 1971. Similarly, significant portions of the manuscript were removed on the claim that it was "too long, diffuse and in need of attention" and on the grounds of poor quality. But "quality is a vague and ideologically freighted notion" (Erlanson et al 188). When on 1 November 1969 Hill questioned the rationale for the initial decision to turn down the publication of Mezu's *Behind the Rising Sun*, the claim of literary value was difficult to defend because, as Currey was later to explain, the HEB AWS was intended "to show the world that writers from Africa could use the imported form of the novel as inventively as the Irish, the Australians and other writers across the English-speaking world" (Currey 26).

It is noteworthy that at a time when Heinemann AWS faced criticism for allegedly publishing some books of poor literary quality (Moore 1971), Currey clarified that the series aimed to "break new ground" and operated without established standards that might limit creativity. Additionally,

Achebe, the editorial adviser, emphasized a broad literary perspective that sought to include "the very best writing from Africa," showcasing "the richness and variety of an emerging independent Africa" (Currey 578, 576). Consequently, their approach to defining literariness was to "cast their net as wide as possible" and not to be "over-meticulous and over-selective" in its choices (Petersen 158). More so, in an interview with Nourdin Bejjit, Currey notes:

> Publishing is a subjective business as you get from Diana Athill as well. The fact is that it is a lot of pressures on you … not literally, of course … but you try and maintain some sort of literary balance. The problem was not just a cultural problem. It was part of the process of how much you accept what the author does and how much you get them to re-write and how you encourage them to re-write. (Bejjit 1)

For him, writing is a lonely business, and all the editor has to do is encourage writers, and advise on a book to ensure it does not lose its freshness. Unfortunately, some of these editorial interventions actually possibly remove a lot of the originality of this book. Currey agrees that although the educational purpose and market contexts were significant factors in their decisions, neo-colonial values and local influence were complicit in determining what was to be published: "As to your question of whether I was imposing metropolitan, cultural, neocolonial values on my colleagues in Africa, I think we were in collusion. But what I think is disappointing is that there isn't a very strong literary publishing centre in either East or West Africa" (Bejjit 2).

However, the editors had ignored this policy when dealing with Mezu's manuscript, leveraging the claim of "poor quality" of the manuscript to cut out significant perspectives that were necessary for a more comprehensive appreciation of the critical role of certain characters in the novel. For instance, some sections of the storylines about corruption at the British Embassy on page 36 were removed based on editorial advice. Narrations about the corruption among Air France officials in Chapter 2; and in the French Customs office on page 35, were also cut off with the excuse that the institutions would object to those portions if published (David Foster, Letter to Mezu, 14 November 1969). According to Foster, "I think we should alter the suggestion that the French customs officials had been bribed; perhaps you could be more vague about who Onuoha dealt with" (David Foster, Letter to Mezu, 14 November 1969). The storylines about the Nigerian Ambassador to Paris and about overseas banks that participated in shady deals such as Rothsfield Trust Bank, Jordania Bank, and First National City Bank, were also altered. One of HEB's editors complained that Mezu's depiction of "the Rothsfield Trust Bank is too close to Rothschild for comfort" and suggested making the narration 'vague' about who received the bribe (Foster, Letter to Mezu, 14 November 1969). Consequently, the manuscript was reduced from 500 pages to 241 pages. In his letter to Currey about these cuts, Mezu noted:

> As you know, I look at *Behind the Rising Sun* not only as a novel but as a crusading work. Naturally, economic considerations apart, I would like to see it come to being as soon as possible for it will go a long way towards underscoring the uselessness of the mass slaughter going on in Biafra and Nigeria. If it succeeds in moving even a small section of the world to do something more positive about stopping the mutual self-destruction, I would consider it a success. (Mezu, Letter to Currey, 10 December 1969)

Mezu's response foregrounds his desire for his novel to show the reader that the war was not a mere tribal clash as claimed in some quarters but a catastrophic "self-destruction" that needed global intervention. In his letter of 18 December 1969 to Forster, he noted that for him, what was important was to ensure that the message of the novel was not lost:

> Quite naturally I could not perhaps for emotional reasons and attachment amputate a child I created. The work had to be done by someone else. The most I can do is hope that the surgery is in the interest of the child, its survival, its being, that the future will show that it was perhaps a necessary surgery. (Mezu, Letter to Currey, 10 December 1969)

Behind the Rising Sun was Mezu's first novel and first-time authors are more likely to accept manuscript cuts than already established authors. So, despite the alterations in the manuscript, he remained committed to publishing the novel with them. Although he had at the time founded the Black Academy Press in Buffalo, New York in 1969, he desired to be published in the AWS because of its global prestige. Indeed, at this time, the education industry wanted established standards that were so easily verifiable and ascertainable as to allow inclusion in the school curriculum. Books that sold well were mostly those that followed the prescriptions for examinations and class adoptions, which were usually drawn from the series.

Mezu had accused the British government of turning the war into a goldmine by selling war equipment to Nigeria and punishing the Igbo for their pioneering role in the struggle for Nigerian independence (Barnes 2003). This was not without any reason. In Higo's letter of 2 June 1967 to Hill, he had expressed his worry over "a total stoppage of business" with the Eastern region but also expected that the war would bring a boom in their publishing business. Sambrook told Higo in a letter during the early period of the war: "As you will appreciate, secession could not have come at a better time as far as sales and promotion are concerned but couldn't have come at a worse time for collecting payments" (Sambrook letter to Higo, 9 June 1967).

Biafran Minoritization in Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra*

Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* is a memoir that offers a personal account of his civil war experience. Amadi, an Ikwerre, a minority Igbo group in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, fought on the Nigerian federal government's side against Biafra during the war. He was among those who survived separation from their families, months of hardship, and detention. He regained his freedom at the liberation of Port-Harcourt by the Federal troops. The text condemns Biafra's false optimism, its unilateral declaration of independence, and the long gloomy night of horrors it brought with it. In its representation of Biafra, it stands both as a counter-discourse to and as an ally of Mezu's novel. Articulating his ambivalence toward the conflict, Amadi exhibits anti-sentiments that are rooted in both historical contexts. Having witnessed the tragic consequences of the war, he infuses his narrative with a deep sense of loss and futility. He portrays the war's impact on the lives of ordinary people in a manner that transcends nationalist fervor, revealing pain, suffering, and disillusionment. The characters in the memoir are not heroes fighting for a cause; rather, they are deeply affected individuals grappling with trauma and survival. This focus on personal suffering reflects Amadi's scepticism about the idealism often associated with the Biafran struggle and suggests a more sombre, critical stance. He critiques the idealism that often colors nationalist movements, suggesting that the pursuit of such ideals can lead to devastating consequences.

Amadi questions whether the sacrifices made for the Biafran cause are justified when weighed against the resulting chaos and destruction, a position that pits him at odds with the Biafra militant supporters. His characters' preference for peace and reconciliation over conflict is seen as anti-Biafran, especially when pitted against the fervent spirit of nationalism that characterized the movement. While the book does not deny the historical context of the conflict, it seeks to elevate the human experience above political allegiances, thereby advocating a return to communal values and peace amidst chaos. In his foreword to the book which is suffused with his disavowal of Biafra, Amadi lays out his motivations for publishing his book:

> […] will vivid recollections right now perhaps retard reconciliation? I think not. In any case the path to full national maturity lies through the fearsome jungle of self-criticism, and the sooner we take to this path the better. There are those who would have no intimate chronicles, now or ever. They are wrong. What today is grim and agonizing may be amusing, even hilarious, tomorrow. Let us not deny posterity a good laugh. *(Sunset in Biafra* 1973, "Foreword")

Although he seemed to make a case for urgent reconciliation, he believed that the Biafran fighters needed to look inwards to see the folly of their actions, which whether they accepted it or not would unfold in the future. This pessimistic view of the Biafran struggle is made even clearer further

in the memoir as he envisioned what he considered the inevitable end of the republic*:* "The rising sun, done up in bright yellow, shone on every shoulder and cap. It was unlucky, I thought, that this symbol also represented the setting sun. Already it was sunset in Biafra, and a long gloomy night of horrors lay ahead." (*Sunset in Biafra* 47)

To foreground his angst against Biafra, Amadi captures the fate of the minority Igbo living in Biafra including the repression, the abuses, the dangers of being too slow and unenthusiastic in embracing the cause, and how easily people, including Amadi himself, were branded saboteurs and subsequently imprisoned:

> Because of the daily warnings against "careless talk" and rumour mongering most people suffered in silence, for even an honest complaint could be given damning interpretations. And so we moved about with ghostly smiles on our faces and deep nagging apprehensions in our hearts. This repression gave birth to an urge to confide in someone, but in whom? (*Sunset in Biafra* 50)

Amadi illustrates how the war exacerbates divisions within communities, leading to betrayal and loss. Sadly, the cyclical nature of the human tragedy in *Sunset in Biafra* emphasizes an existential despair that challenges the romantic notions of fighting for liberation. But so does it lay bare the fact that "every boundlessness is potentially a form of terror" (Abba 187). Hegel, in his *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, expresses his reservations about revolutionary terror and absolute freedom with reference to Robespierre's 'Reign of Terror' (a revolutionary movement in France that stretched from the fall of the Girondins, 31 May 1793, to the fall of Robespierre on the ninth of Thermidor, 27 July 1794). Although he was an early enthusiast of this great revolution, Hegel later became sharply critical of its failure to achieve the expected universal freedom and to establish a rule of virtue. He sees the failure of the revolution and its descent into terror as "its disutilitarian consequences as well as its antithesis" (356). While refuting the famous Platonic view of politics in the Republic for its impracticability, Hegel thus criticizes the transformation of the Jacobins' efforts to secure political freedom into terror and argues that interest in utility turns into a practical concern with "absolute freedom" (356). Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* whose vision seems to derive from the historical significance of revolution foresees the metamorphosis of the Biafran freedom fighters to oppressors: "The laws of nature eventually take adequate care of offenders. It is quite unnecessary to assist nature in this respect. In any case, the seeker after vengeance often finds himself sinking lower morally than the aggressor in the long run" (105). His critical position emerges not just from a rejection of the cause itself, but from a deeper reflection on the suffering in the wake of such tumultuous events.

Amadi's criticism of Biafra and belief that it would never succeed aligns with the position of HEB Nigerian Manager Higo and this was to

influence Heinemann's editorial and publishing decisions towards Biafran narratives. Higo neither recognized the name "Biafra" nor believed that it would succeed. Indeed, in a handwritten memo to Currey on 14 April 1969, he noted that he did not believe in the existence of any republic known as Biafra and then added in red ink: "The point is, James, 'Biafra' is dead; never lived" (Higo, Memo to Currey, 14 April 1969). Although his renunciation of Biafra derived partly from his personal conviction not to validate the Biafran ideal, he also feared that any recognition to Biafra could lead to the extinction of Heinemann in Nigeria. Thus Heinemann considered the implication of the war on its publishing business and as a result was sceptical about publishing any narrative that seemed to promote Biafra. This accounts for the rousing celebration of Amadi's memoir by Heinemann editors who described it as an objective assessment of the real issues of the war. Hill particularly would not conceal his disgust over a negative review of the memoir in one unnamed journal by an unknown reviewer. In his memo to Chakava, Hill gave the journal review a cynical backlash:

> A review by one suspected to be one of the ex-Biafrans who now live in self-imposed exile in East Africa. He fails to conceal his distaste for 'tempered truth' and his adoration of Wole Soyinka for no evident reason. Still, it was a review and if 5% of those who read it do buy *Sunset in Biafra* you will sell some 1000 copies. That would be something, won't it? Thanks for the review. (Hill, Memo to Chakava, 16 April 1974)

The sentiment in this assessment is also noticed in Sambrook's letter to Hill and Currey, in which he also drew attention to how Amadi's memoir was to serve as a counter-discourse to Soyinka's prison memoir *The Man Died*, with its pro-Biafran sentiment:

> *Sunset in Biafra* is placed as a counter to Soyinka's The Man Died, an account by someone who felt he was on the wrong side in federal Nigeria… It is the first book of firsthand experiences of the Nigerian war from someone inside Biafra who was on the wrong side. It counterbalances Soyinka's book. Both are famous authors caught up in a politicians' war. (Sambrook, Letter to Hill and Currey, 7 September 1973)

The memoir was sent to over thirty-one journals and news outlets for review. In addition, a well-publicized party was held in honor of Amadi in London, including an interview session on Tuesday 25 September 1973.

The initial title of Amadi's memoir *Sunset in the East* was changed to *Sunset in Biafra* when it was published two years later in 1973. While "*Sunset in Biafra*" seems to delimit the woes of the war to a particular section of Eastern Nigeria, "*Sunset in the East*" is more all-encompassing. Currey, in his letter to Amadi on 12 February 1973 hinted at the political implication of Amadi's book title: "*Sunset in the East* has so many connotations in this country that I think it may be a misleading title.

People tend to think of the Orient and the passing of the Empire and all that sort of thing" (Currey, Letter to Amadi, 12 February 1973). For Currey, there was a need to be cautious about any reference to the "East" and its multiple political connotations. This is noteworthy since there were parts of Eastern Nigeria that did not support the idea of Biafra and its struggle for secession.

Although the act of manuscript selection is often acknowledged as an artistic practice that helps in the overall shape of the text, certain modes of selection practices appear as "critical control or manipulation rather than (creative) choice" (Greenberg 8), which hinder creativity and frustrate potentially great works. Such practices also consider the author's status and individuality in the editorial decisions. The manuscript of Amadi's novel, *The Slave*, initially rejected by reviewers, was later published in 1978, without the suggested revisions. In a telegram to Currey on 24 October 1977, Higo advised Amadi to rework the manuscript in the context of the reviewers' suggestions but Amadi insisted that he would not revise *The Slave* (Higo, telegram to Currey, 24 October 1977). Yet, Currey assured Amadi that they were "delighted to add the book to the AWS whether you do further work on it or not" (Currey, Letter to Amadi, 3 November 1977). Amadi's tone in his response to the editorial queries on the page proofs, including the advance payment made to him, was that of triumph:

> I have received the proofs for *The Slave.* I am working on them. I have noted the minor editorial comments made, but I do not see the need for any changes (emphasis, mine). Thank you for all the financial arrangements made. The remittances have been received. Yours sincerely.

Despite his refusal, Heinemann did not only publish the book as it was but also made an elaborate arrangement to host him in London. An advance payment of £750 was made on his arrival to avoid embarrassments. In Sambrook's letter to Currey on 14 October 1977, he noted:

> Elechi may arrive before I get into office on Thursday from Frankfurt. Can you please make sure there is no embarrassing situation where nothing has been done about his advance when he arrives? (Sambrook, Letter to Currey, 14 October 1977).

Amadi was already an established author, unlike Mezu, having earlier published the first two successful novels *The Concubine* (1966) and *The Great Ponds* (1969).

Archival records show that HEB, like many other metropolitan publishers, was "more concerned about the lack of market than about the lack of quality, to be honest" (Low 43). The idea of turning educational publishing into big business also meant that certain norms were set aside by the enterprising publisher seeking to take advantage of the great increase in the general reading public. This practice was evident in the

history of the cover design of Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra*. In his distinction between what he calls "historiophoty"—the representation of history in visual images and filmic discourse—and historiography, the representation of history in verbal images and written discourse, Hayden White argues that "pictures may be used primarily as 'illustrations' of the predications made in verbally written discourse to direct attention to, specify, and emphasize a meaning conveyable by visual means alone" (White 1193). However, there are policies guiding the use of images. Amadi's book cover shows a heavy military presence, with the photograph of a naked and hungry Biafran child and a distraught civilian, perhaps in search of something to eat. The Biafran soldier turned out to be one Mr E. Ora, a former Biafran soldier of Nsukka Igbo extraction. In a letter to Amadi, Mr. Ora drew attention to an infringement of this policy, and complained about the use of his photograph without his consent on the book cover; a photo which according to him had been causing him a lot of embarrassment since the book had come into circulation (Ora, Letter to Amadi, 28 December 1976). His complaint was ignored until he wrote another letter to Higo explaining that the photo portrayed him all over the world as an arch-rebel soldier (Ora, Letter to Higo, 17 April 1978).

Heinemann's solicitor, Rubinstein Callingham, had advised the company to make a moderate payment in circumstances such as this, where an unjustified claim amounted to a nuisance that was worth getting rid of (Callingham, Letter to Mrs Hoff, 19 April 1977). The company showed a clear unwillingness to effectively address Mr Ora's concern. Instead, Currey argued that rather than paying for damages, they "could easily alter the photograph" (Currey, letter to Callingham, 13 June 1978). This suggested alteration of Ora's visual identity minoritizes and denies his rights over how his image might be accessed, retrieved, or used. Using his photograph even without any biographical details also writes him out of existence, transforming him "into a ghost" (Anyaduba 1-10). It conceals the historical and structural conditions of the violence of the war. In a broader context, the different shades of minoritization of Biafran voices and identity, and the anonymization of their images problematize the neo-imperial strategies that have continued to deny agency and create wealth out of postcolonial conflicts and agonies in Africa and globally.

Conclusion

This article brings together S. O. Mezu's *Behind the Rising Sun* and Elechi Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* in conversation with a selection of publisher-author correspondence on the Nigeria-Biafra war obtained from the Heinemann African Writers Series archive at the University of Reading Special Collections to show the historical and political dimensions of the publication of Biafran voices during the Biafran war. Engaging the archival and literary materials as co-texts, the article has contended that pro-Biafran texts were treated in a way that suggested a deliberate attempt by the HEB to undermine the Biafran voices during the war. Using

Mezu's novel and Amadi's memoir as case studies, it draws attention to how HEB editors adopted discriminatory editorial policies in their treatment of significant perspectives in the Biafran-focused texts. Many revealing parts of Mezu's novel, for instance, were censored, altered, or removed either on unsubstantiated claims of poor quality or that they might offend the sensibilities of certain, mostly European, individuals and institutions. However, Amadi's memoir which ostensibly shares a certain degree of anti-Biafran sentiments was celebrated as a counterdiscourse to other Biafran-focused writing including Wole Soyinka's memoir *The Man Died*. More so, the cover design of Amadi's book has photographs of hungry Biafran civilians, disillusioned soldiers, and distraught children in a way that not only denigrates them, but also writes them out of existence. Even so, the photographs were used without the owners' consent, an action that is against global publishing ethics.

Thus, the analysis demonstrates how texts and materials from the archives might be framed as research tools for a more comprehensive understanding of the literary text. It is an approach that brings the disciplines of literary, archival, and publishing studies into a bond to reveal what authors, publishers, and readers might tell us about the history of the book. In a broader context, the article extends our understanding of how neo-imperial politics has continued to problematize the history, writing and publishing of identity, conflict, and resistance in Africa and in the global space.

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