DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for examination or the award of a degree at any other university.

Signature ........................................ Date ........................................ 23rd October 2014

Jacqueline Kubasu Ojjambo

This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors.

Signature ........................................ Date ........................................ 23/10/14

Prof. Peter Wasamba

Signature ........................................ Date ........................................ 23/10/2014

Dr. Tom Odhiambo
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to

The late Reverends James and Ketry Kubasu, my inspiration

Were my love

Were (Jnr) my silly heart

Chinua my sweet laughter

And

To God Almighty, my help
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research project would not have come together in any cohesive manner without the consistent and immensely helpful guidance of my supervisors, Prof. Peter Wasamba and Dr. Tom Odhiambo. Thanks are also due to Dr. Jennifer Muchiri for her invaluable support and guidance during the conceptual stages of this project. I also thank the lecturers in the Department of Literature for providing a strong knowledge base in the course of my studies.

To my colleagues Jennifer, Jane, Kefa, Grace, Makokha, Margaret, Mike, Maureen, Munyiri, Obala, Odongo, Owiti, Amos, Angie, Korir, Winnie, Rachel, Bernard and Wafula for your moral support and genuine interest in my work. To Marciana and Doseline, thank you for being very kind “Big Sisters”. To my siblings for constant encouragement to push further. Finally but not least to Were, Were (Jnr) and Chinua for allowing me the space, time and peace required to study.
## CONTENTS

DECLARATION ....................................................................................................................... i

DEDICATION ......................................................................................................................... ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................................................... iii

CONTENTS ......................................................................................................................... iv

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................ vii

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY ....................................................... 1

Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1

Statement of the Problem .................................................................................................... 4

Objectives ............................................................................................................................. 5

Hypothesis ............................................................................................................................ 5

Justification ........................................................................................................................... 5

Scope and Limitation .......................................................................................................... 8

Literature Review ............................................................................................................... 8

Theoretical Framework ..................................................................................................... 14

Methodology ..................................................................................................................... 17

Chapter Outline ............................................................................................................... 19
CHAPTER TWO: THE NATURE OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction..........................................................................................................................21

Nature of Embedding in Adichie’s Selected Works............................................................21

Narrative Levels in Adichie’s Selected Works....................................................................26

Relationship between Embedding Texts and Embedded Texts..........................................33

Embedding and Authority...................................................................................................38

Conclusion..........................................................................................................................41

CHAPTER THREE: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN
ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction..........................................................................................................................43

Functions of the Embedded Narratives...............................................................................43

The Explicative Function....................................................................................................44

Thematic Function............................................................................................................52

Actional Function.............................................................................................................53

Aesthetic Function...........................................................................................................55

Advancing the Oral Storytelling Tradition.........................................................................59

Creation of Multi-vocality .................................................................................................62
ABSTRACT

Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” feature diverse forms of narrative embedding. Although embedded narratives have attracted considerable attention, narrative analysts have not accounted for new forms of embedding such as blogs. This research examines the nature and function of embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works while evaluating the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating themes. The research draws upon Russian formalism to examine how the form of the work contributes to the overall meaning of the work. It also adopts the theory of narratology which outlines the basic approach to narrative levels. A close and comparative reading of the texts reveals the nature and function of the embedded narratives and the relationship between the primary and secondary narratives. The relationship between narrative levels in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* is complicated both by competing structural models and clashes between narrative levels. Adichie transgresses the norms of narrative embedding thus bringing into focus the assumptions that exist around it. Adichie’s deft use of embedded narratives is seen through the many functions it serves and its efficacy in developing central themes. This research adds to studies done on Adichie’s fiction by attempting a narratological inquiry. It also, hopefully, contributes to future research of structure and other narrative techniques applied in Adichie’s works.
CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Writers employ numerous narrative techniques in their work to achieve various outcomes. A narrative is a representation of one or more events by a narrator. This definition is derived from those of Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (2) and H. Porter Abbot, in *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (12). This definition emphasizes that a narrative requires a narrator; a narrative must be communicated by someone or a channel of communication. Narrative techniques are the methods that authors employ to tell their stories. All the techniques employed have important functions in the story. The method and means behind interesting stories are the techniques used.

Sometimes writers employ the technique of inserting one or more stories within the larger story that encompasses them. These stories within stories are referred to as embedded narratives. Some famous examples are Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* and *The Arabian Nights*. In *Canterbury Tales* the main story is about a band of pilgrims travelling to the shrine of Thomas A. Becket in Canterbury. The band passes time by having a story telling contest. The embedded narratives are the stories told by the pilgrims who participate in the storytelling contest. In *The Arabian Nights* the main story is of Scheherazade who is threatened by execution from her husband. Only if she beguiles her husband with a fascinating story will she survive. Every night she tells him a story and within that story new stories are embedded.
Embedded narratives are also common in African oral storytelling. African writers continue to merge the worlds of orality and literacy. An example is Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* where an anonymous Sudanese narrator tells of the journey of Mustafa Saeed, the protagonist of the novel. Salih’s narrative is a polyphonic novel in which the narrator assumes a crucial role as he gradually turns into a full blown character. Another example is Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* which contains nine embedded narratives; these include myths, folktales and anecdotes.

Mieke Bal in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* sees the narrator’s text as primary and the text narrated by the characters within the main primary text as the embedded text. These embedded texts have also been referred to as secondary narratives. Bal explains that she uses the term primary “without value judgement; neither (temporal) priority nor (qualitative) primacy is implied” (57). This implies that the primary text just means the text which comes first, the secondary narrative is the one which comes second and is embedded in the primary narrative. This means either the primary text or secondary text may be the main story depending on the intensity of either narrative. The primary text and secondary text are distinguished by levels in the technical sense such that the narrator’s text is the primary text and the actor’s text is secondary.

Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* distinguishes principal types of relations between embedding and embedded narrative: The first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, conferring on the second narrative an explanatory function. The second type consists of a purely thematic
relationship, therefore implying no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis: a relationship of contrast or of analogy. The third type involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content, a function of distraction, or obstruction. The most illustrious example according to Genette is found in *The Arabian Nights*, where Scheherazade holds off death with renewed narratives, (provided they interest the sultan) (232-233).

Chimamanda Adichie has earned reputation as a master story-teller with a fresh, lyrical and irreverent voice. An acclaimed contemporary African writer; Adichie has written three novels; *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Americanah* (2013), a collection of short stories *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009) and a short story “Transition to Glory” found within the anthology *African Love Stories* (2006) edited by Ama Ata Aidoo. *Half of a Yellow Sun*, which won the 2007 Orange Prize for fiction captures the experiences and impact of the Nigeria-Biafra war through the lives of its characters. “Jumping Monkey Hill”, a short story in the collection *The Thing around Your Neck* looks at the foreign perceptions of Africans in general and the subtle exploitation of women. *Americanah* which won the National Book Critics Circle award for fiction in 2014 is the story of Ifemelu a young immigrant from Nigeria to America and Obinze her boyfriend who goes to London and stays there illegally hoping to regularize his status. The authorities catch up with him and he is deported. The book details their immigrant experiences, their love, separation and eventual reunion.

It is intriguing that Adichie employs embedded narratives widely in her fiction. This research explores the significance of the embedded narrative strategy in African literature.
It is an inquiry in the nature and form of the embedded narratives and how the embedded narratives bear on ideological dimensions of literature while expounding its usefulness. While all users of narrative embedding as literary device have their points of interest, some instances are so extreme that they call for critical attention, like in Adichie’s case. Adichie’s novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* feature highly complex structures of embedding. *Half of a Yellow Sun* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” employ the Mise en Abyme technique, a term coined in 1893 by Andre Gide that refers to a text within a text. This is a text that mirrors the text that holds it. Therefore in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, there is a book within the main book and in “Jumping Monkey Hill” a story within a story. In *Americanah*, one of the characters sets up blogs at various points in her life. Through the omniscient narrator we learn about the comments of visitors to the two blogs.

**Statement of the Problem**

Although the phenomenon of the story within a story has received considerable attention, the orientation has been towards oral narratives such as myths, folktales, fairy tales, animal fables, song tales and such other categories. The tendency of placing these oral narratives within the African novel has been used by African novelists to conjoin the creative forces from their oral tradition to those within the writer’s chosen form of writing.

Embedded narratives have received significant attention from theorists of narrative in recent years. However, narrative analysts have not sought to account for new forms of embedding such as emails, blogs or online chats. Though Adichie’s work has been received
with great interest most of it has been slanted toward the thematic concerns. There is limited narratological inquiry on her work.

The nature and function of embedded narratives vary from one piece of writing to another. This study therefore examines the narrative techniques in Adichie’s work with specific attention to the nature and function of embedded narratives in the novels Half a Yellow sun, Americanah and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

**Objectives**

This research was guided by the following objectives:

i. To examine the nature of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s work;

ii. To evaluate the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating themes.

**Hypothesis**

This research tested the following hypotheses:

i. Adichie employs new forms of narrative embedding in her fiction.

ii. Embedded narratives are effective tools for communicating themes.

**Justification**

The colonial and immediate post-colonial African novelists were driven by the African experiences under the colonial system. This group of writers assimilated and synthesized
the traditions of orality and literacy. The oral tradition impulse is strong in their writing because the writers are products of both the oral and literate education. One significant aspect of merging the oral and literacy traditions is the use of story within a story technique. The writers introduce various oral narratives within the narrative structure of their work in the development of characters, plots and themes.

I define contemporary as occurring in or belonging to the present time. Contemporary writers therefore in my judgment are those whose works have been written and published from the 1980s to the present time. Adichie, born in 1977 and whose works in this study were published between the years 2006-2013 fits the description of a contemporary writer. Christina Abuk in her review of Yvonne Vera’s *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women’s Writing* defines ‘opening spaces’ as “pushing the limits of conventional expectations and then moving beyond interstitial positions, into arenas for new actions and relations.”

One of the important questions narratologists ask is; how the story is packaged. Stories are not always presented in a linear form. Writers may sometimes use frame narratives which contain within them embedded narratives. Tanure Ojaide in “Examining Canonisation in Modern African Literature” argues that the aesthetic choices African writers make in response to different social realities is important in any discussion of a literary canon. Studies on the growth of African literature have focused more on examinations of the importance of oral traditions, languages and thematic concerns at the expense of narratological observations and concerns. It is through the study of literature in terms of style, form, and narrative strategies that the thematic concerns are adequately addressed.
This research is also informed by the fact that African literature continues to grow and develop. Growth in African literature is marked by experimentation, particularly of form and by the realization that knowledge is not absolute. African writers explore new possibilities and at the same time putting into question any previously accepted means of grounding and evaluating ideas. Technological innovations, for example, contribute to modernist experimentation with new forms. Through this research I attempt to expand the observation by Ojaide that African literary canon is fluid and not cast in stone. Contemporary writers seem to follow Ezra Pound’s famous exhortation to ‘Make it new’. This exhortation encouraged writers to apply new energy to established forms.

The study of the new ways contemporary writers are telling their stories is a useful contribution to the ever-growing body of African literary criticism. Contemporary trends are expanding the African literary canon and thus literary critics need to be open minded and not biased when new forms emerge. Adichie’s choice to embed a blog within her novel is a pointer to how modern innovations affects the way writers tell their story.

The differently styled narratives and structures of embedding in Adichie’s selected works facilitate an exploration of the changing trends in writing. The study will also bring into focus the assumptions that exist around embedded narratives.

This study contributes to the studies already done on Adichie’s work by taking an approach that gives attention to the use of embedding in the selected works. This attention to the use of this narrative technique may transform readings of the text.
Scope and Limitation
In this project I focus on Chimamanda Adichie’s novels Americanah and Half of a Yellow Sun, and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” from the collection of short stories The Thing around your Neck. I am concerned with the nature and function of embedded narratives in these texts. In Americanah I examine the blogs set up by Ifemelu. In Half of a Yellow Sun I interrogate the book Ugwu writes; “The World Was Silent When We Died.” and in the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” I examine the untitled story written by Ujunwa.

My background readings of Adichie’s published fiction revealed that of her three novels only Purple Hibiscus does not contain embedded narratives. In the collection of short stories; The Thing around your Neck only “Jumping Monkey Hill” contains an embedded narrative. I have chosen the three texts because of the extended use of embedding in those texts. For example, in Americanah there is extensive use of the blog within the text. This study limited itself to these embeddings with an aim of interrogating their purpose and place in the selected works.

Literature Review
The purpose of this literature review is to provide a context for this research. I also include relevant discourses on embedding to show where this study fits in the existing body of knowledge. The literature selected has some bearing on my project and was reviewed to serve as building blocks upon which this study is pegged on.

Emmanuel Obiechina refers to the phenomenon of the story within the story as the narrative proverb. He explains that the embedded stories are referred to as the narrative...
proverbs because they perform organic and structural functions of proverbs in oral speech and in creative literature. Obiechina argues that:

like the use of proverbs proper, the embedding of stories in the novels is based upon two main principles of the African oral tradition- authority and association through which an idea is given validity by being placed side by side with another idea that bears the stamp of communal approval and by its being linked to the storehouse of collective wisdom (201).

In discussing the embedded narratives in Things Fall Apart by Achebe he concludes that each embedded story brings “something total to the meaning of the novel, some insight to clarify the action, to sharpen characterization, to elaborate themes and enrich the setting and environment of action” (204). Thus narrative embedding expresses the distinctive quality of African fiction. This background points to the fact that as African literature develops it does not necessarily deviate from the historical context of embedding. Narrative embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition and has continued to be important as a way of bridging the gap between the culture of oral and communal storytelling and the experience of reading a text. In this research we look at how Adichie employs this age old technique in her contemporary style.

Abiola Irele in “Orality, Literacy and African Literature” argues that the development of the interplay between orality and literacy is “not merely in purely linguistic framework as in the phase of early Africanist studies, but also from a literacy and artistic perspective” (24). Narrative
embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition. The first narrative level functions in a similar way to the performance aspect of the storyteller’s role. The embedded narrative is an artistic device that enhances the performance of narrating.

Eileen Julien in “African Literature” says “the stuff of which literature is made of includes: language, aesthetic and literary tradition, culture and history and socio-political reality” (296). She adds that “the circumstances in which African novels, plays, and poetry are produced, many of them the legacy of colonialism, are as important to our understanding of African literature as are the style and images of texts we read” (304). This statement suggests that it is important to look at the style and form of a text in order to get a better understanding of it.

Frances E. White in her review ‘While the World Watched’, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Adichie” views the use of a “clever book within a book” (10) in *Half of a Yellow Sun* as one of the effective strategies that Adichie has used to confront Nigeria’s bloody past. White argues that Ugwu the child narrator and writer of the book within a book “takes up writing as a way of dealing with his bewildering and disturbing experiences: facing both shortcomings and strengths of his master; participating in atrocities as a child soldier; and sustaining serious physical damage during battle” (11).

While appreciating White’s observation, this study looks beyond what the writing of the book does for Ugwu the child narrator. It bears asking what the purpose or function is for the narrative that embeds it, what message the book carries, and of what significance the position of the
embedding takes in the book. This study also engages with the function of narrative embedding for the primary texts and its effect on the embedded text.

Doseline Kiguru (2011) examines the role of the child figure in telling narratives based on Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Kiguru notes that the writing of the book “The World was Silent When we Died” by Ugwu, a child narrator is a strategy Adichie uses creatively to point to the reader that the entire narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is the story of Ugwu. She also adds that the strategy is used to create in the mind of the reader the illusion that the stories in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are not fictional but real. This observation points to the embedded narrative as not only a tool for expressing the author’s thematic concerns but as an artistic device. In looking at the nature of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s work this research highlights the creative strategies employed through the form of the embedded narratives.

Umelo Ojinmah in “No Humanity in War: Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” contends that the embedded narrative “The World Was Silent When We Died” within *Half of a Yellow Sun* is Adichie’s real book, real voice and opinion. Ojinmah argues that it is in the exposition of the embedded narrative that Adichie’s voice and opinion are poignant. This research puts to test Ojinmah’s argument by looking at both the embedding text and the embedded text with an aim of establishing how Adichie merges the two. I map out for each text the structure of embedding as well as its relationship with the narrative discourse, the story and the meaning of the texts.
In *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women’s Writing* Yvonne Vera refers to the writers’ need to invent and to banish. This involves defiance of the convention of women’s silence. Writing has established a platform which is freer than speech due to comparative distance and autonomy of books. Critics of African literature have looked at the issues shaping contemporary fiction while giving little attention to how these issues are packaged in writing. Though Adichie’s work does not feature in this collection, it is worth noting that she has embraced the need to “invent and banish” through her choice of form. Adichie chooses to deviate from the common linear form of writing to extensive narrative embedding in her fiction.

David Herman in “Genette meets Vygotsky: Narrative Embedding and Distributed Intelligence” argues that “in conjunction with the cognitive activity of their interpreter embedded narratives constitute intelligent systems—systems that both stage and facilitate the process of shared thinking about past events and about one’s own and other minds” (357). Herman views narrative embedding as enhancing the overall power of the knowledge-generating system to which it lends structure. He further explains that there is a very complex process involved in comprehending the shifts between narrative levels and the changes entailed by those shifts in the status of characters doubling as narrators. In Herman’s view, the embedded text is a system for generating knowledge not just a mere vessel. This argument makes a case for a closer look at embedded narratives in search of the meaning and knowledge they hold.
William Nelles in his paper “Stories within Stories: Narrative Levels and Embedded Narratives” argues that all embedded narratives have a dramatic impact, if only that of deferring or interrupting the embedding narrative, and that all embedded narrative have a thematic function, if only one of relative contrast or analogy. I on the other hand, feel that there is more to the embedded narrative than just deferring or interrupting the embedding narrative. Rimmon-Kenan describes three classes of functions performed either individually or in combination by embedded narratives: actional, explicative and thematic. In this study I examine the function of embedded narratives without limiting the possibilities to a given standard; instead I use those as guides.

Mikhail Bakhtin in *Discourse in the Novel* defines heteroglossia in the novel as:

> A special type of double-voiced discourse (which) …serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they- as it were-know about each other (just as two exchanges in a dialogue know of each other and are structured in this mutual knowledge of each other); it is as if they actually hold conversation with each other (324).

This study approaches the Bakhtinian ideal of the heteroglossic novel from the perspective that its vocal multiplicity is a narrative strategy that signals to the reader to attend to the multi-voiced potential of the text and to interpret it. Bakhtin envisions egalitarian polyphony for the novel as a genre. Bakhtin writes: “The novel must represent all the social and ideological voices of its era
the novel must be a microcosm of heteroglossia…one single unit of social becoming. Every language in the novel is a point of view, a socio-ideological conceptual system of real social groups and their embodied representatives” (411). This study examines how the embedded narratives contribute to the multi-vocality in the selected texts.

From the literature review it is clear that various scholars have researched the area of embedded narratives. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* having been published earlier than *Americanah* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” has received more critical attention. The studies on Adichie’s work however, do not focus much on the embedded narratives save by way of mention. There exists a gap in the area of narratological inquiry in Adichie’s work. This study attempts to fill the gap by examining the use of embedded narratives in the selected works.

**Theoretical Framework**

The main focus in this research is on the nature and function of embedded narratives in Chimamanda Adichie’s work. I rely on two theories to achieve my objectives namely, Narratology and Russian Formalism.

Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* has defined narratology as “the study of how narratives make meaning, and what basic mechanisms and procedures are common to all acts of story-telling” (222). One of the most prominent narratologists Genette focuses on not just the narrative itself but how it is told, that is the process of narrating. To study the nature and function of embedded narratives I analyzed the narrative
structure of Adichie’s fiction. Narratology enabled me to answer vital questions such as: who is telling the story? And how is the story packaged?

Writers often make use of frame narratives sometimes called primary narratives which contain within them the embedded narratives also called secondary narratives. Mieke Bal in *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of Narrative* discusses the possible relationships between primary and embedded texts. In this discussion she notes that “the structure of narrative levels becomes more than a mere story-telling device; it is part of the narrative’s poetics and needs to be understood for the narrative to be fully appreciated” (59). This therefore suggests that to fully understand a text it is important to study the relationship between primary texts and embedded narratives to get the intended meaning.

This study also used formalism as an analytical tool. Formalism refers to a style of inquiry that focuses, almost exclusively, on features of the literary text itself, to the exclusion of biographical, historical or intellectual contexts. One of the central tenets of formalism thought is: that the form of any work of literature is inherently part of its content and that the attempt to separate the two is erroneous. Formalism has the advantage of forcing writers and critics to evaluate a work on its own terms rather to rely on “accepted” notions of a writer’s work.

This study will adopt the Russian formalism strand. Russian formalism refers primarily to the work of the Society for the Study of Poetic Language founded in 1916 in St. Petersburg by Boris Eichenbaum, Victor Shklovsky, and Yury Tynyanov, and secondarily to the Moscow Linguistic
Circle Founded in 1914 by Roman Jakobson. Russian formalists are interested in the analysis of the text but their main concern is with method as the scientific basis for literary theory.

One of the concepts of formalism is about, as Di Yanni Robert puts it, “how a literary work comes to mean what it does” (1580). Formalism’s concern with the formal elements of a text makes it suitable for this research because the embedded narratives take different forms and also the idea of embedding narratives in a work is an aspect of form.

Narratology and formalism have a close relationship brought about by the fact that narratology borrows elements from Russian Formalist critics such as Vladimir Propp. Propp investigates Russian fairy tales to determine there narrative functions. According to his analysis, all folk or fairy tales are based on thirty fixed elements that occur in a given sequence. Narratologists such as Genette have also developed methods of analyzing a story’s structure to uncover its meaning, each building upon the former work of another narratologist (and in some cases Russian Formalists) and adding an element or two.

The point of departure is that narratologists provide us with various systematic, thorough approaches to the mechanics of a narrative; narratology helps the reader to understand how a text makes meaning and not what it means. Formalists on the other hand emphasize the form of a literary work to determine its meaning focusing on literary elements such as plot, character, setting, diction, imagery, structure and point of view. Narratology and Formalism both look at the structure of a narrative. While narratologists study how narratives make meaning. Formalists focus almost exclusively on the form of a work.
Methodology

This study is concerned with the nature and function of the embedded narrative. To achieve my goals, my methodology included close and comparative reading of Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”. I examined Adichie’s work, narrowing down to the texts that have embedded narratives. My key focus was on the nature and function of these narratives. This process helped me to identify the relationship between the primary narrative and the secondary narratives in the texts.

I then interrogated the primary texts using the theory of narratology and the Russian formalist theory. Narratology was relevant in the analysis of the structural framework that underlies the order and manner in which a narrative is presented to the reader. Following Genette’s ideas in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* where he explains the relations between narrative levels; I studied the texts to identify the different narrative levels and the relationship between these levels. Genette suggests that in every narrative the narrator’s status is defined both by its narrative level (extra-or intradiegetic) and by its relationship to the story (hetero-or homodiegetic). Once I identified these relationships I looked at the differences and similarities in the selected texts.

The working presuppositions and the basic conceptual framework of this study were informed by the formalist approach to literary criticism so as to understand the organic unity in the text. I interpreted the texts by exploring ways in which the embedded narratives contribute to the organic unity in the selected works of Adichie.
I also reviewed secondary texts especially critical works dealing with Adichie’s works from different perspectives. Literary critics who have looked at Adichie’s work were useful in shedding light on the subject. Through the close and comparative reading I was able to further the arguments advanced or deviated from them based on my research findings.
Chapter Outline

Chapter one introduces the writer Chimamanda Adichie and the works selected for this research. Within this chapter I make a case for the study of the nature and function of embedded narratives. It also gives a background to narrative embedding as a literary technique. This chapter on the whole gives an introduction to the research, stating the objectives, scope and limitation, methodology and the theoretical framework which guided this study.

Chapter two makes an inquiry on the nature of embedded narratives in the selected texts. I examine the form the embedded narratives take, the position of the narratives in the text and the relationship between the embedded text and the embedding narrative. This chapter also looks at the differently styled narratives and structure of embedding in Adichie’s work bringing into focus the assumptions that exist around embedded narratives.

Chapter three explores the functions performed by the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works without limiting itself to the actional, explicative and thematic functions. It also examines the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating the writer’s thematic concerns. This chapter engages with the function of narrative embedding in terms of the embedding narrative’s effect on the embedded narrative and also the purpose and function of the embedded narratives for the narrative that embeds. It also addresses the function of embedded narratives to the characters.

The conclusion summarizes the research done with a focus on the findings observed in this study.
CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction
This section explores the nature of embedding in Adichie’s selected works. This has been done through an analysis of embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey” separately. This chapter discusses the forms of embedding found in the texts while examining how the embedded narratives bear on ideological dimensions of literature. In this chapter I identify the different narrative levels and the relationship between these levels.

Narrative embedding takes place where one narrative is subordinated to another narrative. Samuel Waldron in “Challenging Narrative Hierarchies: Embedded Narrative Structure in David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* and Mark Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*” suggests that narrative embedding requires a text with at least two narratives the embedded and the embedding. For the purpose of this research the embedding relationship will require the embedded narrative must be visible. The latter narrative must be present and observable in the text

Nature of Embedding in Adichie’s selected works
“Jumping Monkey Hill” is a story set outside Cape Town in South Africa. Ujunwa the protagonist is part of a group of African writers attending a writers’ workshop. Authors from various African countries are gathered at this workshop. Within the story there is reference to the stories written by the other writers in the workshop. Only Ujunwa’s story
is displayed and the reader journeys with Ujunwa as she writes her story. Through the third person omniscient narrator the reader gets to know Ujunwa’s thoughts.

Adichie makes use of the *Mise en abyme technique* in the packaging of “Jumping Monkey Hill”. *Mise en abyme* is the French term referring to the practice in heraldry of placing the image of a small shield on a larger shield. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Ujunwa’s story is semi-autobiographical. The story Ujunwa writes is in the third person limited point of view. Ujunwa’s story is untitled. It is indented within the primary narrative and presented in smaller font to distinguish it from the primary text. The story is complete and can be read independent from the primary narrative.

The protagonist Chioma in Ujunwa’s story faces two situations where men in authority take advantage of her position through sexual exploitation. In the first instance, “the man says he will hire her and then walks across and stands behind her and reaches over her shoulders to squeeze her breasts. She hisses, stupid man! You cannot respect yourself! and leaves” (100). In the second instance, Chioma walks away after observing Yinka sitting on a customer’s lap and realizing that this would also be her fate. The alhaji runs a finger over Yinka’s arm. When the alhaji invites them in to give them perfume Chioma walks away.

The choice of the short story form within the short story is valid because of the advantages of the short story form. An example is the ease with which an author maintains consistency of purpose since there are fewer characters and settings thus better dramatic and thematic unities.
Later when Ujunwa reads the story to the group, Edward the workshop leader says that “the whole thing is implausible”(113). At this point Adichie reveals to the reader and the other characters in the primary text that this story is the real life story of Ujunwa:

A real story of real people?” she said, with her eyes on Edward’s face. “The only thing I didn’t add in the story is that after I left my co-worker and walked out of the alhaji’s house, I got into the jeep and insisted that the driver takes me home because I knew it was the last time I would be riding it. (114)

*Half of a Yellow Sun* recounts the ghastly historical events of the Nigeria-Biafra war. The central characters in the novel are Ugwu, the twin sisters; Olanna and Kainene, Odenigbo and Richard. To a large extent, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is Ugwu’s story, but, the chapters are written in turn from the point of view of Ugwu, Olanna and Richard. The action in the novel moves between the early and the late nineteen sixties.

Interspersed throughout the book are brief passages taken from a book entitled; “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The authorship of this book is ambiguous; Adichie leads the reader to believe that the book is written by Richard, “the title of the book came to Richard: “‘The World Was Silent When We Died’. He would write it after the war, a narrative of Biafra’s difficult victory…” (375) but we learn towards the end of the book that it was Ugwu who was writing the book; “Ugwu was writing as she
spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of…” (210).

*Americanah*, Adichie’s most recent novel traverses three nations and addresses a myriad of issues; identity, nationality, race, love, loneliness and aspiration. The book opens in Princeton where Ifemelu lives, as she heads to Trenton, the closest place she can get her hair braided. Her hair being braided at the salon is symbolic of Adichie braiding and weaving her story. Through flashbacks we get to know the story of Ifemelu and Obinze that begins twenty years earlier in Nigeria.

Ifemelu and her boyfriend Obinze are caught up in a state that is surrounded by dysfunction and corruption. The two respond by leaving the country in search of brighter prospects. Obinze heads to England due to rejection from post 9/11 stringent immigration policies in America. He travels on a tourist visa but extends his stay illegally. Eventually he is discovered and deported to Nigeria. Ifemelu goes to the United States and cuts all communication with Obinze. She struggles to make it and finally succeeds. Ifemelu launches a blog about race in America. By the time we meet her at the salon she has made up her mind to return to Nigeria.

*Americanah* has a seven part structure that holds fifty five chapters. The story takes the third person omniscient perspective. The chapter narration oscillates between Obinze and Ifemelu’s point of view. Adichie establishes that *Americanah* is primarily Ifemelu’s story.
by writing chapter one from Ifemelu’s point of view. Chapter two is from Obinze’s point of view, this establishes that his story is also of importance.

The frame of the story is rendered by the braid salon. From the salon the details of the story are laid out as flashback within that frame. Interestingly, Ifemelu leaves the salon at the end of chapter forty one. The following chapters deal with Ifemelu’s transition on the verge of returning to Nigeria. Chapters forty four to fifty five are set in Nigeria and deal with the issues in Ifemelu and Obinze’s relationship and provide a closure to the novel.

There are blog posts spread throughout the novel. While in America Ifemelu sets up a blog called “Raceteenth or Curious Observations by a Non-American Black on the subject of Blackness in America” (296). Ifemelu later changes its name to “Raceteenth or Various Observations in America About American Blacks (Those formerly known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black” (315). When Ifemelu returns to Nigeria she sets up another blog called “The Small Redemptions of Lagos”.

Adichie’s use of the blogosphere in Americanah is in keeping with the narrative time. The advancement of technology has significantly changed the mode of communication; people have turned to the use of Twitter, Facebook and blogs to express opinions on significant issues. Though we are not given specific dates in the novel, the allusion to 9/11 tragedy attack and the election of President Barack Obama to office helps us to place the setting as contemporary. The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines blogosphere as “an online journal where an individual, group,
or corporation presents a record of activities, thoughts or beliefs…many blogs provide a forum to allow visitors to leave comments and interact with the publisher” (n.p).

The choice of a blog as the form that carries the embedded text is very significant. Blogs are perpetual and can reach a wide audience. Each blog post has its own title and content. Visitors to the blog read the posts and share them so that other people can see and read them. Visitors can also make comments and participate in the discussion. Blogs are also easily accessible through computers and mobile phones. One of the characters in the novel, Paula reads one of Ifemelu’s blog posts in a gathering of friends from her phone (325).

**Narrative Levels in Adichie’s Selected Works**

Martin Gray’s dictionary of literary terms defines the various types of narrators and narrative levels as follows:

An extradiegetic narrator tells a story on the extradiegetic level, a ‘higher’ level that includes everyone and everything that determines how the story is told. His or her narration can include one or more other narrations (told by intradiegetic narrators). An intradiegetic narrator tells the story on the narrative level of the characters; the diegetic level which describes how the characters of a story communicate with each other and which is embedded at the extradiegetic level.

A homodiegetic narrator describes his or her own personal experience as a character in the story. Such a character cannot know more about other characters than what their
actions reveal. A heterodiegetic narrator on the other hand describes the experiences of the characters that appear in the story.

The narrator in Ujunwa’s story is presented to the reader as a heterodiegetic narrator. As we read the story we cannot link the events of the story to Ujunwa. It is only through the primary text or at the extradiegetic level that we learn that the narrator is actually homodiegetic. Ujunwa the character in “Jumping Monkey Hill” is actually Chioma in the untitled story she writes.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the reader is presented with a first narrative level through the third person omniscient narrator and then the second level narrative act Ujunwa writes a short story. At each level, the narrative is truncated before it attains closure.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in “Jumping Monkey Hill”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Narrative Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Omniscient third person narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story about Ujunwa and other participants in a writers workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second level</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ujunwa writes a short story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative act</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded</td>
<td>Metadiegetic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>Story of Chioma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Half of a Yellow Sun, at the extradiegetic level, the third person omniscient narrator presents the events around the Nigeria-Biafra war. This constitutes the intradiegetic level in which Ugwu writes a book. This book within the primary text constitutes the metadiegetic level of narratives. This structure is similar to that of the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill”. Adichie also applies the Mise en Abyme technique, since the embedded narrative mirrors the embedding narrative in terms of form.

In Half of a Yellow Sun, “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” is written from the omniscient third person point of view. The brief passages appear as summaries that tell the reader what is contained in the chapters of that book:

1. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash. She sat on the floor. Olanna tells him this story and he notes the details. She tells him how the bloodstains on the woman’s wrapper blended into the fabric to form a misty manure…(82).

The omniscient narrator of the novel and the writer of “The Book” constantly overlap. In this first part it is obvious that the writer has access to the information in the novel. At this point in the story we do not know who is writing the book. The only person mentioned to have an interest in writing a book about Nigeria is Richard, a British journalist. The reader easily assumes the writer is Richard.

1 All the excerpts from “The Book” are numbered as such I have numbered them in my quotes for ease of reference.
Genette in *Narrative Discourse* defines metalepsis as “any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a Metadiegetic universe etc) or the inverse (234-235). Metalepsis therefore is a paradoxical transgression of the boundaries between narrative levels. Dorrit Cohn in “Metalepsis and Mise en Abyme” defines interior metalepsis as “all metalepsis that occurs between two levels of the same story; that is to say, between a primary and secondary story” (106).

Interior metalepsis occurs in *Half of a Yellow Sun* when at the extradiegetic level the reader finds out that the ‘he’ referred to in the first part of “The World Was Silent when We Died” is Ugwu. This is found in part four of the novel which covers the late Sixties. “Then she described the head itself, the open eyes, the greying skin. Ugwu was writing as she spoke and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important…” (210).

The transgression here occurs between the primary narrative and the secondary narrative. It appears that the narrator of the primary narrative is the same narrator in “The Book: The World Was Silent When we Died”. The book’s passages are written from the third person point of view similar to primary text:

2. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

He discusses the British soldier merchant Taubman Goldie, how he coerced, cajoled and killed…(115).

3. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died
He writes about independence. The second world war changed the world order: Empire was crumbling…(155).

5. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

He writes about starvation, starvation was a Nigerian weapon of war. (237)

When towards the end of the novel we realize it is Ugwu writing the book we discover that Adichie collapses the idea of narrative levels and the hierarchy of the same. There are no longer boundaries. The levels become intertwined. Adichie creates an illusion of a real book but in the real sense the passages are summaries of “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The summaries of “The Book” are presented to the reader by the same extradiegetic narrator.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>levels</th>
<th>Narrative content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Third person omniscient narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story about Nigeria-Biafra war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second level narrative</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ugwu writes a book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded narrative</td>
<td>Metadiegetic</td>
<td>The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Genette suggests that “metalepsis designates the transgression of a line of demarcation that authors usually do not touch, namely the shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells and the world of which one tells” (236). Adichie looks away from
conventional embedding and points to alternative structural reading of her novel. The overlapping in *Half of a Yellow Sun* suggests links between the narrative levels. A close observation of the narrative structure in this particular text reveals a limitation of the theory of narratology to the extent that it views metalepsis more of a transgression than of any merit. One of the merits seen in this text is its use to connect the embedded and the embedding. The demerit is that metalepsis may cause confusion about who the narrators are to the readers of the novel.

It is important to note that there are other forms of embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The novel contains speeches, radio broadcasts, songs, poems, Richard’s articles, letters and such other categories. This research focuses on the major embedded narrative. The term ‘major’ for the purposes of this research refers to any narrative that takes a significant portion of the text, where significant is any narrative longer than three to four paragraphs. While this distinction may not be perfect, it is nevertheless a useful one. The intent is not to brush aside the text’s shorter narratives but to provide a clearer comprehensible picture of the predominant narrative structure.

The narrative structure in *Americanah* is multi-layered. At the extradiegetic level is the third person omniscient narrator narrating from Ifemelu’s and Obinze’s perspective at different times. The next level is the intradiegetic level where Ifemelu writes a blog and posts blogs on different topics. The reader observes the narration of ‘tales’ by the intradiegetic narrator both about the narrator (homodiegetic) and about others (heterodiegetic). The next level is the Metadiegetic, which comprises the blog posts by Ifemelu. Beyond this is the meta-metadiegetic which arises from blog comments by blog visitors on different topics.
This type of embedding presents a complex situation because the narrative levels follow no clear pattern. The result is that it does not amount to a structural system that would explain the relationship of the narrative parts. In some instances the extradiegetic narrator presents the blog contents from the meta-metadiegetic level. An example is: “Years later she would blog about this: ‘On the Subject of Non-American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know.’ A Congolese woman wrote a long comment in response: She had moved to Virginia from Kinshasa and months into her first semester of college begun to feel dizzy … (158).” In this example the extradiegetic narrator cuts across all the possible levels of narration in the novel as follows; the intradiegetic- Ifemelu writing the blog, The metadiegetic- the blog post; “On the Subject of Non-American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know” (158) The meta-metadiegetic, the Congolese woman writing her experience of panic attacks.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in *Americanah*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>levels</th>
<th>Narrative content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Story told from the third person omniscient point of View</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story revolves around the lives of Obinze and Ifemelu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Level Narrative</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ifemelu sets up a blog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

2 This table presentation is *Americanah*’s basic narrative level structure. The complex nature of the embedding caused by the overlapping of narrative levels could not be tabulated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embedded Narrative</th>
<th>Metadiegetic</th>
<th>Blog – Raceteenth or Various observations about American Blacks (Those Formerly known as Negroes) by a Non-American black Blog – The Small Redemptions of Lagos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third Level Narrative</td>
<td>Meta-metadiegetic</td>
<td>Comments and stories posted by blog visitors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Relationship between embedding texts and embedded texts in Adichie’s selected works**

Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* differentiates the main types of relationships that can connect the metadiegetic narrative to the primary narrative in which it is inserted. The first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, conferring on the second narrative an explanatory function. The second type consists of a purely thematic relationship, therefore implying no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis: a relationship of contrast or of analogy. The third type involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content a function of distraction, for example and/or obstruction (232-233).

Mieke Bal observes that when the embedded text presents a complete story with an elaborate fabula, we gradually forget the fabula of the primary narrative: This apparently loose relationship between primary and embedded text is relevant to the development of the primary fabula (57). Another possible relationship between the two texts presents itself when the two fabulas are
related to each other. This structure has two possible meanings. Either the embedded story explains the primary story, or it resembles the primary story. In the first case the relationship is made explicit by the actor narrating the embedded story; in the second the explanation is usually left to the reader, or merely hinted at, in the fabula (58).

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the narrator relates the writing process of one of the characters. The omniscient third person narrator says, “She sat there for a long time, moving the mouse from side to side, trying to decide whether to name her character something common, like Chioma or something exotic like Ibani” (100). From this narration we learn that Ujunwa is writing a story about a female protagonist. Just beneath this excerpt is a display of the story Ujunwa is writing.

The two texts are related to each other. The embedded story explains the primary story. Adichie uses the embedded story to develop pertinent issues that the primary text raises. This relationship is made explicit by the character Ujunwa narrating the embedded story through her writing. Though the short story written by Ujunwa is complete the primary text takes a larger part of the story “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

In Half of a Yellow Sun “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” is interspersed throughout the novel. The distinction between the primary narrative and this narrative is that the excerpts are short passages, printed in a different typeface, they are all titled “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The primary text takes a larger part of the novel since the embeddings are summaries and not whole chapters.
The reader finds the first part of embedded book in part one of the novel which covers the early sixties. This portion summarizes the prologue of the book within the novel. It is worth noting that the presentation of the book is abrupt, no mention of what it is about or who the author is has been given this far. The embedded narratives are short passages that are presented as chapter summaries that are numbered.

The embeddings have no relation with the chapter content of the chapters that hold them. Though the arrangement of the embedded narratives within the text appears haphazard, a closer study reveals an orderly pattern. Each segment of “The Book” appears at the end of either one or two series of three chapters focalised by each of the three main focalisers. In part one and three the embeddings appear after one series and in part two and four after every two series.

In total, the embeddings are eight and the last is found on the last page of the novel:

8. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

Ugwu writes his dedication last. For my master, my good man (433).

The ending of the novel at the same time with the ending of the embedded narrative is significant because it places them on the same level. This implies that both narratives are of equal import.

In Half of a Yellow Sun the embedded narrative and the embedding narrative are related to each other. The embedded narrative explains the primary story. Bal explains in Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative that “this relationship is made explicit by the
actor narrating the embedded story” (58). By stating clearly in the last chapter of the embedded narrative that Ugwu wrote, Adichie wants to ensure there is no doubt about the authorship of the book. This also reveals the connection between the two texts. Ugwu the child narrator in the primary text rises to write about his experience and observations about the war in the embedded text.

Genette’s *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* refers to this relationship as one of “direct causality” (232). He further explains that these kinds of embedded narratives seek to answer the question “what events led to the present situation?” The information contained in “The Book: The World was Silent When We Died” gives background details to events in the extradiegetic narrative.

In *Americanah* the narrator furnishes us with background information on the blogger (Ifemelu) and the blog. The reader is introduced to the blog in the first chapter of the book. This is an indication to the reader that the blog is an important part of the novel and its story. Unlike *Half of a Yellow Sun* where the embedded narrative just appears without warning; the blog in *Americanah* has an external introduction. From the outset of the novel the reader knows there is a blog and gets a feel of what the blog is about when the narrator mentions some posts in the blog and visitor comments on the second and third page of the novel.

The blog and primary text have a close relationship. There is spatio-temporal continuity between the metadiegesis and diegesis. This relationship is not of direct causality like the one observed in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The second narrative takes on an explanatory function. Some of the
Fabulas in Americanah also resemble one another and the blog is intertwined with the primary narrative. Contained in the blogs are incidents of interest that Ifemelu experiences or observes in her day to day life. There is a repetition within the blog of events that the reader has already seen in the primary text.

An example is when Ifemelu works as a babysitter for a white family that lived in a grand stone house with white pillars; she encounters a carpet cleaner who is hostile to her because she is black and a black should not own such a stately house: “She would begin the blog post “Sometimes in America, Race is Class” with the story of his dramatic change and end it with: *It didn’t matter to him how much money I had. As far as he was concerned I did not fit as the owner of that stately house because of the way I looked. In America’s public discourse ... (166).”*

Another example is the blog on the expensive lifestyles of some young Nigerian women posted in “The Small Redemptions of Lagos” (422). The blog post is about Ranyinudo, Ifemelu’s friend. Before the post, on an earlier page is a description of Ranyinudo that matches the blog. “Ifemelu... wondered if she would be like Ranyinudo, working for an advertising company, living in a one bedroom flat whose rent her salary could not pay...dating a married chief executive who bought her business class tickets to London” (389). The blog reads in part;

“There are many young women in Lagos with Unknown Sources of Wealth; they live lives they cannot afford. They have only ever travelled business class to Europe but have jobs that can’t even afford them a regular ticket. One of them is my friend a beautiful, brilliant woman who works in advertising” (422).
Bal defines resemblance between two fabulas as follows: “we speak of resemblance when two fabulas can be paraphrased in such a way that the summaries have one or more striking elements in common” (60). In the case of the two blog posts cited above in one the resemblance with the text is that both texts address the issue of race in America using the same incident. In the second the blog and text are a social critique on the lives of certain women in Nigeria. When confronted by Ranyinudo for airing her story in public, Ifemelu says “Your story is so common” (422). Ifemelu uses Ranyinudo’s life story to talk about women “who define their lives by men they can never truly have and are crippled by a culture of dependence” (422).

**Embedding and Authority**

All the embedding narratives in Adichie’s work vouch for the authenticity of the narrative they embed. The embedding texts do not just present the embedded text; they provide a context for the embedded narrative, credit it to a specific person and establish its credentials.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” and *Americanah* it is very clear from the outset who the authors of the embedded texts are. Ifemelu sets up the two blogs in *Americanah*. Ujunwa writes the untitled story in “Jumping Monkey Hill”. *Half of a Yellow Sun* takes a different approach: the author of the book within the novel is not revealed at the outset. The reader has to contend with the ambiguity of whether it is Richard or Ugwu who writes the book. It is eventually made clear towards the end of the novel that Ugwu is the author of the book. The ambiguity of the authorship of the embedded text is employed by Adichie to create suspense and at the same time make a statement about who should tell the African story.
The embedding narratives attest to the credibility of the narratives that they embed. In *Americanah* the narrator presents Ifemelu’s blog as a successful blog with a growing readership. The omniscient narrator says this about the blog:

> She had written the final post only days ago. Trailed by two hundred and seventy-four comments so far. All those readers growing month by month, linking, cross posting, knowing so much more than she did; they had always frightened and exhilarated her (5)

In another instance, Paula one of Ifemelu and Blaine’s friends tells her students to read the blog (325). Paula equates the blog to any other authoritative text that the students are required to read. This puts forth a case about the importance of the blog. The various blog posts and comments from blog visitors create an interesting patchwork of conversations giving an impression of a series of supporting sources.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the embedding narrative backs up the information in “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” by creating an illusion that the information in the embedded narrative is true. In the first chapter of the embedded book the reader learns the source of the story in the prologue of that book is Olanna (81). To authenticate this story about the baby in calabash the extradiegetic narrator narrates this episode in chapter eleven. The narrator gives the reader details of the train journey and uses similar words; from the embedded narrative we read; “For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash. She sat on the floor of a train...” (81). From the primary text we read that; “Olanna sat on the floor of the train with her knees drawn up” (149). The narrator further endorses that prologue by narrating how the actual
process of writing that prologue takes place in chapter thirty four; “Then she described the head itself, the open eyes, the graying skin. Ugwu was writing as she spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose…” (410). Captured in that narration is an affirmation of the author of the book as earnest and keen to tell the story and a pointer to the importance of the story shared in the embedded narrative.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the reader learns that Ujunwa is a fine writer. The third person omniscient narrator says: “It was the British Council that had made the call for entries and selected the best” (96). This sets the readers expectation high; we anticipate that the story she writes will be good. After she reads her story some of the comments from the other participants were that; the story was “strong…believable…captured Lagos well…had a realistic portrayal of what women were going through in Nigeria” (113). This approval places the embedded story in good standing to counter Edward’s negative opinion about it.

An important piece of information that the embedding narrative reveals is that the story is actually Ujunwa’s real life experience. Since autobiography is more believable than fiction; Adichie effectively creates the illusion that the embedded narrative is a true story. The embedded narrative is therefore placed at a level higher than the one embedding it by being presented as a true story while the one that holds it is fictional.

The authors of the embedded narratives in the works studied write from a point of experience. Ugwu writes about his experiences during the war. Ifemelu blogs about her immigrant experiences in America. Ujunwa writes her own story. This validates their suitability to write
these stories. The experience gives them the knowledge and power to write the embedded narratives and the reader easily believes them.

Adichie’s choice to represent the embedded narratives as non-fictional text within the context of the embedding narrative elevates them in the ontological level. Ontological levels point out the subordination of worlds or realities. Waldron describes a subordinate world as one which is “fictional; it is subordinated to the real world because it has no independent existence beyond what is described or imagined in the real world” (17). In the works selected the primary narratives take a subordinate level.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the nature of the embedded narratives in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”. It has discussed the various forms that shape the embedded narratives. I have attempted to present a working narratological model for the texts; discussing the narrative levels and their relationships. I have also observed that in some cases like *Americanah* the extensive embedding creates a clash between the narrative levels. In this chapter I also looked at the relationships between the embedding narrative and embedded narratives and concluded that the relationship is one where the embedding narrative justifies the embedded narrative. This discussion leads us to the next chapter that looks at the function of the embedded texts and how it contributes to developing Adichie’s thematic concerns.
CHAPTER 3

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction

This chapter looks at the functions of the embedded narratives in the texts selected. It also evaluates the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique in communicating the author’s thematic concerns. It highlights the limitations of the embedded narrative technique in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

Functions of the Embedded Narratives

Authors choose to employ the embedded narrative technique in their work for various reasons. Some common uses are; for aesthetic purpose as a means of adding diversity to the narrative act, dramatic impact, sharpening characterization, developing thematic concerns and increasing the complexity of the narrative. This study focuses on the roles played by the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works.

Narratologists such as Genette and Bal have discussed possible functions of embedded narratives. Shlomith Rimmon Kenan builds on the earlier work of Genette and Bal in *Narrative Fiction Contemporary Poetics*. She argues that there are three types of embedded narrative function: actional, where the telling itself progresses the plot; explicative, which explain the diegesis; and thematic, which function as *Mise en abyme*, stories that reflect in some way the
narrative around them (93). This study begins the examination of the functions of the embedded narrative from the functions identified by Kenan and then expands to other functions revealed in the short stories “Jumping Monkey Hill” and the novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah.*

### The Explicative Function

Embedded narratives may serve as an answer to questions that arise in the primary narrative. This function helps the reader to understand how the events in the primary narrative came to be. “All these narratives, explicitly or not, answer a question of the type “what events have led to the present situation?” (Genette 232).

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the excerpts of “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” focus on saying, this is how things were and this is why things turned out this way. The prologue introduces the reader to the effects of the senseless killing during the war by recounting the story of the woman with the calabash. Ugwu contextualizes the senseless killings within the wider narratives of war and violence in the world by mentioning “the German women who fled Hamburg with the charred bodies of their children in stuffed suitcases and the Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies” (82).

The second excerpt explains the colonial aspect of how Nigeria was formed. How the British preferred the North to the South. The flourishing of the Christianity and education brought by the missionaries, the merging of the North and the South in 1914 and the picking of the name Nigeria by the governor-general’s wife (115).
The third excerpt talks about independence and highlights the state of Nigeria during independence “At independence in 1960, Nigeria was a collection of a fragments held in a fragile clasp” (155). This statement is important in explaining the state of the country at independence. This signals the reader to the volatile nature of the state and it therefore does not come as a surprise that the country broke into war. This excerpt also reveals the tension between the North and the South: “The North was wary; it feared domination of the more educated South and had always wanted a country separate from the infidel South …Nothing was done about the clamour of the minority groups and the regions were already competing so fiercely that some wanted separate foreign embassies (155).”

The fourth excerpt talks about the economy of Nigeria which was nonexistent until independence. This excerpt points to the poor governance and complex problems facing the country. It focuses on the 1966 massacres and mentions the ostensible reason for the massacre as revenge for the “Igbo Coup”. The attitude of the Igbo is shown as resilient and what mattered to them was the unity forged among the Igbo and the creation of the fervent Biafrans out of former Nigerians.

The fifth excerpt discusses the starvation that was prevalent in the Biafra war. How starvation was used by Nigeria as a weapon of war and how it drew attention to Biafra. He also talks of how people used that starvation for their own gains. For example, photographers use of the photos of the hunger stricken children to grow their careers. Parents also used the mention of starvation to get their children to eat.
The sixth excerpt discusses the reactions of the international community to the Biafran Republic. It mentions the silence and the indifference from some. “In the United States, Biafra was “Under Britain’s sphere of interest”. In Canada the prime minister quipped, “Where is Biafra?”(257). Within this portion Ugwu explains the reason for the silence of the world toward Biafra. This discussion is very crucial because it underscores the notion “The World Was Silent When We Died” which is also the title of the book Ugwu writes.

The seventh excerpt contains the epilogue which is a poem Ugwu wrote, modelled after a poem by Okeoma one of the characters. The poem is titled “Were you Silent When We Died?” This title is also related to the title of the embedded book. This linkage and repetition point to the importance of questioning the silence or attitude of indifference among nations when a nation faces a crisis especially one that leads to massive loss of human life. This is an important socio-political question for Africa since the continent continues to face crises that cause loss of lives. A current example is the South Sudan conflict where hundreds of people continue to be killed because of their ethnicity and political alignment.

The eighth and final excerpt of the embedded book constitutes one line; “Ugwu writes his dedication last: For Master, my good man” (433). This line sums up Ugwu’s appreciation to Odenigbo for is mentorship. Through this final line the issue of the ambiguity of the authorship of the book is finally put to rest. There is no doubt about whose story this is and who writes it. The embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun* serves an explicative function where the embedded narrative explains the events in the embedding narrative. It gives the reader a deeper understanding of what the scenario was during the Biafran War. This is important because some
of the readers may have no idea what the Biafran war was about, The Book functions as a device to anchor the reader. Maria Plaias in “The danger of a single story in Chimamanda N. Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun” states that “the line of reasoning in “The Book” provides the basis for analysing and interpreting the characters political views in the main narrative and affirms and reinforces the major ideas of these characters” (54).

The embedding narrative presents to us the action of the story while the embedded narrative presents to us the cause of the action. An example is the issue of starvation as a tool of war. Through description Adichie paints a picture of the inhumanity of starvation; she shows girls fighting for food (270), the desperation Olanna experiences when she goes to the gate of the relief centre to collect food for five consecutive days and finds the gate locked. She details the inward rush of the crowds into the relief centre when it finally opens (271), the theft of Olanna’s corned beef by five soldiers (272). How children roasted rats to eat (370) and how every leaf became a vegetable (371). Through these scenes and many others in the book we see the effect of starvation on the Biafran people. It is only from the fifth excerpt of the embedded book that we understand that starvation was a weapon of war:

Starvation broke Biafra and brought Biafra fame and made Biafra last as long as it did. Starvation made the people of the world take notice and sparked protests and demonstrations in London and Moscow and Czechoslovakia…Starvation made the international Red Cross call Biafra its gravest emergency since the Second World War (237).
The blog Ifemelu puts up in *Americanah* explains the countless different approaches to race, gender, ethnicity and beauty both in Nigeria and in the United States of America. From the title of the Ifemelu’s blog: “Raceteenth or Various Curious Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non American Black” it is clear that Adichie wants to tackle race from an African perspective. To avoid the subjectivity that may come from an American Black because of the history of slavery and earlier racist practices which they were subjected too; Adichie looks at it from an outsider’s perspective (through Ifemelu). Through the blogs Adichie avoids being didactic about the issue of race.

Similar to the *Half of a Yellow Sun* approach the primary narrative presents to the reader the action of the story while the blog explains the “why” and “how” of the situation in the primary text. The blog allows the public to comment on the issues at hand. The blogs in the novel play a complementary role while facilitating explanation of the primary text. An example is the case of Abe who does not see Ifemelu as female because of the racial divide:

…Abe in her ethics class, Abe was white, Abe who liked her well enough, who thought her smart and funny, even attractive but who did not see her as female. She was curious about Abe, interested in Abe… Abe would hook her up with his black friend… She was invisible to Abe (192).

Later in the novel Ifemelu is involved romantically with Curt, a wealthy white man. During the duration of this relationship she experiences racial prejudice firsthand. When Curt introduced Ifemelu as his girlfriend she saw on the faces of the white women the expression of the question
“why her” (292). Other instances are when they walked into the restaurant and the host asked Curt “Table for one?” and when the owner of the bed and breakfast in Montreal refused to acknowledge her and looked only at Curt (294). Ifemelu felt slighted by this treatment but she could not tell Curt because he would say she was overreacting. Finally when Ifemelu starts her blog her first post entails the prejudices she experienced when seen with a white man and the racially skewed magazines. She ends the blog with words she remembered a long time after that post and recited at the dinner table of a French and American couple. The blog reads:

The simplest solution to the problem of race in America? Romantic love. Not friendship. Not the kind of safe, shallow love where the objective is that both people remain comfortable. But real deep romantic love, the kind that twists you and wrings you out and makes you breathe through the nostrils of your beloved. And because that deep romantic love is so rare, because American society is set up to make it even rarer between American Black and American White, the problem of race in America will never be solved. (296)

This post explains her brutal honesty to a comment by a Haitian poet who had dated a white man for three years. The poet said that race was never an issue for them. Ifemelu reacts by saying “That’s a lie” (290) she repeats “it’s a lie” (290). Through this narration and the blog post Adichie expresses her anger at the idea of sweeping of the race issue under the carpet by saying “race is not an issue” or race does not matter (291).
The blog posts are also used to explain the meaning of concepts around the race issue that cannot be explained in the text. An example is the blog post titled “Understanding America for the Non-American Black: A few Explanations of What Things Really Mean” (350). This blog captures the evasive nature of Americans when handling conversations that address racial issues. They are reported to refer to race using abstract terms such as “simplistic” or “complex”. Among other terms the blogger discusses how diversity means different things to blacks and to whites. “To the whites diverse means nine per cent black people and if it gets to ten per cent they can’t stand it. To the blacks diverse neighbourhood means forty per cent black” (350).

Another post “What Academics Mean by White Privileges, or Yes it Sucks To Be Poor and White but Try Being Poor and Non-White”. This post is one of the lengthier posts, spanning close to two pages. It discusses, explaining at length the imbalances created by racism. An example is given about what would happen if a black person was found in possession of drugs and if a white person was found in a similar situation. The post reads “the white guy is more likely to be sent to treatment and the black guy is more likely to be sent to jail” (346).

Just like Half of a Yellow Sun’s embedded narrative the “Raceteenth” blog in Americanah helps the reader to trace the histories around the race issue, this explains to the reader how the current situation arose and why the race issue remains unresolved. In the post “Friendly Tips for the American Non-Black: How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness.” (325) Ifemelu outlines the ways in which the whites offer alternative explanations about racial issues and how they want to wish away the past. In this post she records history to anchor the reader on the race issue:
Dear Non-American Black, If an American Black person is telling you about an experience about being black, please do not eagerly bring up examples from your own life. ...Don’t be quick to find alternative explanations for what happened. Don’t say “Oh, it’s not really race, it’s class. Oh, it’s not race it’s gender... A hundred years ago the white ethnics hated being hated, but it was sort of tolerable because at least black people were below them on the ladder. ... being American means you take the whole Shebang, America’s assets and America’s debts, and Jim Crow is a big ass debt. ... Don’t say “Oh Racism is over, slavery was so long ago.” We are talking about the problem from the 1960s not 1860s ...325-327.

The mention of the historic events; the slavery, Jim Crow, blacks stepping off the curb because a white person was passing, white women standing outside schools shouting “Ape” because they did not want their children to mix with black children among other incidences mentioned in the post, gives the reader background information on why the racial wound still festers. At the end of this blog post Ifemelu does not stop at listing the do’s and don’ts of the appropriate way whites should respond to blacks discussing race. She invites the two races to a possibility of a friendship where there is mutual understanding and respect:

American Blacks are not telling you that you are to blame. They are just telling you what is. If you don’t understand, ask questions. If you are uncomfortable asking questions, say you are uncomfortable about asking questions and then ask anyway. It’s easy to tell when a question is coming from a good place...sometimes
people just want to feel heard. Here’s to possibilities of friendship connection and understanding. 327

**Thematic Function**

Rimon-Kenan defines the thematic function of the embedded narrative as one that establishes a relationship of analogy, that is, similarity and contrast” between the narrative levels (92). Genette in *Narrative Discourse* explains that this “purely thematic relationship implies no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis; a relationship of contrast or of analogy. Based on these two definitions of the embedded narratives studied, only the story nested in “Jumping Monkey Hill” serves this function. In *Americanah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* there exists a form of continuity in space and time in the events related in the embedded narratives and embedding narratives.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the untitled story Ujunwa writes has nothing to do with the primary narrative in terms of time and space. Adichie use this story to exemplify the mistaken perceptions of Africans and issues that affect them by foreigners. In the primary narrative Isabel a British assumes that only royal blood could explain the good looks of African people, Edward believes that homosexual weren’t reflective of Africa and women are never victims of sexual exploitation in crude ways. Edward has a warped idea of what the “real Africa” is and insists that his perception of Africa is correct. The story Ujunwa writes and reads unbeknownst to her audience is a true story of her experiences and so when Edward comments that; “The whole thing is implausible,”…This is agenda writing, it isn’t a story of real people.(113)” She responds: “A real story of real people? …The only thing I didn’t add in the story is that after I
left my co-worker and walked out of the alhaji’s house I got into the Jeep and insisted that the driver take me home because I knew it was the last time I would be riding it (113)”. The revelation that the embedded story is a true story serves to show that Edward’s (foreigners) perceptions about Africa are sometimes so wrong. It gives an analogy of similarity by showing that the comments Edward had been making about the unrealistic nature of the other participants African stories was wrong.

**Actional Function**

The actional function occurs when the very telling of the embedded narrative progresses the plot. This function borrows from Genette’s third type of function expounded in *Narrative Discourse* where such an embedded narrative: “Involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content- a function of distraction, for example and/ or of obstruction (233)”. The embeddings in the selected texts do not fit this definition completely because they are not completely independent of the diegesis and have no function of obstruction or distraction. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the attendees of the African writers’ workshop are expected to produce one story for possible publication. It therefore follows that Ujunwa the protagonist of the story writes a story which she is required to read to the other attendees.

The short story written by Ujunwa serves as a plot device employed by Adichie to advance the plot in this story. Once Ujunwa reads the story the reactions of the other participants and those of Edward form the rising action. One of the key conflicts of the story is the fixed perceptions of Africa by foreigners. The embedded narrative also makes possible the denouement of the story.
The final outcome of the events is the story is directly linked to the story Chioma writes because it is at this point that she reveals that she is the protagonist in the story that she writes. This revelation then proves Edward wrong in referring to her story as implausible.

In *Americanah* there are other characters from the primary text who are involved with the blogs either directly or indirectly. Ranyinudo for example is upset that Ifemelu had written about her in one of the blog posts. Ifemelu had posted a blog about “the expensive lifestyles of some young women in Lagos”. Ranyinudo calls Ifemelu and says “It is obviously me! Look at this! Ranyinudo paused and then began to read aloud” (422). This post was then taken down by Ifemelu.

Paula like Ranyinudo also reads a blog post to her friends. She also requires her students to read Ifemelu’s blog. It is noted that Obinze read the whole archive of Ifemelu’s blog posts, his reaction to blogs is also accounted for. Some of the experiences Ifemelu has and the observations about life and the other characters form a significant part of the blog.

Blaine contributed to the blog indirectly by influencing Ifemelu through his comments. He reminded Ifemelu what he thought was her role and what the purpose of the blog should have been “Remember people are not reading you as entertainment; they’re reading you as cultural commentary. That's real responsibility. There are kids writing college essays about your blog” (312). To the extent that the other characters make a contribution to this blog gives it an actional function.
The actional function applies to *Half of a Yellow Sun* on a very small degree because as much as the reader knows that Ugwu is writing a book; the narratives he writes do not contribute to the progression of the plot. The embedded narrative in this novel serves an explicative function but could easily stand on its own. This is emphasized by the haphazard positioning of the embeddings and the lack of introduction to them by the primary text. Compared to *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”; there is very little interaction of the other characters with this text.

**Aesthetic Function**

Aesthetics in literature refers to the investigation of the nature and perception of beauty in a piece of literary work. Peter Lamarque in “Aesthetics and Literature: A problematic Relation?” argues that “Aesthetic characterisations have implication for how the work appears, what impact it has, what is salient in it and what merits aesthetic attention” (6). The use of embedded narratives is one of the aesthetic choices Adichie makes to creatively present her work.

The embedded narratives in Adichie’s work positively affect the presentation of the works to the reader. The external appearance reveals breaks, with an indented bolded typeface in *Americanah*. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the excerpts of “The Book” are numbered and are in bold letter title. The font of “The Book” is different from that of the primary text. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the font used to present the embedded short story is similar to that of the primary text but in smaller size and indented.

In the works selected the embedded narratives provide obstruction in the continuity of the whole. This obstruction affords the narration with more ups and downs. The continuity of the primary
narration is momentarily suspended and a heightened suspense is created. In her longer forms the embedded narratives break the monotony of reading the primary narrative by offering a shift in the reader’s thought process.

In a number of instances the embedded narratives in *Half of a Yellow Sun* help us to break from the heavy matter of the war. In chapter twelve the reader is presented with the narration of the horrendous killings at the airport which are witnessed by Richard. He witnesses Nnaemeka’s “chest blow open” (153) and the soldiers line up Igbo people and shoot them. At the end of the chapter Richard lowers his head to the sink and begins to cry. Immediately after this scene the third excerpt of “The Book” is inserted just before the next chapter. This excerpt shifts the reader’s attention from the dreadful events of the airport killings to the narration of the independence of Nigeria. This excerpt also explains the state of the country at independence and suggests that “nothing had been done about the clamour of minority groups” (155). Apart from giving background information relating to the Biafran war, it offers a relief from the horrific details of the killings.

The same relief is offered in chapter eighteen which details the air raids that killed people and razed houses. The reader is moved by the effect of the raids on both the victims and survivors. The excerpt provides an obstruction by talking about the state of the economy of Nigeria. It also focuses on the 1966 massacres and the effect on the Biafrans.

In chapter thirty one of *Americanah* the tension raised by a heated discussion on race and relationships at a dinner party is cooled off by the insertion of a blog that discusses hair as a race metaphor: “Imagine if Michelle Obama got tired of all the heat and decided to go natural and
appeared on TV with lots of woolly hair, or tight spirally curls...She would totally rock but poor Obama would certainly lose the independent vote, even the undecided Democrat vote (297)”.

The tone of the blog is that of discussing race with a light touch and is peppered with humour. The reader is expected to get relief from the humour contained in the blog. Through the description of Michelle Obama’s hair as woolly and the effect of that on his election results, the heavy matter of race is discussed albeit in a humorous way.

The embedded narratives help to break the monotony of the primary narratives. In Americanah which spans four hundred and seventy seven pages; the blogs give the reader a much needed break from the monotony. The blogs give the readers fresh perspectives offered by Ifemelu and her blog followers. Unlike Half of a Yellow Sun where the embeddings are always located at the end of chapter, the blogs in Americanah appear both within the chapter and sometimes at the end of the chapter. The embedding in “Jumping Monkey Hill” appears at different points in the short story.

The embedded narratives help to create suspense in the novels and short story. Since the reader has to wait for the reading of the embedded narrative to pass, the experience of suspense is lengthened. Any questions raised in the reader’s mind have to be held in suspense till the embedded narrative is read for a possible resolution. In Half of a Yellow Sun the abrupt presentation of the first excerpt of “The Book” in itself creates suspense. The reader has no idea who the author of “The Book” is and there is no introduction to the book. The reader wonders
what the book is about, who the author is and how long it will be. Adichie creates an urge within the readers to continue engaging with the novel.

In *Americanah* an instance of suspense is seen when a blog follows this statement- “When months later, Ifemelu had the fight with Blaine, she wondered if Shan had fuelled this anger, an anger she never fully understood” (337). While the reader is still wondering how and why the break up will take place, Adichie inserts the blog: Is Obama Anything but Black? The blog is totally unrelated to the preceding passages and thus suspense is created.

In the short story the embedded story written by Ujunwa serves as a break between different parts of the story. The embedded story appears immediately after breakfast following that excerpt it is dinner time then comes bed time; the next excerpt appears after breakfast the next day. This pattern continues dividing the primary story into various time frames. The embedded narrative also creates suspense in both the primary narrative and embedded narrative. Since the two stories obstruct each other, the reader is held in suspense as he or she awaits the next part.

The embedded narratives also slow down the tempo of the narrative. The reader is forced to slow down in order to fully comprehend the importance of a new embedding. This ensures that the reader understands its meaning and relates it to the structure of the story or novels’ total meaning. One of the concepts of Formalism is defamiliarization which Victor Shklovsky argues makes objects; “unfamiliar to makes forms difficult, to increase difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic in itself and must be prolonged (16). Borrowing from this concept this study views the use of embedded narratives as one way of
lengthening perception. The embeddings force the reader to slow down and effect a more strenuous but rewarding engagement with the text.

The embedded narratives also serve to help effectively introduce new plot lines; when Ifemelu returns to Nigeria she transitions into a home that is different from what it was thirteen years back. *Americanah* captures an aspect of the returnee narrative through a post in the blog: “The small Redemptions of Lagos”. The piece about the Nigerpoltitan Club describes the arrogance of Nigerian returnees who gather on a weekly basis to moan the disparities between Lagos and the cities they come from. Ifemelu uses this post to ridicule the air of pretentiousness that surrounds them and encourages the returnees to accept the way of life back home. This post underscores the definition of an “Americanah” presented earlier in the novel, “They roared with laughter at that word “Americanah”...and at the thought of Bisi...who had come from a short trip to America with odd affectations, pretending she no longer understood Yoruba, adding a slurred r to every word she spoke” (65).

Adichie uses the embedded narratives to enhance the reader’s understanding of the primary narratives while providing her readers an experience of combinational delight unique to the reading of stories within stories.

**Advancing the Oral Storytelling Tradition**

Obiechina observes in “Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel” that “the oral tradition impulse is strong in the modern African novel, which embodies this experience especially because the writers themselves are products of both oral traditions and literate education” (199). Roger Kurtz
describes the third generation of writers; a categorization in which Adichie belongs as “labouring under an obvious but understandable anxiety of influence as the giants of Nigerian literature who preceded them cast long shadows” (25). Heather Hewett observes in “Coming of Age: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and The Voice of the Third Generation.” that “Adichie like her peers is directly engaged with the Nigerian literary canon and is furthermore making a case for her inclusion in it” (78).

Embedded narratives were common in oral storytelling in independent traditions in parts of Africa. They are also used as a bridge between oral and written narrative. Herman argues that embedded narratives describe the historical consciousness of the present. There is a link with the past and a relaying of knowledge between two or more minds. *Half of a Yellow Sun* exemplifies this scenario. The embedded narrative found in “The Book” has a relationship of mediation. Adichie uses this embedding to narrate Nigeria’s history linking past events to the prevailing circumstances in her fiction.

Adichie is conscious of her position and role as an African writer and demonstrates this by borrowing from the rich reserves of traditional oral storytelling techniques. Narrative embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition. The first narrative level functions in a similar way to a storyteller’s role. The embedded narrative is an artistic device that enhances the performance of narrating. Abiola Irele argues that the interplay between orality and literacy is:

... not merely in a purely linguistic framework, as in the early phase of Africanist Studies, but also from a literary and artistic perspective. At the same time the
dominance of orality in the cultural environment of African expression seemed to offer possibilities for validating the endeavour to state the relevance of orality not only to a general understanding of the processes involved in human communication but also, and in particular, to formulate an all-encompassing idea of imaginative expression, one that would point toward a universal concept of literature. (24)

This statement points to the benefits of creating a situation where oral culture is assimilated and reorganized in written fiction. First it enhances artistry in a piece of work. Secondly it aids in stimulating the process of understanding a text. Thirdly as Obiechina notes “as a means of giving maximum authenticity to the writing...writers look to their indigenous poetics to create works that draw upon their living oral traditions to enrich forms, techniques and styles through literate education” (199).

“Jumping Monkey Hill” has in its first narrative level an oral story telling situation. The writers congregate at Jumping Monkey Hill to write and share their stories. This resembles the traditional fireside telling of stories in parts of Africa. The reading of the stories aloud by the characters’ enacts the performance aspect of narrating. In Americanah some of the characters like Paula and Ranyinudo are shown to read the blog posts aloud thus enacting a performance. Olanna in Half of a Yellow Sun narrates her train experience to Ugwu. He then records this narration in his prologue.
**Creation of Multi-vocality**

Bakhtin argues that the strength of a novel stems from the co-existence of and the conflict between the different types of speech: the speech of characters, the speech of the narrators and the speech of the author. This study approaches the Bakhtinian idea from the perspective that the vocal multiplicity is a narrative strategy that forces the reader to attend to the multi voiced potential of the text and interpret it. The embedded narratives create the infusion of a distinct quality of heterologlossia in the narrative.

The embedded narratives permit the author to create a “voice” for his narration (for example if he or she wants to use any special language effects) a voice which can be of a more closely involved narrator. This voice enables the reader to understand the effects of the action since they are immediate and clear. This second narrator or third narrator as the case may require can be made as naïve or as sophisticated as best serves the author’s purposes. This narrator may be faintly or distinctly separated from the author himself.

Aghogho Akpome in “Focalisation and Polyvocality in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” asserts that “the generic diversity of “The Book’s” different segments – it incorporates verse, various prose forms, and journalist reportage- may be read as one way in which Adichie interrogates notions of narrative form and explores the different literary forms through which postcolonial rehistoricisation may be represented” (32). Following Akpome’s argument I add that those genres also represent the different voices or languages that give various meanings, various expressions and converse with each other.
Plaias in “The Danger of a Single Story in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* argues that the arrangement of the embedded narratives in the sequence in which they are arranged is “a way to spread and reinforce the perspective” (54) she continues to argue that “unlike the focalised perspectives the omniscient extradiegetic narrator may offer a de-personalised point of view to counterbalance or reinforce the main characters perspectives” (54). This gives the reader another opinion, through another voice.

Umelo Ojinmah in “No Humanity in War: Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” contends that the embedded narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is where Adichie’s real voice and opinion emerges. (10). Jane Bryce in “Half and Half Children: Third generation Women Writers and the New Nigerian Novel” argues that the embedding of the “The World Was Silent When We Died” is “a device that allows Adichie to gracefully relinquish her position as a narrative authority in favour of a spokesman for the voiceless, which she does not claim to be” (62). Both of these critics point to the double voiced nature of the discourse in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Through Adichie’s double voiced discourse her intentions are expressed albeit in a refracted way. The embedded narrative serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions, the express intention of the character speaking through his or her writing and the refracted intention of the author. The effect is that when the author’s words are introduced into the characters speech, they assume a new meaning and interpretation. The writing of ‘The Book’ by Ugwu presents a voice which appeals to the reader to interpret his voice as the voice of the voiceless. This is necessitated by his position as a child narrator and as a houseboy one of the lowest cadres of employment. Richard Churchill who comes up with the
title “The World Was Silent When We Died” has an academic background, is an expatriate fascinated by the Igbo culture and history. His advantages over Ugwu not withstanding he realizes the war story is not his story to tell. If he told the story the interpretation would be different; it would not carry the same weight as a story told by a Biafran, conscripted into the army and with firsthand experience of the suffering the war caused.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the story that Ujunwa writes turns out to be autobiographical; it is written using auto-fiction techniques. The story is revealed as Ujunwa’s personal story at the end of the primary narrative to resolve the conflict in the primary narrative. The voices in this short story have a conversation about the idea of what constitutes real African experiences. Adichie chooses Ujunwa to write her own life story, which Edward refers to as implausible. This choice presents a voice that proves to the reader and the other voices in the story that foreign perceptions about Africa can be flawed.

In *Americanah* there are various voices and languages presented both in the primary narrative and the embedded narrative. The voices of Nigerian (village), Nigerian (town), accents of Nigerians who have just arrived in America and try to imitate the Americans, Americans and British mispronouncing African names to a Nigerian who’s lived in Britain for a while and has a British wife, to mention a few. The voice of the blogger and the respondents to the blog post add to the multiple voices in the text and the reader thus engages with the complex nature that is the human life.
In an interview with Brooke Obie of Ebony magazine, Adichie responds to the issue of using the blog as a “literary cheat” and editorializing through the blog by saying that she realized that if she editorialized in regular dialogue in the primary narrative it would not work. “I think that what I wanted to say (about race) and how I wanted to say it was in the kind of voice that would not have worked in dialogue or any other way (than through Ifemelu’s posts)” (n.p). Adichie through those confirms the Bakhtinian idea that the author orchestrates all other voices and directs the interactions of those voices. The author organizes the diversity of voices to achieve a desired end.

**Illusion of Reality**

I look at the subject of illusion of reality from the standpoint that illusion is essential to art and that art is an important resource for truth. The inclusion of an embedded narrative which can be oral or written is rationalized or motivated in a realistic way to preserve or imitate the illusion of reality. This illusion of reality consequently lends to both the embedded and embedding narrative credibility. Traditionally several devices are used by writers to achieve this goal. Examples include; gathering of characters who tell each other stories, dreams or hallucinations experienced by a character, the discovery of written manuscripts, diaries, letters and such other categories.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Adichie use the autobiographical genre as a textual disguise to stress the idea that the events in the embedded story are pure fact. This in effect counters the false perception about Africa by Edward in the primary narrative. As much as the primary narrative is
fictive the author creates a way for the reader to enter the characters world and therefore perceive this reality.

The use of the blog in *Americanah* creates the semblance of reality by Adichie’s accuracy in her simulation of how blogs work. This technique transports the reader to the blogosphere and the reader becomes part of the audience of the blog. Blogs provide centralized locations at which readers find web-based journals known as blogs and bloggers are able to find each other. Ifemelu’s blog has many followers, she edits her posts, comments and reactions of the blog are recorded in the text. She pulls down posts when she wants to and eventually she exits from that particular blog zone. She then begins another blog when she returns to Nigeria. All the events in the novel make for a believable story.

Another way Adichie achieves the illusion of reality in her fiction is by empowering the characters that author the embedded narratives. The characters involved all author from a point of experience. The experiences they have give them the authority to write the embedded narratives. The reader then believes the embedded narratives because he or she has shared the experiences with the character in the embedding narrative.

Adichie also accurately merges the information in the embedded narrative with that in the embedding narrative where required. An example in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is where Olanna sees the child’s head in the calabash on the train. Olanna then narrates this event to Kainene and Ugwu on separate occasions. Ugwu then includes this story in the prologue of “The Book”. The narration in the primary text corroborates the information in the embedded narrative.
Alongside other mediums employed in the novels to create an illusion of reality, the embedded narratives contribute effectively to this literary technique. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* we encounter letters, radio broadcasts, poems, songs, newspaper articles and excerpts from a published book. In *Americanah* some of the other devices employed include emails between Ifemelu and Obinze and text messages from mobile phones.

*Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” address factual issues: war, race and the perceptions of foreigners about Africa. Since the issues discussed are real issues the author underscores their importance by employing a technique that enhances the perception by the reader that the issues are real.

**Functions of Embedded Narratives for the Characters**

Irene de Jong in “Narratological Theory on Narrators, Narratees, and Narrative” states that embedded narrative may have a function to the characters. She says “In the case of an embedded narrative told by a character it may also be relevant to distinguish between the function it has for secondary narratees, the characters who are listening and for the primary narratees”(10). This points to the usefulness of the embeddings for the characters; the characters may have been propelled or motivated by something to author the embedded narratives.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* Adichie attempts to capture the effects of the postcolonial and civil war trauma. The characters in the novel live through traumatic experiences which they struggle with. The characters in the novel experiences both personal and collective trauma. Focusing on Ugwu the author of the embedded narrative, I note that his trauma is of a different kind because he
plays the role of the perpetrator. When he is conscripted he rapes a girl at the prodding of his fellow soldiers. This action haunts him and traumatizes him. Frances White in her review of the book writes that “Ugwu takes up writing as a way of dealing with his bewildering and disturbing experiences” (n.p). Doseline Kiguru (2011) examines the role of the child figure in telling narratives based on Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow sun*. She notes that the book Ugwu writes is a reflection of the violence that defined the Biafra society and is an effort to deal with the trauma caused by the violence and destruction (68).

Maria Plaias in “The Danger of a Single Story in Chimamanda N. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” argues that “…Ugwu is atoned and healed through the process of writing and that the healing process entails a continuous engagement with the memory of the war” (64). As the scars of the war reminded Ugwu of his role as a perpetrator he tried to unburden the trauma of those episodes. “He would never be able to depict the bleakness of bombing hungry people. But he tried, and the more he wrote, the less he dreamed” (398).

The writing process is therapeutic not only to Ugwu but to Olanna and Richard as well. Adichie shows how narration may have a therapeutic effect not only to Ugwu but to her as part of the second generation Biafrans. Adichie is bruised by the war, having lost her grandfathers in it. On reasons why she wrote the book she says “my father has tears in his eyes when he speaks of losing his father and my mother still cannot speak at length about losing her father in a refugee camp”. (Adichie, “The Story Behind the Book”). Olanna narrates the train episode to Ugwu and comes to a realization that her story is important when she notes Ugwu’s keenness:
Ugwu was writing as she spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of, and so she told him all she remembered about the train full of people who had cried and shouted and urinated on themselves. (410)

Richard witnessed a customs officer get shot at the airport, just because he was an Igbo. The soldiers went on to kill dozens more of Igbo people at the airport. These scenes flash through Richards mind over and over again to the point that he wishes “he would lose his mind or that his memory would suppress itself” (165). Richard desires to express his trauma through writing but he cannot get himself to do it. “The echo of unreality weighed each word down; he clearly remembered what had happened at that airport but to write about it, he would have to re-imagine it, and he was not sure if he could”(168).

Through these characters Adichie makes a point about the importance of narration and writing for the assimilation of individual and communal past. Adichie seems to feel that narration has the ability to bring on a therapeutic effect on the speaker or writer.

The blog set up by Ifemelu serves an important function in her life. As she pens down her thoughts and feelings on race, we see a metamorphosis in her. From the young lady who was unsure of herself when she arrived in America to a confident lady poised to return to Nigeria. Ifemelu uses the blog as means to understanding race and its complexities but also protecting herself from being swayed into accepting the falsehoods surrounding the race issue in America. The blog offered a catharsis to Ifemelu purging the pressures of immigrant life especially the
The blog gave Ifemelu opportunity to evaluate her life, finally she senses the emptiness, the following excerpt explains:

Readers frightened and exhilarated her…made Ifemelu, nervous eager to be fresh and to impress, so that she began, over time to feel like a vulture hacking into the carcasses of people’s stories for something she could use. Sometimes making fragile links to race. Sometimes not believing herself. The more she wrote, the less sure she became. Each post scraped off yet one more scale of self until she felt naked and false (5).

Prior to the books opening scene, Ifemelu had written her final post and closed the blog. Ifemelu feared she had lost touch with part of herself and makes a decision to return home. Ifemelu feels that her personality is shaped by the blog and that she is losing her core to the blog. This revelation helps her to move to the next phase of her life.

The blog attracts comments from people affected by the issues Ifemelu blogs about. The blog gives them opportunity to vent out or to find solace from the knowledge that their experiences are not uncommon. When Ifemelu blogs about her experience with depression, a Congolese woman posts a long comment in response about a similar experience she had (158). Through the blogs Ifemelu opens up a space for people to talk about issues that disturb them but have
nowhere to air them. A comment on the blog “The Small Redemptions of Lagos” said “Thank God somebody is finally talking about this” (421). We therefore note that the embedded narratives serve different functions for different characters including those who author them.

**Development of Themes through Embedded Narratives**

Adichie’s fictional works address a myriad of themes among them love, violence, immigration, race, identity, sexual exploitation of women, sexuality, war and its effects. This research focuses on the themes expounded by the embedded narratives with an aim of evaluating the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique. Adichie uses the embedded narrative as a foregrounding strategy.

The term foregrounding has its origin with Czech theorist Jan Mukarovsky and other formalist critics who emphasize that stylistic features are characteristics of literary texts. The NTC’s dictionary of literary terms defines foregrounding as “calling attention to something –a rhythm, a character, an idea, a viewpoint by placing it in the foreground against a background” (87). Leech and Short in *Style in Fiction* have argued that “in order to make sure that the point is put across; the novelist tends to say the same thing in a number of different ways and at different levels of structure” (207). They add that “incident and mode of description combine to embody one of the major themes of the novel”. Adichie uses the embedded narratives to call attention to her major thematic concerns, the embedded narrative being in the foreground against the background of the embedding narrative.
The silence of the world is a major philosophical concern of Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Adichie questions how societies remain indifferent to others in times of war or genocide. The choice of the title of the embedded narrative, “The World Was Silent When We Died” develops a sense of curiosity within the reader to find out; who was silent? Why were they silent? This title is presented in bold text in all the eight excerpts within the book. It is highlighted in this manner to gnaw at the reader’s conscience. The reader cannot miss it and therefore is forced to think about it.

In the first excerpt the mention of the German women who fled Hamburg with charred bodies of their children stuffed in suitcases, the Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies alongside that of the woman Olanna met in a train with a dead baby’s head in a calabash (82), reminds the reader that there have been other massacres across the globe. This introduces the reader to the idea of death in Biafran war and though Ugwu is careful not to draw parallels of the Biafran war to the German or Rwandan killings, it helps us to visualize and appreciate the magnitude of the Biafran war. This then validates the questioning of the apathy expressed by the world.

It is noteworthy that the poem “Were You Silent When We Died” in excerpt seven of “The Book” (375) appears side by side with the discussion between Richard and the two American journalists about the American policy and the silence of America despite their knowledge that thousands of Biafrans were dying. On this same page the reader learns how the title “The World Was Silent We Died” comes to Richard. Richard is angry at the American journalists for their apathy towards Biafra. “He felt incredibly alone in their presence” (374) they were returning
back to America to the comfort of their homes after collecting stories and photographs from Biafra. This represents how the world left Biafra to deal with its problems.

Adichie uses the embedded narrative to emphasize concerns about the effect of the war. She does this by linking the content of the embedded narrative to the content in the embedding narrative through repetition. The poem in excerpt seven of “The Book” paints a picture of the magnitude of the starvation:

Imagine children with arms like toothpicks
With football for bellies and skin stretched thin
It was Kwashiorkor –difficult word
A word that was not quite ugly enough, a sin. (375)

This second stanza is replayed in the narration in the embedding narrative. “The nun cradled the smallest, a shrivelled doll with stick legs and a pregnant belly” (374). Through the use of rich metaphors and similes, she evokes the sympathy of the reader. The “arms like toothpicks” and “a shrivelled doll with stick legs” refer to the same situation and so does “with football for bellies” and “a pregnant belly”:

Naked children, as if the man
Would not take photos and then leave, alone. (375)
These last two lines of the same poem re-present a scene on an earlier page where the children clamoured around the American photographer begging for more sweets “Once he said, “That’s a lovely smile!” and after he left them the children went back to roasting rats” (370). The laughter referred to in the poem symbolizes the hope the children had; that some form of salvation would come from the American man and by extension the world. This hope is dashed when the photographer leaves and they return to roasting rats.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the story Ujunwa writes expounds the theme on sexual exploitation of women. Chioma the protagonist in the embedded narrative is sexually exploited by a male interviewer who after saying he will hire her “walks across and stands behind her and reaches over to squeeze her breasts” (100). Ujunwa experiences some subtle form of exploitation from Edward, the workshop organizer. When she offers Edward a seat he responds by saying “I’d rather like you to lie down for me” (106). Edward also tells the Senegalese lady that he had dreamt of her naked navel. The repetition of the theme in both diegetic levels is used by Adichie for emphasis and calls the attention of the reader to that theme. This ensures that the reader stops and attends to that theme.

The major theme developed by the blog in Americanah is race. The question of race has been discussed over many decades. Yet it remains a relevant discussion even now. Americanah published in 2013 and whose setting captures the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, correctly assesses that racism still exists. The novel starts on a train journey to Trenton where Ifemelu goes to braid her hair. On the train she remembers an incident on a plane when she had to explain what she meant by “lifestyle blog” to a man who sat next to her. This man then asks
“Ever write about adoption?” Nobody wants black babies in this country and I don’t mean biracial, I mean black. Even black families don’t want them” (4). Ifemelu blogs about this man and this post receives the highest comments for a month. The positioning of this conversation in the very first chapter is to make the reader understand that this book is about race and the blog is a space for discussing race.

The rejection of black babies plays out in Dike’s life when later in the story he attempts to commit suicide. Dike experiences racism at his tender age; because he is black he is the first suspect when the school computers are hacked. The pastor at his church says hello to all the other kids but to Dike she says “What’s up bro?” (349), this makes him feel different and he says, “I feel like I have vegetables instead of ears, like large broccoli sticking out of my head” (349). Dike feels unwanted to the extent that he nearly takes his life.

The concept of race first occurs to Ifemelu when she arrives in the United States “I come from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America” (290). The covert and overt racisms she witnesses and experiences are what make her black. Ifemelu is angered at the silence, the things “unsaid and unfinished” (296) around the race issue. Ifemelu begins longing for other listeners and she longed to hear the stories of others. “How many other people had become black in America?” (296).

At the encouragement of her friend Wambui she sets up a blog. The blog is informed by her daily encounters with racism. These encounters form the titles of her posts and make up the
content of her discussion. The blog separates the race issue from the other issues in the novel. The blog is a technique used by the writer to foreground the race issues.

The blog effectively develops the theme of race in *Americanah* because of its unique nature. The nature of the blog embedded in *Americanah* borrows heavily from the real medium that the blog is. Ruth Aylett and Sandy Louchart in “Towards A Narrative Theory of Virtual Reality” argue that a story is not told or shown in the same way according to the medium in which it is displayed, nor is its content or intensity the same” (1). The blog in the novel does not address the issue of race in the same way the embedding narrative does. The blog by its nature allows for multiple comments on the issues posted, it also allows the blogger to edit or withdraw posts accordingly. Blogs also serve a wider reach because they can be re-posted onto many other sites.

The blog in *Americanah* supports the contention by Cornel West that the race question is urgent. “For me the race question is an urgent question of power and morality; for others, it is an everyday matter of life and death” (Morrison, 61). What better way to address an urgent issue than by putting it on a medium that delivers blog posts in real time? Through the use of the blog Adichie shows the need to view the race issue as one that requires urgent attention. Adichie chooses the blog over other forms because of the advantage it offers in terms of the immediacy in communicating and ability to reach a wide audience.

The existence of racism brings up the question of identity. The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy defines one’s personal identity as “what makes one the person one is” (n.p). Identity reflects on who we are and how others perceive us. Identity is a language and culture rooted
process that includes our position in the world and others thoughts about who we are as well as who they are.

Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* discusses the complexity of the concept of “identity”. Gilroy argues that historians should reconsider how they document the past “I want to develop the suggestion that cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single complex unit of analysis in their discussion of the modern world…and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective”(15). This suggests that black is black and there are no levels of blackness. It is assumptions such as these that Adichie problematizes as she explores the various categories of identities in *Americanah*.

There are several diasporas in different chronotypes as a result of creolization being a continuous process. Globalization has made it more complicated such that within the diasporic community there are various categories of identities. In the blog post “Understanding America for the Non-American Black: American Tribalism” (184). The different kinds of black are spelt out. Ifemelu talks about the ladder of racial hierarchy in America. “White is on top, specifically White Anglo Saxon Protestant (alluding to the possibility of another type of white). American Black is always on the bottom and what’s in the middle depends on time and place.” She includes an example about how in the “ladder of races Jewish is white but also some rungs below white”.

In another blog post “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: In America You Are Black, Baby”(220), Ifemelu addresses the idea of the Non American Blacks denying that they are black
because they are from other countries where the issue of blackness does not arise. This calls attention to the creation of a racial identity “black” that confronts immigrants to America. She also looks at the generalizations and assumptions surrounding black people. Black people are treated as though they have no individual identity. If a crime is committed by a black person all other black people are stopped for fitting the profile. Black people are made to feel that they have to compensate for other black people’s behaviour by being apologetic to the whites, or always being on guard because any offensive behaviour by one black will mean the other blacks get to pay for it. This post is written in a scornful tone, scorning at the ridiculous ideas that whites have about blacks.

Chinua Achebe argued that the role of the African writer included a responsibility to educate his or her readers. In the essay “The Novelist as Teacher” in a collection of essay *Hopes and Impediments* he states “…The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and re-generation that must be done. In fact he should march right in front…” (30) He adds that the African writer is more concerned with the importance of combating “our acceptance of …racial inferiority” (29) by confronting the “disaster brought upon the African psyche in the period of subjection to alien races” (29).

Adichie seems to have heeded the call by Achebe to march right in front and re-educate especially in the area of ownership and authorship of the African story. Adichie belongs to a group of writers described as the third generation of modern Nigerian Literature. Roger Kurtz in “The Intertextual Imagination in Purple Hibiscus” has outlined the generations as follows:
The first generation consists of writers like Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Flora Nwapa and others. The second generation includes names such as Femi Osofisan, Buchi Emecheta and Tanure Ojaide. The third generation comprises of those who were born and educated in 1960 and whose writings began to appear in the mid 1980’s. They include Ben Okri, Helen Oyeyemi, Helen Habila, Seffie Atta, Chimamanda Adichie and others. (24)

Adichie and her peers have found a platform to speak from through their writing. They are able to experiment with new avenues of expressing and formulating the African experience. Through the texts studied in this research Adichie has defined the role of the African writer and then shown who should be telling the African Story. She has exemplified this by her choice of characters and the embedded narratives authored by them.

Adichie underscores the glaring need for contextualized reading of African literature and the telling of authentic African stories. In her address “The Danger of a Single Story” Adichie explains how class and culture based prejudices is often fostered by individuals adherence to hegemonic narratives of societies and histories. Adichie argues that “The single story creates stereotypes and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (7).

Adichie highlights the fundamental function of the writer, like those of storytellers in traditional African communities. Preceding writers such as Rene Wellek (238-9), Wole Soyinka (21), Chinua Achebe (7-8) and Chukwudi Maduka (11) have on various occasions agreed that the
African writer is the conscience of the society and serves as a historian, preserving its past; critic, analyzing its current state and shepherd, helping to usher it towards its future.

*Half of a Yellow Sun* addresses the question of the authorship and ownership of history. Adichie juxtaposes the characters Ugwu and Richard Churchill. The two characters represent opposite perspectives in life. Ugwu is from a small village and comes to work as a houseboy for Odenigbo in Nsuka. Richard is a British man who comes to study Igbo-Ugwu art. Through the two who are both authors in the novel Adichie points to us who the African story belongs to and who should tell it. Ugwu writes “The Book” which is a historical account from the time period of the British colonizer to the Nigeria-Biafra war. For a long time the colonizer has had an upper hand and influence about the African continent and its history.

Richard is fascinated by Igbo Ugwu art and his novel titles borrow from the Igbo past and the culture: “The Basket of hands” and “In the Time of Roped Pots”. Richard learns Igbo and gets further enmeshed into the Igbo culture. He begins considering himself a Biafran. He says “*We* are still extracting from some fields we control in Egbema … *We* move the crude to our refineries at night…”. “You keep saying *we*” the Redhead said. (372) Eventually Richard realizes “The war story isn’t my story to tell, really”, something that Ugwu had always known: Ugwu nodded. He had never thought that it was” (425).

This exclusion of Richard from the Biafran experience is seen earlier when Richard sense’s it from Madu’s tone: “We are running our cars with a mix of kerosene and oil or we’ve perfected the flying Ogbunigwe or we’ve made an armoured car from scrap. His *we* was edged with...
exclusion. The deliberate emphasis, the deepened voice, meant that Richard was not part of we; a visitor could not take the liberties of homeowners” (304).

The subject of Richard’s exclusion is repeated for emphasis when Madu tells Richard” the truth is this is not your war, this is not your cause” (305). When Richard tells Kainene how the book title “The World Was Silent When We Died” came to him “she arched her eyebrows “We”? The world was silent when we died? (374). The word we is italicized a number of times to make the reader sense the exclusivity that surrounds the right to tell the Biafran story.

It is remarkable that the title of the book Ugwu writes originates from the words of a Nigerian. As much as Richard picks it up and hands it over to Ugwu. Colonel Madu tells Richard “The world has to know the truth about what is happening, because they simply cannot remain silent when we die” (305). At this juncture Madu was requesting Richard to write for the Propaganda Directorate as a way of him contributing to the war effort. Adichie makes an important statement that the book title and the book content had to be owned by Biafrans. They had the exclusive right to tell their true story.

An example of the falsehoods that result from a single story are shown in Half of a Yellow Sun where the American journalist views the belief of the woman with one arm; that Biafra would win, a result of the Biafran propaganda machine. Richard likened his thoughts to “President Nixon’s’ fact finders from Washington or Prime Minister Wilson’s commission members from London who arrived with their firm protein tables and their firmer conclusions: that Nigeria was
not bombing civilians, that the starvation was over flogged, that all was well as it should be in the war” (371). While people died of starvation or air raids the fact finders twisted the story and said Biafra’s suffering was exaggerated. In short they lied about the real situation on the ground. Just like Richard desires to write a book after the war telling “a narrative of Biafra’s difficult victory, an indictment of the world” (374); Adichie through the embedded narrative reproaches the world for its silence during the Biafran war that led to the loss of thousands of lives. The sixth excerpt of “The Book” (258) sheds light on this silence.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the characterization and the interactions presented at the writers workshop portrays the situation Adichie denounces in the TED Talk “The Danger of The Single Story”. Isabel, the wife of the workshop organizer claims that the exquisite bone structure Ujunwa has must be from Nigerian royal stock. Edward dismisses most of the writers’ stories in the workshop as un-African or implausible. Adichie points to the fact that the erroneous foreign perceptions about Africa will only be countered when Africans tell their own stories.

This is presented to the reader when Ujunwa reveals that the story she writes is based on a personal experience. When Edward refers to her story as “agenda writing” and “implausible”, convinced that it was not a “real story of real people” (114); Ujunwa responds when she sees the victory in his eyes as he says those words. She stands up and begins laughing; this act of standing up symbolizes Adichie’s call to writers to be bold and courageous, to stand up for the truth, to rise up and tell their truth. The laughter is a mockery of the lies and false perceptions that the west perceives as truth. Ujunwa asks “A real story of real people”? She goes on to reveal
that this was an autobiographical account. Ujunwa the African writer triumphs, as her story turns out to be real.

In *Americanah* we learn very early in the novel about the writer’s role and voice. Sapphic Derrida, one of the most frequent posters writes of Ifemelu “you’ve used your irreverent, hectoring, funny and thought provoking voice to create a space for real conversations about an important subject”(5). This statement carries the description of who an African writer should be; irreverent meaning fearless and bold, thought provoking voice meaning one who stimulates the readers’ interests and creating spaces for real conversation about an important subject.

The genesis of the blog stems from a desire by Ifemelu to share her stories with a larger audience and longing to hear other people’s stories. Ifemelu had a desire to tackle things “unsaid and unfinished” (295). Ifemelu wonders “How many other people had become black in America? How many had felt as though their world was wrapped in gauze” (296). Ifemelu then creates a space where people can address the issues surrounding the race discussion.

The choice of the blog, a medium new and unfamiliar to Ifemelu can be interpreted as a way writers should push boundaries through use of new forms. Like Adichie, Ifemelu experiments by using the blog a medium new to her to voice her concerns; while Adichie embeds the blog in her novel. Adichie seems to say that writers should not shy away from using different mediums to communicate important concerns. Adichie’s creation of Ifemelu as a successful blogger attests to this.
The specific authorship of the blog is spelt out in the title of the blog: “Raceteenth or Curious Observations by a Non-American Black on the Subject of Blackness in America”. This is a pointer on the importance of who the author is. The statement that observations are made by a Non-American Black separates this particular voice from the many other voices that may have an interest in this discussion. It shows that being a Non American black qualifies Ifemelu to talk about blackness.

Like in “Jumping Monkey Hill”, Americanah is also concerned about telling the truth. The remarks “That’s a lie…It’s a lie” (290) by Ifemelu match with the question raised by Ujunwa “A real story of real people? (113), these remarks exhort writers to tell the reader about the importance of the “truth” being told by the African writer. Ifemelu is angered by the silences around the race issue and invites people to “unzip themselves” as this blog post shows:

Open thread: For All the Zipped-Up Negroes

This is for the Zipped-Up Negroes, the upwardly mobile American and Non-American Blacks who don’t talk about Life Experiences That have to Do Exclusively with Being Black. Because they want to keep everyone comfortable. Tell your story here. Unzip yourself. This is a safe space. (307)

Through the characters in the three pieces studied Adichie shows who should write the African history and the concerns that plague Africa. Her opinion resonates throughout her work but it is through the exemplification in the embedded narratives that she makes her opinion clear.
Closely linked to the issue of addressing the authorship of the African story is the attitude of silence. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Ujunwa questions this attitude when the Senegalese says she did not need to say anything to Edward about his sexually suggestive remarks. “But why do we say nothing?” Ujunwa asked. She raised her voice and looked at the others. “Why do we always say nothing?”(112). Ujunwa goes on to give the black South African a tongue lash when he makes excuses for Edward. “Ujunwa shouted at him, “This kind of attitude is why they could kill you and herd you into townships and requires passes from you before you could walk on your own land!”(112). Ujunwa blames the attitude of silence for problems encountered by African states by using the example of apartheid in South Africa.

In the same story I read Edward’s comments about the stories written by the participants as a way of silencing them from telling their authentic stories. For example when he says that “homosexual stories weren’t reflective of Africa...This may indeed be the year 2000, but how African is it for a person to tell her family that she is homosexual?” Earlier on the Senegalese had mentioned to her colleagues that “her story was really her story, about how she had mourned her girlfriend...” (102). The Senegalese case matches that of Ujunwa where true stories are seen as implausible by foreigners because of their conditioned idea of what African life should be.

In Americanah Adichie addresses the issue of silence through Ifemelu’s uneasiness about the silences that surrounded the race question. Ifemelu had a desire to tackle things “unsaid and unfinished” (295). Ifemelu wonders “How many other people had become black in America (296)?” The silence of the world while Biafrans died is one of the major themes in Half of a Yellow Sun. This is repeated over and over again as the title of the embedded narrative “The
Book: The World Was Silent While we Died” and within various passages in the book. Adichie uses the embedded narratives to raise the question of why Africans choose silence. This helps the reader to reflect on the issue of silence and its consequences.

Ifemelu invites both Blacks and Whites to engage in dialogue and to ask questions. This is seen in the blog “Friendly Tips for the American Non: Black How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness” (325) quoted earlier. This blog calls for objectivity in the race discussion- “American Blacks are not telling you that you are to blame...ask questions...listen”. The Blacks are encouraged to speak about the race issue and the whites are encouraged to listen and ask questions about the concerns by blacks about race.

**Limitations of the Embedded Narrative Technique**

While this study has discussed Adichie’s skill in engaging the embedded narrative technique and evaluating the effectiveness of the use of the embedded narratives. There are a few limitations in the way Adichie uses the embedded narrative strategy. These do not overwhelm the quality of her fiction but are worth pointing out.

In *Americanah* there are places where we encounter interposition which can sometimes be exasperating and disruptive. For example in the scene where Aunty Uju tells Ifemelu about her decision to leave Bartholomew and move to Willow. The omniscient narrator says “Ifemelu liked the name of the town Willow; it sounded to her like freshly squeezed new beginnings” (221). Immediately below this line is a blog post that covers close to two pages, a new chapter then
begins after this. This has the potential of creating the feeling of being left hanging at the point the narration ends in the primary text. The reader without warning encounters a blog.

Adichie weaves full blog posts into the primary narrative. The blog posts were too many and quite lengthy. Fewer blogs would still have communicated and achieved the desired result. The too many blogs added unnecessary bulk to the text which may cause the reader to lose interest in reading them and as a result miss crucial information. The monotonous use of the blogs by Adichie makes them loose their desired impact.

Linda Alcoff in “The Problem of Speaking for Others” argues that “the practice of speaking for others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as one who more correctly understands the truth about another’s situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus achieve glory and praise” (22). Adichie creates a space for people to speak for themselves about their race issues. Though Ifemelu’s blog does not purport to speak for others it easily presents Ifemelu as one who understands the truth about others situations. The privileging of the Non-American black by creating that space for them to voice their concerns creates a situation where we cannot see or hear about whites fighting racism.

Some of the blog post titles in Americanah can be read as promoting exclusionism. The American Heritage Dictionary defines an exclusionist as one who advocates the exclusion of another or others, as from having or exercising a right or privilege. Examples are “Understanding America for the Non-American Blacks…” and “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks”. This specific categorization of who is invited to read and contribute to the blogs excludes other races.
It conflicts with the author’s desire to contribute to a debate whose ultimate purpose is to solve the race issue.

The embedded narratives in *Half of Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” could disrupt the reader in the process of reading the primary narrative. There is a possibility of the reader’s attention being diverted to the embedded narrative because of its nature. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* the embeddings are presented in a bold font, while in “Jumping Monkey Hill” they appear in a smaller font. This draws attention to them and they seem to compete with the primary narrative.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the functions of the embedded narratives in the selected works of Adichie. The chapter also evaluated the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique in communicating the author’s thematic concerns. It has also pointed out the limitations observed in Adichie’s use of this strategy. The observation is that Adichie effectively uses the embedded narrative to communicate on the themes of race, identity, the subtle sexual exploitation of women, war and the question of the authorship, the ownership of the African story and the dangers of an attitude of silence. The functions identified are actional, explicative, thematic, illusion of reality, aesthetic function, advancement of traditional oral storytelling, the development of multiple voices in the texts and the functions to the characters.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

In this research I set out to examine the nature and the function of embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works. The study of the nature of the embedded narratives included looking at the forms of the narratives, the narrative levels in the selected works and the relationships between the embedded narratives and the primary text. I also explored the functions of the embedded narratives in the selected texts. This study also evaluated the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating the author’s thematic concerns.

Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* shifts from conventional embedding and points to an alternative structural reading of her novel. The overlapping in *Half of a Yellow Sun* between the narration of the embedded narrative and the embedding narrative transgress the norms of embedding. The study reveals a limitation of the theory of narratology to the extent that it views metalepsis more of a transgression than of any merit. One of the merits of this transgression in this text is its use to connect the embedded and the embedding. The demerit is that metalepsis may cause confusion about who narrates and what they narrate.

Of the three texts studied *Americanah* employed the most extensive embedding. *Americanah* highlights how the pressure of extensive use of this literary device challenges the hierarchies in the narrative levels. Adichie creates clashes between the narrative levels; presenting a complex situation that does not amount to a structural system that would explain the relationship of the
narrative parts. This is seen where in some instances the extradiegetic narrator cuts across all possible levels of narration.

I tested the hypothesis that the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works take distinctive forms. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” a short story is inserted within the primary short story. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* a book is nested within the primary novel. In *Americanah* blog posts are embedded in the novel. I observe that the choice of those forms by the author plays a significant role in the function of the embedded narrative and in contributing to their effectiveness as tools for communicating thematic concerns. The primary texts vouch for the authenticity of the texts they embed and are presented as non-fictional texts within the fictional texts; this places them at a higher ontological level.

Apart from serving the explicative, actional and thematic function, the embedded narratives also help create vocal multiplicity in the texts, serve an aesthetic function, advance the oral storytelling technique and imitate an illusion of reality which lends the work credibility. The embedded narratives have specific functions for the characters that author them and those who either contribute to the embeddings or engage with the narrative. Ugwu’s writing is a reflection of the violence that defined the Biafran society and is an effort to deal with the trauma caused by the violence and destruction. Ifemelu uses the blog as a means of understanding race and protecting herself from the falsehoods that surround the issue of race in America.

Adichie foregrounds the core thematic issues in her works by using the embedded narrative technique. This strategy ensures that the reader attends to the issues raised. These issues are also
addressed in the primary text. The reader therefore looks at them twice thus attaining a better understanding about the concerns in question. Some of the ways Adichie effectively uses the embedded narratives to discuss her thematic concerns include the choice of the author for the narratives and the choice and meaning of the title where there is a title. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the embedded short story is untitled. In my view this is a deliberate choice by the author for the story to represent the many African stories that are classified as implausible.

The major theme developed by the embedded narratives in all the three texts is the question of ownership of the African story. Adichie underscores the glaring need for contextualized reading of African literature and the telling of authentic African stories by Africans themselves. Other themes addressed through the embedded narratives are war and the silence of the world during the Biafran war in Half of a Yellow Sun, race and identity in Americanah and sexual exploitation in “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

As this study was limited only to extensive embedding I suggest that future studies look at the nature and function of the other embeddings in the studied texts. Examples include radio broadcasts, letters, newspaper articles, speeches, poems and songs in Half of a Yellow Sun. In Americanah there are emails and phone texts. It would also be worth studying the other narrative techniques employed by Adichie to fully bring out the wealth of variety in her artistry.

As the foregoing analysis has illustrated the study of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works hopes to contribute to the growing interest in her oeuvre. This research has attempted to provide a narratological inquiry to the pieces studied, the significance is that it shows how the texts make meaning and how that process contributes to the interpretation of the
text. The narrative arrangement is an effectual means to communicating the author’s themes. Adichie questions notions of form and experiments with different literary forms through which she communicates her concerns.
WORKS CITED


DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for examination or the award of a degree at any other university.

Signature .................................. Date ..................................

Jacqueline Kubasu Ojiambo

This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors.

Signature .................................. Date ..................................

Prof. Peter Wasamba

Signature .................................. Date ..................................

Dr. Tom Odhiambo
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to

The late Reverends James and Ketry Kubasu, my inspiration

Were my love

Were (Jnr) my silly heart

Chinua my sweet laughter

And

To God Almighty, my help
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research project would not have come together in any cohesive manner without the consistent and immensely helpful guidance of my supervisors, Prof. Peter Wasamba and Dr. Tom Odhiambo. Thanks are also due to Dr. Jennifer Muchiri for her invaluable support and guidance during the conceptual stages of this project. I also thank the lecturers in the Department of Literature for providing a strong knowledge base in the course of my studies.

To my colleagues Jennifer, Jane, Kefa, Grace, Makokha, Margaret, Mike, Maureen, Munyiri, Obala, Odongo, Owiti, Amos, Angie, Korir, Winnie, Rachel, Bernard and Wafula for your moral support and genuine interest in my work. To Marciana and Doseline, thank you for being very kind “Big Sisters”. To my siblings for constant encouragement to push further. Finally but not least to Were, Were (Jnr) and Chinua for allowing me the space, time and peace required to study.
CONTENTS

DECLARATION........................................................................................................i

DEDICATION........................................................................................................ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..........................................................................................iii

CONTENTS........................................................................................................iv

ABSTRACT........................................................................................................vii

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY..............................................1

Introduction........................................................................................................1

Statement of the Problem.....................................................................................4

Objectives........................................................................................................5

Hypothesis........................................................................................................5

Justification.......................................................................................................5

Scope and Limitation........................................................................................8

Literature Review..............................................................................................8

Theoretical Framework......................................................................................14

Methodology...................................................................................................17

Chapter Outline..............................................................................................19
CHAPTER TWO: THE NATURE OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction..................................................................................................................21

Nature of Embedding in Adichie’s Selected Works.........................................................21

Narrative Levels in Adichie’s Selected Works.................................................................26

Relationship between Embedding Texts and Embedded Texts.........................................33

Embedding and Authority...............................................................................................38

Conclusion.......................................................................................................................41

CHAPTER THREE: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction..................................................................................................................43

Functions of the Embedded Narratives...........................................................................43

The Explicative Function.................................................................................................44

Thematic Function............................................................................................................52

Actional Function.............................................................................................................53

Aesthetic Function...........................................................................................................55

Advancing the Oral Storytelling Tradition.....................................................................59

Creation of Multi-vocality ...............................................................................................62
Illusion of Reality...........................................................................................................65

Functions of Embedded Narratives for the Characters.................................................67

Development of Themes through the Embedded Narratives........................................71

Limitations of the Embedded Narrative Technique ......................................................86

Conclusion....................................................................................................................88

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION...................................................................................89

WORKS CITED.............................................................................................................93
ABSTRACT

Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” feature diverse forms of narrative embedding. Although embedded narratives have attracted considerable attention, narrative analysts have not accounted for new forms of embedding such as blogs. This research examines the nature and function of embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works while evaluating the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating themes. The research draws upon Russian formalism to examine how the form of the work contributes to the overall meaning of the work. It also adopts the theory of narratology which outlines the basic approach to narrative levels. A close and comparative reading of the texts reveals the nature and function of the embedded narratives and the relationship between the primary and secondary narratives. The relationship between narrative levels in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* is complicated both by competing structural models and clashes between narrative levels. Adichie transgresses the norms of narrative embedding thus bringing into focus the assumptions that exist around it. Adichie’s deft use of embedded narratives is seen through the many functions it serves and its efficacy in developing central themes. This research adds to studies done on Adichie’s fiction by attempting a narratological inquiry. It also, hopefully, contributes to future research of structure and other narrative techniques applied in Adichie’s works.
CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Writers employ numerous narrative techniques in their work to achieve various outcomes. A narrative is a representation of one or more events by a narrator. This definition is derived from those of Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (2) and H. Porter Abbot, in *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (12). This definition emphasizes that a narrative requires a narrator; a narrative must be communicated by someone or a channel of communication. Narrative techniques are the methods that authors employ to tell their stories. All the techniques employed have important functions in the story. The method and means behind interesting stories are the techniques used.

Sometimes writers employ the technique of inserting one or more stories within the larger story that encompasses them. These stories within stories are referred to as embedded narratives. Some famous examples are Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* and *The Arabian Nights*. In *Canterbury Tales* the main story is about a band of pilgrims travelling to the shrine of Thomas A. Becket in Canterbury. The band passes time by having a story telling contest. The embedded narratives are the stories told by the pilgrims who participate in the storytelling contest. In *The Arabian Nights* the main story is of Scheherazade who is threatened by execution from her husband. Only if she beguiles her husband with a fascinating story will she survive. Every night she tells him a story and within that story new stories are embedded.
Embedded narratives are also common in African oral storytelling. African writers continue to merge the worlds of orality and literacy. An example is Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* where an anonymous Sudanese narrator tells of the journey of Mustafa Saeed, the protagonist of the novel. Salih’s narrative is a polyphonic novel in which the narrator assumes a crucial role as he gradually turns into a full blown character. Another example is Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* which contains nine embedded narratives; these include myths, folktales and anecdotes.

Mieke Bal in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* sees the narrator’s text as primary and the text narrated by the characters within the main primary text as the embedded text. These embedded texts have also been referred to as secondary narratives. Bal explains that she uses the term primary “without value judgement; neither (temporal) priority nor (qualitative) primacy is implied” (57). This implies that the primary text just means the text which comes first, the secondary narrative is the one which comes second and is embedded in the primary narrative. This means either the primary text or secondary text may be the main story depending on the intensity of either narrative. The primary text and secondary text are distinguished by levels in the technical sense such that the narrator’s text is the primary text and the actor’s text is secondary.

Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* distinguishes principal types of relations between embedding and embedded narrative: The first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, conferring on the second narrative an explanatory function. The second type consists of a purely thematic
relationship, therefore implying no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and
diegesis: a relationship of contrast or of analogy. The third type involves no explicit relationship
between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis,
independently of the metadiegetic content, a function of distraction, or obstruction. The most
illustrious example according to Genette is found in *The Arabian Nights*, where Scheherazade
holds off death with renewed narratives, (provided they interest the sultan) (232-233).

Chimamanda Adichie has earned reputation as a master story-teller with a fresh, lyrical and
irreverent voice. An acclaimed contemporary African writer; Adichie has written three novels;
short stories *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009) and a short story “Transition to Glory” found
Sun*, which won the 2007 Orange Prize for fiction captures the experiences and impact of the
Nigeria-Biafra war through the lives of its characters. “Jumping Monkey Hill”, a short story in
the collection *The Thing around Your Neck* looks at the foreign perceptions of Africans in
general and the subtle exploitation of women. *Americanah* which won the National Book Critics
Circle award for fiction in 2014 is the story of Ifemelu a young immigrant from Nigeria to
America and Obinze her boyfriend who goes to London and stays there illegally hoping to
regularize his status. The authorities catch up with him and he is deported. The book details their
immigrant experiences, their love, separation and eventual reunion.

It is intriguing that Adichie employs embedded narratives widely in her fiction. This
research explores the significance of the embedded narrative strategy in African literature.
It is an inquiry in the nature and form of the embedded narratives and how the embedded narratives bear on ideological dimensions of literature while expounding its usefulness. While all users of narrative embedding as literary device have their points of interest, some instances are so extreme that they call for critical attention, like in Adichie’s case. Adichie’s novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* feature highly complex structures of embedding. *Half of a Yellow Sun* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” employ the Mise en Abyme technique, a term coined in 1893 by Andre Gide that refers to a text within a text. This is a text that mirrors the text that holds it. Therefore in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, there is a book within the main book and in “Jumping Monkey Hill” a story within a story. In *Americanah*, one of the characters sets up blogs at various points in her life. Through the omniscient narrator we learn about the comments of visitors to the two blogs.

**Statement of the Problem**

Although the phenomenon of the story within a story has received considerable attention, the orientation has been towards oral narratives such as myths, folktales, fairy tales, animal fables, song tales and such other categories. The tendency of placing these oral narratives within the African novel has been used by African novelists to conjoin the creative forces from their oral tradition to those within the writer’s chosen form of writing.

Embedded narratives have received significant attention from theorists of narrative in recent years. However, narrative analysts have not sought to account for new forms of embedding such as emails, blogs or online chats. Though Adichie’s work has been received
with great interest most of it has been slanted toward the thematic concerns. There is limited narratological inquiry on her work.

The nature and function of embedded narratives vary from one piece of writing to another. This study therefore examines the narrative techniques in Adichie’s work with specific attention to the nature and function of embedded narratives in the novels *Half a Yellow sun, Americanah* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

**Objectives**

This research was guided by the following objectives:

i. To examine the nature of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s work;

ii. To evaluate the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating themes.

**Hypothesis**

This research tested the following hypotheses:

i. Adichie employs new forms of narrative embedding in her fiction.

ii. Embedded narratives are effective tools for communicating themes.

**Justification**

The colonial and immediate post-colonial African novelists were driven by the African experiences under the colonial system. This group of writers assimilated and synthesized
the traditions of orality and literacy. The oral tradition impulse is strong in their writing because the writers are products of both the oral and literate education. One significant aspect of merging the oral and literacy traditions is the use of story within a story technique. The writers introduce various oral narratives within the narrative structure of their work in the development of characters, plots and themes.

I define contemporary as occurring in or belonging to the present time. Contemporary writers therefore in my judgment are those whose works have been written and published from the 1980s to the present time. Adichie, born in 1977 and whose works in this study were published between the years 2006-2013 fits the description of a contemporary writer. Christina Abuk in her review of Yvonne Vera’s *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women’s Writing* defines ‘opening spaces’ as “pushing the limits of conventional expectations and then moving beyond interstitial positions, into arenas for new actions and relations.”

One of the important questions narratologists ask is; how the story is packaged. Stories are not always presented in a linear form. Writers may sometimes use frame narratives which contain within them embedded narratives. Tanure Ojaide in “Examining Canonisation in Modern African Literature” argues that the aesthetic choices African writers make in response to different social realities is important in any discussion of a literary canon. Studies on the growth of African literature have focused more on examinations of the importance of oral traditions, languages and thematic concerns at the expense of narratological observations and concerns. It is through the study of literature in terms of style, form, and narrative strategies that the thematic concerns are adequately addressed.
This research is also informed by the fact that African literature continues to grow and develop. Growth in African literature is marked by experimentation, particularly of form and by the realization that knowledge is not absolute. African writers explore new possibilities and at the same time putting into question any previously accepted means of grounding and evaluating ideas. Technological innovations, for example, contribute to modernist experimentation with new forms. Through this research I attempt to expand the observation by Ojaide that African literary canon is fluid and not cast in stone. Contemporary writers seem to follow Ezra Pound’s famous exhortation to ‘Make it new’. This exhortation encouraged writers to apply new energy to established forms.

The study of the new ways contemporary writers are telling their stories is a useful contribution to the ever-growing body of African literary criticism. Contemporary trends are expanding the African literary canon and thus literary critics need to be open minded and not biased when new forms emerge. Adichie’s choice to embed a blog within her novel is a pointer to how modern innovations affects the way writers tell their story. The differently styled narratives and structures of embedding in Adichie’s selected works facilitate an exploration of the changing trends in writing. The study will also bring into focus the assumptions that exist around embedded narratives.

This study contributes to the studies already done on Adichie’s work by taking an approach that gives attention to the use of embedding in the selected works. This attention to the use of this narrative technique may transform readings of the text.
Scope and Limitation
In this project I focus on Chimamanda Adichie’s novels Americanah and Half of a Yellow Sun, and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” from the collection of short stories The Thing around your Neck. I am concerned with the nature and function of embedded narratives in these texts. In Americanah I examine the blogs set up by Ifemelu. In Half of a Yellow Sun I interrogate the book Ugwu writes; “The World Was Silent When We Died.” and in the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” I examine the untitled story written by Ujunwa.

My background readings of Adichie’s published fiction revealed that of her three novels only Purple Hibiscus does not contain embedded narratives. In the collection of short stories; The Thing around your Neck only “Jumping Monkey Hill” contains an embedded narrative. I have chosen the three texts because of the extended use of embedding in those texts. For example, in Americanah there is extensive use of the blog within the text. This study limited itself to these embeddings with an aim of interrogating their purpose and place in the selected works.

Literature Review
The purpose of this literature review is to provide a context for this research. I also include relevant discourses on embedding to show where this study fits in the existing body of knowledge. The literature selected has some bearing on my project and was reviewed to serve as building blocks upon which this study is pegged on.

Emmanuel Obiechina refers to the phenomenon of the story- within- the story as the narrative proverb. He explains that the embedded stories are referred to as the narrative
proverbs because they perform organic and structural functions of proverbs in oral speech and in creative literature. Obiechina argues that:

like the use of proverbs proper, the embedding of stories in the novels is based upon two main principles of the African oral tradition—authority and association through which an idea is given validity by being placed side by side with another idea that bears the stamp of communal approval and by its being linked to the storehouse of collective wisdom (201).

In discussing the embedded narratives in *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe he concludes that each embedded story brings “something total to the meaning of the novel, some insight to clarify the action, to sharpen characterization, to elaborate themes and enrich the setting and environment of action” (204). Thus narrative embedding expresses the distinctive quality of African fiction. This background points to the fact that as African literature develops it does not necessarily deviate from the historical context of embedding. Narrative embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition and has continued to be important as a way of bridging the gap between the culture of oral and communal storytelling and the experience of reading a text. In this research we look at how Adichie employs this age old technique in her contemporary style.

Abiola Irele in “Orality, Literacy and African Literature” argues that the development of the interplay between orality and literacy is “not merely in purely linguistic framework as in the phase of early Africanist studies, but also from a literacy and artistic perspective” (24). Narrative
embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition. The first narrative level functions in a similar way to the performance aspect of the storyteller’s role. The embedded narrative is an artistic device that enhances the performance of narrating.

Eileen Julien in “African Literature” says “the stuff of which literature is made of includes: language, aesthetic and literary tradition, culture and history and socio-political reality” (296). She adds that “the circumstances in which African novels, plays, and poetry are produced, many of them the legacy of colonialism, are as important to our understanding of African literature as are the style and images of texts we read” (304). This statement suggests that it is important to look at the style and form of a text in order to get a better understanding of it.

Frances E. White in her review ‘While the World Watched’, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Adichie” views the use of a “clever book within a book” (10) in *Half of a Yellow Sun* as one of the effective strategies that Adichie has used to confront Nigeria’s bloody past. White argues that Ugwu the child narrator and writer of the book within a book “takes up writing as a way of dealing with his bewildering and disturbing experiences: facing both shortcomings and strengths of his master; participating in atrocities as a child soldier; and sustaining serious physical damage during battle” (11).

While appreciating White’s observation, this study looks beyond what the writing of the book does for Ugwu the child narrator. It bears asking what the purpose or function is for the narrative that embeds it, what message the book carries, and of what significance the position of the
embedding takes in the book. This study also engages with the function of narrative embedding for the primary texts and its effect on the embedded text.

Doseline Kiguru (2011) examines the role of the child figure in telling narratives based on Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Kiguru notes that the writing of the book “The World was Silent When we Died” by Ugwu, a child narrator is a strategy Adichie uses creatively to point to the reader that the entire narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is the story of Ugwu. She also adds that the strategy is used to create in the mind of the reader the illusion that the stories in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are not fictional but real. This observation points to the embedded narrative as not only a tool for expressing the author’s thematic concerns but as an artistic device. In looking at the nature of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s work this research highlights the creative strategies employed through the form of the embedded narratives.

Umelo Ojinmah in “No Humanity in War: Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” contends that the embedded narrative “The World Was Silent When We Died” within *Half of a Yellow Sun* is Adichie’s real book, real voice and opinion. Ojinmah argues that it is in the exposition of the embedded narrative that Adichie’s voice and opinion are poignant. This research puts to test Ojinmah’s argument by looking at both the embedding text and the embedded text with an aim of establishing how Adichie merges the two. I map out for each text the structure of embedding as well as its relationship with the narrative discourse, the story and the meaning of the texts.
In *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women’s Writing* Yvonne Vera refers to the writers’ need to invent and to banish. This involves defiance of the convention of women’s silence. Writing has established a platform which is freer than speech due to comparative distance and autonomy of books. Critics of African literature have looked at the issues shaping contemporary fiction while giving little attention to how these issues are packaged in writing. Though Adichie’s work does not feature in this collection, it is worth noting that she has embraced the need to “invent and banish” through her choice of form. Adichie chooses to deviate from the common linear form of writing to extensive narrative embedding in her fiction.

David Herman in “Genette meets Vygotsky: Narrative Embedding and Distributed Intelligence” argues that “in conjunction with the cognitive activity of their interpreter embedded narratives constitute intelligent systems—systems that both stage and facilitate the process of shared thinking about past events and about one’s own and other minds” (357). Herman views narrative embedding as enhancing the overall power of the knowledge-generating system to which it lends structure. He further explains that there is a very complex process involved in comprehending the shifts between narrative levels and the changes entailed by those shifts in the status of characters doubling as narrators. In Herman’s view, the embedded text is a system for generating knowledge not just a mere vessel. This argument makes a case for a closer look at embedded narratives in search of the meaning and knowledge they hold.
William Nelles in his paper “Stories within Stories: Narrative Levels and Embedded Narratives” argues that all embedded narratives have a dramatic impact, if only that of deferring or interrupting the embedding narrative, and that all embedded narrative have a thematic function, if only one of relative contrast or analogy. I on the other hand, feel that there is more to the embedded narrative than just deferring or interrupting the embedding narrative. Rimmon-Kenan describes three classes of functions performed either individually or in combination by embedded narratives: actional, explicative and thematic. In this study I examine the function of embedded narratives without limiting the possibilities to a given standard; instead I use those as guides.

Mikhail Bakhtin in *Discourse in the Novel* defines heteroglossia in the novel as:

A special type of double-voiced discourse (which) …serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they- as it were- know about each other (just as two exchanges in a dialogue know of each other and are structured in this mutual knowledge of each other); it is as if they actually hold conversation with each other (324).

This study approaches the Bakhtinian ideal of the heteroglossic novel from the perspective that its vocal multiplicity is a narrative strategy that signals to the reader to attend to the multi-voiced potential of the text and to interpret it. Bakhtin envisions egalitarian polyphony for the novel as a genre. Bakhtin writes: “The novel must represent all the social and ideological voices of its era
the novel must be a microcosm of heteroglossia...one single unit of social becoming. Every language in the novel is a point of view, a socio-ideological conceptual system of real social groups and their embodied representatives” (411). This study examines how the embedded narratives contribute to the multi-vocality in the selected texts.

From the literature review it is clear that various scholars have researched the area of embedded narratives. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* having been published earlier than *Americanah* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” has received more critical attention. The studies on Adichie’s work however, do not focus much on the embedded narratives save by way of mention. There exists a gap in the area of narratological inquiry in Adichie’s work. This study attempts to fill the gap by examining the use of embedded narratives in the selected works.

**Theoretical Framework**

The main focus in this research is on the nature and function of embedded narratives in Chimamanda Adichie’s work. I rely on two theories to achieve my objectives namely, Narratology and Russian Formalism.

Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* has defined narratology as “the study of how narratives make meaning, and what basic mechanisms and procedures are common to all acts of story-telling” (222). One of the most prominent narratologists Genette focuses on not just the narrative itself but how it is told, that is the process of narrating. To study the nature and function of embedded narratives I analyzed the narrative
structure of Adichie’s fiction. Narratology enabled me to answer vital questions such as: who is telling the story? And how is the story packaged?

Writers often make use of frame narratives sometimes called primary narratives which contain within them the embedded narratives also called secondary narratives. Mieke Bal in *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of Narrative* discusses the possible relationships between primary and embedded texts. In this discussion she notes that “the structure of narrative levels becomes more than a mere story-telling device; it is part of the narrative’s poetics and needs to be understood for the narrative to be fully appreciated” (59). This therefore suggests that to fully understand a text it is important to study the relationship between primary texts and embedded narratives to get the intended meaning.

This study also used formalism as an analytical tool. Formalism refers to a style of inquiry that focuses, almost exclusively, on features of the literary text itself, to the exclusion of biographical, historical or intellectual contexts. One of the central tenets of formalism thought is: that the form of any work of literature is inherently part of its content and that the attempt to separate the two is erroneous. Formalism has the advantage of forcing writers and critics to evaluate a work on its own terms rather to rely on “accepted” notions of a writer’s work.

This study will adopt the Russian formalism strand. Russian formalism refers primarily to the work of the Society for the Study of Poetic Language founded in 1916 in St. Petersburg by Boris Eichenbaum, Victor Shklovsky, and Yury Tynyanov, and secondarily to the Moscow Linguistic
Circle Founded in 1914 by Roman Jakobson. Russian formalists are interested in the analysis of the text but their main concern is with method as the scientific basis for literary theory. One of the concepts of formalism is about, as Di Yanni Robert puts it, “how a literary work comes to mean what it does” (1580). Formalism’s concern with the formal elements of a text makes it suitable for this research because the embedded narratives take different forms and also the idea of embedding narratives in a work is an aspect of form.

Narratology and formalism have a close relationship brought about by the fact that narratology borrows elements from Russian Formalist critics such as Vladimir Propp. Propp investigates Russian fairy tales to determine there narrative functions. According to his analysis, all folk or fairy tales are based on thirty fixed elements that occur in a given sequence. Narratologists such as Genette have also developed methods of analyzing a story’s structure to uncover its meaning, each building upon the former work of another narratologist (and in some cases Russian Formalists) and adding an element or two.

The point of departure is that narratologists provide us with various systematic, thorough approaches to the mechanics of a narrative; narratology helps the reader to understand how a text makes meaning and not what it means. Formalists on the other hand emphasize the form of a literary work to determine its meaning focusing on literary elements such as plot, character, setting, diction, imagery, structure and point of view. Narratology and Formalism both look at the structure of a narrative. While narratologists study how narratives make meaning. Formalists focus almost exclusively on the form of a work.
Methodology

This study is concerned with the nature and function of the embedded narrative. To achieve my goals, my methodology included close and comparative reading of Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”. I examined Adichie’s work, narrowing down to the texts that have embedded narratives. My key focus was on the nature and function of these narratives. This process helped me to identify the relationship between the primary narrative and the secondary narratives in the texts.

I then interrogated the primary texts using the theory of narratology and the Russian formalist theory. Narratology was relevant in the analysis of the structural framework that underlies the order and manner in which a narrative is presented to the reader. Following Genette’s ideas in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* where he explains the relations between narrative levels; I studied the texts to identify the different narrative levels and the relationship between these levels. Genette suggests that in every narrative the narrator’s status is defined both by its narrative level (extra-or intradiegetic) and by its relationship to the story (hetero-or homodiegetic). Once I identified these relationships I looked at the differences and similarities in the selected texts.

The working presuppositions and the basic conceptual framework of this study were informed by the formalist approach to literary criticism so as to understand the organic unity in the text. I interpreted the texts by exploring ways in which the embedded narratives contribute to the organic unity in the selected works of Adichie.
I also reviewed secondary texts especially critical works dealing with Adichie’s works from different perspectives. Literary critics who have looked at Adichie’s work were useful in shedding light on the subject. Through the close and comparative reading I was able to further the arguments advanced or deviated from them based on my research findings.
Chapter Outline

Chapter one introduces the writer Chimamanda Adichie and the works selected for this research. Within this chapter I make a case for the study of the nature and function of embedded narratives. It also gives a background to narrative embedding as a literary technique. This chapter on the whole gives an introduction to the research, stating the objectives, scope and limitation, methodology and the theoretical framework which guided this study.

Chapter two makes an inquiry on the nature of embedded narratives in the selected texts. I examine the form the embedded narratives take, the position of the narratives in the text and the relationship between the embedded text and the embedding narrative. This chapter also looks at the differently styled narratives and structure of embedding in Adichie’s work bringing into focus the assumptions that exist around embedded narratives.

Chapter three explores the functions performed by the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works without limiting itself to the actional, explicative and thematic functions. It also examines the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating the writer’s thematic concerns. This chapter engages with the function of narrative embedding in terms of the embedding narrative’s effect on the embedded narrative and also the purpose and function of the embedded narratives for the narrative that embeds. It also addresses the function of embedded narratives to the characters.

The conclusion summarizes the research done with a focus on the findings observed in this study.
CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction

This section explores the nature of embedding in Adichie’s selected works. This has been done through an analysis of embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey” separately. This chapter discusses the forms of embedding found in the texts while examining how the embedded narratives bear on ideological dimensions of literature. In this chapter I identify the different narrative levels and the relationship between these levels.

Narrative embedding takes place where one narrative is subordinated to another narrative. Samuel Waldron in “Challenging Narrative Hierarchies: Embedded Narrative Structure in David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* and Mark Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*” suggests that narrative embedding requires a text with at least two narratives the embedded and the embedding. For the purpose of this research the embedding relationship will require the embedded narrative must be visible. The latter narrative must be present and observable in the text

Nature of Embedding in Adichie’s selected works

“Jumping Monkey Hill” is a story set outside Cape Town in South Africa. Ujunwa the protagonist is part of a group of African writers attending a writers’ workshop. Authors from various African countries are gathered at this workshop. Within the story there is reference to the stories written by the other writers in the workshop. Only Ujunwa’s story
is displayed and the reader journeys with Ujunwa as she writes her story. Through the third person omniscient narrator the reader gets to know Ujunwa’s thoughts.

Adichie makes use of the *Mise en abyme technique* in the packaging of “Jumping Monkey Hill”. *Mise en abyme* is the French term referring to the practice in heraldry of placing the image of a small shield on a larger shield. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Ujunwa’s story is semi-autobiographical. The story Ujunwa writes is in the third person limited point of view. Ujunwa’s story is untitled. It is indented within the primary narrative and presented in smaller font to distinguish it from the primary text. The story is complete and can be read independent from the primary narrative.

The protagonist Chioma in Ujunwa’s story faces two situations where men in authority take advantage of her position through sexual exploitation. In the first instance, “the man says he will hire her and then walks across and stands behind her and reaches over her shoulders to squeeze her breasts. She hisses, stupid man! You cannot respect yourself! and leaves” (100). In the second instance, Chioma walks away after observing Yinka sitting on a customer’s lap and realizing that this would also be her fate. The alhaji runs a finger over Yinka’s arm. When the alhaji invites them in to give them perfume Chioma walks away.

The choice of the short story form within the short story is valid because of the advantages of the short story form. An example is the ease with which an author maintains consistency of purpose since there are fewer characters and settings thus better dramatic and thematic unities.
Later when Ujunwa reads the story to the group, Edward the workshop leader says that “the whole thing is implausible”(113). At this point Adichie reveals to the reader and the other characters in the primary text that this story is the real life story of Ujunwa:

A real story of real people?” she said, with her eyes on Edward’s face. “The only thing I didn’t add in the story is that after I left my co-worker and walked out of the alhaji’s house, I got into the jeep and insisted that the driver takes me home because I knew it was the last time I would be riding it. (114)

Half of a Yellow Sun recounts the ghastly historical events of the Nigeria-Biafra war. The central characters in the novel are Ugwu, the twin sisters; Olanna and Kainene, Odenigbo and Richard. To a large extent, Half of a Yellow Sun is Ugwu’s story, but, the chapters are written in turn from the point of view of Ugwu, Olanna and Richard. The action in the novel moves between the early and the late nineteen sixties.

Interspersed throughout the book are brief passages taken from a book entitled; “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The authorship of this book is ambiguous; Adichie leads the reader to believe that the book is written by Richard, “the title of the book came to Richard: “‘The World Was Silent When We Died’. He would write it after the war, a narrative of Biafra’s difficult victory… ” (375) but we learn towards the end of the book that it was Ugwu who was writing the book; “Ugwu was writing as she
spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of…” (210).

_Americanah_, Adichie’s most recent novel traverses three nations and addresses a myriad of issues; identity, nationality, race, love, loneliness and aspiration. The book opens in Princeton where Ifemelu lives, as she heads to Trenton, the closest place she can get her hair braided. Her hair being braided at the salon is symbolic of Adichie braiding and weaving her story. Through flashbacks we get to know the story of Ifemelu and Obinze that begins twenty years earlier in Nigeria.

Ifemelu and her boyfriend Obinze are caught up in a state that is surrounded by dysfunction and corruption. The two respond by leaving the country in search of brighter prospects. Obinze heads to England due to rejection from post 9/11 stringent immigration policies in America. He travels on a tourist visa but extends his stay illegally. Eventually he is discovered and deported to Nigeria. Ifemelu goes to the United States and cuts all communication with Obinze. She struggles to make it and finally succeeds. Ifemelu launches a blog about race in America. By the time we meet her at the salon she has made up her mind to return to Nigeria.

_Americanah_ has a seven part structure that holds fifty five chapters. The story takes the third person omniscient perspective. The chapter narration oscillates between Obinze and Ifemelu’s point of view. Adichie establishes that _Americanah_ is primarily Ifemelu’s story
by writing chapter one from Ifemelu’s point of view. Chapter two is from Obinze’s point of view, this establishes that his story is also of importance.

The frame of the story is rendered by the braid salon. From the salon the details of the story are laid out as flashback within that frame. Interestingly, Ifemelu leaves the salon at the end of chapter forty one. The following chapters deal with Ifemelu’s transition on the verge of returning to Nigeria. Chapters forty four to fifty five are set in Nigeria and deal with the issues in Ifemelu and Obinze’s relationship and provide a closure to the novel.

There are blog posts spread throughout the novel. While in America Ifemelu sets up a blog called “Raceteenth or Curious Observations by a Non-American Black on the subject of Blackness in America” (296). Ifemelu later changes its name to “Raceteenth or Various Observations in America About American Blacks (Those formerly known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black” (315). When Ifemelu returns to Nigeria she sets up another blog called “The Small Redemptions of Lagos”.

Adichie’s use of the blogosphere in Americanah is in keeping with the narrative time. The advancement of technology has significantly changed the mode of communication; people have turned to the use of Twitter, Facebook and blogs to express opinions on significant issues. Though we are not given specific dates in the novel, the allusion to 9/11 tragedy attack and the election of President Barack Obama to office helps us to place the setting as contemporary. The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines blogosphere as “an online journal where an individual, group,
or corporation presents a record of activities, thoughts or beliefs...many blogs provide a forum to allow visitors to leave comments and interact with the publisher” (n.p).

The choice of a blog as the form that carries the embedded text is very significant. Blogs are perpetual and can reach a wide audience. Each blog post has its own title and content. Visitors to the blog read the posts and share them so that other people can see and read them. Visitors can also make comments and participate in the discussion. Blogs are also easily accessible through computers and mobile phones. One of the characters in the novel, Paula reads one of Ifemelu’s blog posts in a gathering of friends from her phone (325).

**Narrative Levels in Adichie’s Selected Works**

Martin Gray’s dictionary of literary terms defines the various types of narrators and narrative levels as follows:

An extradiegetic narrator tells a story on the extradiegetic level, a ‘higher’ level that includes everyone and everything that determines how the story is told. His or her narration can include one or more other narrations (told by intradiegetic narrators). An intradiegetic narrator tells the story on the narrative level of the characters; the diegetic level which describes how the characters of a story communicate with each other and which is embedded at the extradiegetic level.

A homodiegetic narrator describes his or her own personal experience as a character in the story. Such a character cannot know more about other characters than what their
actions reveal. A heterodiegetic narrator on the other hand describes the experiences of the characters that appear in the story.

The narrator in Ujunwa’s story is presented to the reader as a heterodiegetic narrator. As we read the story we cannot link the events of the story to Ujunwa. It is only through the primary text or at the extradiegetic level that we learn that the narrator is actually homodiegetic. Ujunwa the character in “Jumping Monkey Hill” is actually Chioma in the untitled story she writes.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the reader is presented with a first narrative level through the third person omniscient narrator and then the second level narrative act Ujunwa writes a short story. At each level, the narrative is truncated before it attains closure.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in “Jumping Monkey Hill”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Narrative Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main plot</strong></td>
<td>Extradigetic</td>
<td>Omniscient third person narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Event story</strong></td>
<td>Intradigetic</td>
<td>Story about Ujunwa and other participants in a writers workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second level Narrative act</strong></td>
<td>Intradigetic</td>
<td>Ujunwa writes a short story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Embedded Narrative</strong></td>
<td>Metadigetic</td>
<td>Story of Chioma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, at the extradiegetic level, the third person omniscient narrator presents the events around the Nigeria-Biafra war. This constitutes the intradiegetic level in which Ugwu writes a book. This book within the primary text constitutes the metadiegetic level of narratives. This structure is similar to that of the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill”. Adichie also applies the *Mise en Abyme* technique, since the embedded narrative mirrors the embedding narrative in terms of form.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” is written from the omniscient third person point of view. The brief passages appear as summaries that tell the reader what is contained in the chapters of that book:

1. **The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died**

   For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash. She sat on the floor. Olanna tells him this story and he notes the details. She tells him how the bloodstains on the woman’s wrapper blended into the fabric to form a misty manure…(82). 

The omniscient narrator of the novel and the writer of “The Book” constantly overlap. In this first part it is obvious that the writer has access to the information in the novel. At this point in the story we do not know who is writing the book. The only person mentioned to have an interest in writing a book about Nigeria is Richard, a British journalist. The reader easily assumes the writer is Richard.

---

1 All the excerpts from “The Book” are numbered as such I have numbered them in my quotes for ease of reference.
Genette in *Narrative Discourse* defines metalepsis as “any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a Metadiegetic universe etc) or the inverse (234-235). Metalepsis therefore is a paradoxical transgression of the boundaries between narrative levels. Dorrit Cohn in “Metalepsis and Mise en Abyme” defines interior metalepsis as “all metalepsis that occurs between two levels of the same story; that is to say, between a primary and secondary story” (106).

Interior metalepsis occurs in *Half of a Yellow Sun* when at the extradiegetic level the reader finds out that the ‘he’ referred to in the first part of “The World Was Silent when We Died” is Ugwu. This is found in part four of the novel which covers the late Sixties. “Then she described the head itself, the open eyes, the greying skin. Ugwu was writing as she spoke and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important…” (210).

The transgression here occurs between the primary narrative and the secondary narrative. It appears that the narrator of the primary narrative is the same narrator in “The Book: The World Was Silent When we Died”. The book’s passages are written from the third person point of view similar to primary text:

2. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died
   
   He discusses the British soldier merchant Taubman Goldie, how he coerced, cajoled and killed…(115).

3. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died
He writes about independence. The second world war changed the world order:
Empire was crumbling…(155).

5. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

He writes about starvation, starvation was a Nigerian weapon of war. (237)

When towards the end of the novel we realize it is Ugwu writing the book we discover that Adichie collapses the idea of narrative levels and the hierarchy of the same. There are no longer boundaries. The levels become intertwined. Adichie creates an illusion of a real book but in the real sense the passages are summaries of “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The summaries of “The Book” are presented to the reader by the same extradiegetic narrator.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>levels</th>
<th>Narrative content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Third person omniscient narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story about Nigeria-Biafra war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second level narrative</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ugwu writes a book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded narrative</td>
<td>Metadiegetic</td>
<td>The Book : The World Was Silent When We Died.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Genette suggests that “metalepsis designates the transgression of a line of demarcation that authors usually do not touch, namely the shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells and the world of which one tells” (236). Adichie looks away from
conventional embedding and points to alternative structural reading of her novel. The overlapping in *Half of a Yellow Sun* suggests links between the narrative levels. A close observation of the narrative structure in this particular text reveals a limitation of the theory of narratology to the extent that it views metalepsis more of a transgression than of any merit. One of the merits seen in this text is its use to connect the embedded and the embedding. The demerit is that metalepsis may cause confusion about who the narrators are to the readers of the novel.

It is important to note that there are other forms of embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The novel contains speeches, radio broadcasts, songs, poems, Richard’s articles, letters and such other categories. This research focuses on the major embedded narrative. The term ‘major’ for the purposes of this research refers to any narrative that takes a significant portion of the text, where significant is any narrative longer than three to four paragraphs. While this distinction may not be perfect, it is nevertheless a useful one. The intent is not to brush aside the text’s shorter narratives but to provide a clearer comprehensible picture of the predominant narrative structure.

The narrative structure in *Americanah* is multi-layered. At the extradiegetic level is the third person omniscient narrator narrating from Ifemelu’s and Obinze’s perspective at different times. The next level is the intradiegetic level where Ifemelu writes a blog and posts blogs on different topics. The reader observes the narration of ‘tales’ by the intradiegetic narrator both about the narrator (homodiegetic) and about others (heterodiegetic). The next level is the Metadiegetic, which comprises the blog posts by Ifemelu. Beyond this is the meta-metadiegetic which arises from blog comments by blog visitors on different topics.
This type of embedding presents a complex situation because the narrative levels follow no clear pattern. The result is that it does not amount to a structural system that would explain the relationship of the narrative parts. In some instances the extradiegetic narrator presents the blog contents from the meta-metadiegetic level. An example is: “Years later she would blog about this: ‘On the Subject of Non-American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know.’ A Congolese woman wrote a long comment in response: She had moved to Virginia from Kinshasa and months into her first semester of college begun to feel dizzy … (158).” In this example the extradiegetic narrator cuts across all the possible levels of narration in the novel as follows; the intradiegetic- Ifemelu writing the blog, The Metadiegetic- the blog post; “On the Subject of Non-American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know” (158) The meta-metadiegetic, the Congolese woman writing her experience of panic attacks.

### Table presentation of the narrative levels in *Americanah*²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>levels</th>
<th>Narrative content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Story told from the third person omniscient point of View</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story revolves around the lives of Obinze and Ifemelu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Level Narrative</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ifemelu sets up a blog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² This table presentation is *Americanah*’s basic narrative level structure. The complex nature of the embedding caused by the overlapping of narrative levels could not be tabulated.
### Relationship between embedding texts and embedded texts in Adichie’s selected works

Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* differentiates the main types of relationships that can connect the metadiegetic narrative to the primary narrative in which it is inserted. The first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, conferring on the second narrative an explanatory function. The second type consists of a purely thematic relationship, therefore implying no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis: a relationship of contrast or of analogy. The third type involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content a function of distraction, for example and/or obstruction (232-233).

Mieke Bal observes that when the embedded text presents a complete story with an elaborate fabula, we gradually forget the fabula of the primary narrative: This apparently loose relationship between primary and embedded text is relevant to the development of the primary fabula (57). Another possible relationship between the two texts presents itself when the two fabulas are
related to each other. This structure has two possible meanings. Either the embedded story explains the primary story, or it resembles the primary story. In the first case the relationship is made explicit by the actor narrating the embedded story; in the second the explanation is usually left to the reader, or merely hinted at, in the fabula (58).

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the narrator relates the writing process of one of the characters. The omniscient third person narrator says, “She sat there for a long time, moving the mouse from side to side, trying to decide whether to name her character something common, like Chioma or something exotic like Ibani” (100). From this narration we learn that Ujunwa is writing a story about a female protagonist. Just beneath this excerpt is a display of the story Ujunwa is writing.

The two texts are related to each other. The embedded story explains the primary story. Adichie uses the embedded story to develop pertinent issues that the primary text raises. This relationship is made explicit by the character Ujunwa narrating the embedded story through her writing. Though the short story written by Ujunwa is complete the primary text takes a larger part of the story “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

In Half of a Yellow Sun “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” is interspersed throughout the novel. The distinction between the primary narrative and this narrative is that the excerpts are short passages, printed in a different typeface, they are all titled “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The primary text takes a larger part of the novel since the embeddings are summaries and not whole chapters.
The reader finds the first part of embedded book in part one of the novel which covers the early sixties. This portion summarizes the prologue of the book within the novel. It is worth noting that the presentation of the book is abrupt, no mention of what it is about or who the author is has been given this far. The embedded narratives are short passages that are presented as chapter summaries that are numbered.

The embeddings have no relation with the chapter content of the chapters that hold them. Though the arrangement of the embedded narratives within the text appears haphazard, a closer study reveals an orderly pattern. Each segment of “The Book” appears at the end of either one or two series of three chapters focalised by each of the three main focalisers. In part one and three the embeddings appear after one series and in part two and four after every two series.

In total, the embeddings are eight and the last is found on the last page of the novel:

8. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

Ugwu writes his dedication last. For my master, my good man (433).

The ending of the novel at the same time with the ending of the embedded narrative is significant because it places them on the same level. This implies that both narratives are of equal import.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the embedded narrative and the embedding narrative are related to each other. The embedded narrative explains the primary story. Bal explains in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* that “this relationship is made explicit by the
actor narrating the embedded story” (58). By stating clearly in the last chapter of the embedded narrative that Ugwu wrote, Adichie wants to ensure there is no doubt about the authorship of the book. This also reveals the connection between the two texts. Ugwu the child narrator in the primary text rises to write about his experience and observations about the war in the embedded text.

Genette’s *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* refers to this relationship as one of “direct causality” (232). He further explains that these kinds of embedded narratives seek to answer the question “what events led to the present situation?” The information contained in “The Book: The World was Silent When We Died” gives background details to events in the extradiegetic narrative.

In *Americanah* the narrator furnishes us with background information on the blogger (Ifemelu) and the blog. The reader is introduced to the blog in the first chapter of the book. This is an indication to the reader that the blog is an important part of the novel and its story. Unlike *Half of a Yellow Sun* where the embedded narrative just appears without warning; the blog in *Americanah* has an external introduction. From the outset of the novel the reader knows there is a blog and gets a feel of what the blog is about when the narrator mentions some posts in the blog and visitor comments on the second and third page of the novel.

The blog and primary text have a close relationship. There is spatio-temporal continuity between the metadiegesis and diegesis. This relationship is not of direct causality like the one observed in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The second narrative takes on an explanatory function. Some of the
fabulas in *Americanah* also resemble one another and the blog is intertwined with the primary narrative. Contained in the blogs are incidents of interest that Ifemelu experiences or observes in her day to day life. There is a repetition within the blog of events that the reader has already seen in the primary text.

An example is when Ifemelu works as a babysitter for a white family that lived in a grand stone house with white pillars; she encounters a carpet cleaner who is hostile to her because she is black and a black should not own such a stately house: “She would begin the blog post “Sometimes in America, Race is Class” with the story of his dramatic change and end it with: *It didn’t matter to him how much money I had. As far as he was concerned I did not fit as the owner of that stately house because of the way I looked. In America’s public discourse ...* (166).”

Another example is the blog on the expensive lifestyles of some young Nigerian women posted in “The Small Redemptions of Lagos” (422). The blog post is about Ranyinudo, Ifemelu’s friend. Before the post, on an earlier page is a description of Ranyinudo that matches the blog. “Ifemelu... wondered if she would be like Ranyinudo, working for an advertising company, living in a one bedroom flat whose rent her salary could not pay...dating a married chief executive who bought her business class tickets to London ” (389). The blog reads in part;

“There are many young women in Lagos with Unknown Sources of Wealth; they live lives they cannot afford. They have only ever travelled business class to Europe but have jobs that can’t even afford them a regular ticket. One of them is my friend a beautiful, brilliant woman who works in advertising” (422).
Bal defines resemblance between two fabulas as follows: “we speak of resemblance when two
fabulas can be paraphrased in such a way that the summaries have one or more striking elements
in common” (60). In the case of the two blog posts cited above in one the resemblance with the
text is that both texts address the issue of race in America using the same incident. In the second
the blog and text are a social critique on the lives of certain women in Nigeria. When confronted
by Ranyinudo for airing her story in public, Ifemelu says “Your story is so common” (422).
Ifemelu uses Ranyinudo’s life story to talk about women “who define their lives by men they can
never truly have and are crippled by a culture of dependence” (422).

**Embedding and Authority**

All the embedding narratives in Adichie’s work vouch for the authenticity of the narrative they
embed. The embedding texts do not just present the embedded text; they provide a context for
the embedded narrative, credit it to a specific person and establish its credentials.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” and *Americanah* it is very clear from the outset who the authors of
the embedded texts are. Ifemelu sets up the two blogs in *Americanah*. Ujunwa writes the untitled
story in “Jumping Monkey Hill”. *Half of a Yellow Sun* takes a different approach: the author of
the book within the novel is not revealed at the outset. The reader has to contend with the
ambiguity of whether it is Richard or Ugwu who writes the book. It is eventually made clear
towards the end of the novel that Ugwu is the author of the book. The ambiguity of the
authorship of the embedded text is employed by Adichie to create suspense and at the same time
make a statement about who should tell the African story.
The embedding narratives attest to the credibility of the narratives that they embed. In *Americanah* the narrator presents Ifemelu’s blog as a successful blog with a growing readership. The omniscient narrator says this about the blog:

> She had written the final post only days ago. Trailed by two hundred and seventy-four comments so far. All those readers growing month by month, linking, cross posting, knowing so much more than she did; they had always frightened and exhilarated her (5)

In another instance, Paula one of Ifemelu and Blaine’s friends tells her students to read the blog (325). Paula equates the blog to any other authoritative text that the students are required to read. This puts forth a case about the importance of the blog. The various blog posts and comments from blog visitors create an interesting patchwork of conversations giving an impression of a series of supporting sources.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the embedding narrative backs up the information in “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” by creating an illusion that the information in the embedded narrative is true. In the first chapter of the embedded book the reader learns the source of the story in the prologue of that book is Olanna (81). To authenticate this story about the baby in calabash the extradiegetic narrator narrates this episode in chapter eleven. The narrator gives the reader details of the train journey and uses similar words; from the embedded narrative we read; “For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash. She sat on the floor of a train...” (81). From the primary text we read that; “Olanna sat on the floor of the train with her knees drawn up” (149). The narrator further endorses that prologue by narrating how the actual
process of writing that prologue takes place in chapter thirty four; “Then she described the head itself, the open eyes, the graying skin. Ugwu was writing as she spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose…” (410). Captured in that narration is an affirmation of the author of the book as earnest and keen to tell the story and a pointer to the importance of the story shared in the embedded narrative.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the reader learns that Ujunwa is a fine writer. The third person omniscient narrator says: “It was the British Council that had made the call for entries and selected the best” (96). This sets the readers expectation high; we anticipate that the story she writes will be good. After she reads her story some of the comments from the other participants were that; the story was “strong…believable…captured Lagos well…had a realistic portrayal of what women were going through in Nigeria” (113). This approval places the embedded story in good standing to counter Edward’s negative opinion about it.

An important piece of information that the embedding narrative reveals is that the story is actually Ujunwa’s real life experience. Since autobiography is more believable than fiction; Adichie effectively creates the illusion that the embedded narrative is a true story. The embedded narrative is therefore placed at a level higher than the one embedding it by being presented as a true story while the one that holds it is fictional.

The authors of the embedded narratives in the works studied write from a point of experience. Ugwu writes about his experiences during the war. Ifemelu blogs about her immigrant experiences in America. Ujunwa writes her own story. This validates their suitability to write
these stories. The experience gives them the knowledge and power to write the embedded narratives and the reader easily believes them.

Adichie’s choice to represent the embedded narratives as non-fictional text within the context of the embedding narrative elevates them in the ontological level. Ontological levels point out the subordination of worlds or realities. Waldron describes a subordinate world as one which is “fictional; it is subordinated to the real world because it has no independent existence beyond what is described or imagined in the real world” (17). In the works selected the primary narratives take a subordinate level.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the nature of the embedded narratives in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”. It has discussed the various forms that shape the embedded narratives. I have attempted to present a working narratological model for the texts; discussing the narrative levels and their relationships. I have also observed that in some cases like *Americanah* the extensive embedding creates a clash between the narrative levels. In this chapter I also looked at the relationships between the embedding narrative and embedded narratives and concluded that the relationship is one where the embedding narrative justifies the embedded narrative. This discussion leads us to the next chapter that looks at the function of the embedded texts and how it contributes to developing Adichie’s thematic concerns.
CHAPTER 3

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction

This chapter looks at the functions of the embedded narratives in the texts selected. It also evaluates the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique in communicating the author’s thematic concerns. It highlights the limitations of the embedded narrative technique in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

Functions of the Embedded Narratives

Authors choose to employ the embedded narrative technique in their work for various reasons. Some common uses are; for aesthetic purpose as a means of adding diversity to the narrative act, dramatic impact, sharpening characterization, developing thematic concerns and increasing the complexity of the narrative. This study focuses on the roles played by the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works.

Narratologists such as Genette and Bal have discussed possible functions of embedded narratives. Shlomith Rimmon Kenan builds on the earlier work of Genette and Bal in *Narrative Fiction* *Contemporary Poetics*. She argues that there are three types of embedded narrative function: actional, where the telling itself progresses the plot; explicative, which explain the diegesis; and thematic, which function as *Mise en abyme*, stories that reflect in some way the
narrative around them (93). This study begins the examination of the functions of the embedded narrative from the functions identified by Kenan and then expands to other functions revealed in the short stories “Jumping Monkey Hill” and the novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah.*

**The Explicative Function**

Embedded narratives may serve as an answer to questions that arise in the primary narrative. This function helps the reader to understand how the events in the primary narrative came to be. “All these narratives, explicitly or not, answer a question of the type “what events have led to the present situation?” (Genette 232).

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the excerpts of “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” focus on saying, this is how things were and this is why things turned out this way. The prologue introduces the reader to the effects of the senseless killing during the war by recounting the story of the woman with the calabash. Ugwu contextualizes the senseless killings within the wider narratives of war and violence in the world by mentioning “the German women who fled Hamburg with the charred bodies of their children in stuffed suitcases and the Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies” (82).

The second excerpt explains the colonial aspect of how Nigeria was formed. How the British preferred the North to the South. The flourishing of the Christianity and education brought by the missionaries, the merging of the North and the South in 1914 and the picking of the name Nigeria by the governor-general’s wife (115).
The third excerpt talks about independence and highlights the state of Nigeria during independence “At independence in 1960, Nigeria was a collection of a fragments held in a fragile clasp” (155). This statement is important in explaining the state of the country at independence. This signals the reader to the volatile nature of the state and it therefore does not come as a surprise that the country broke into war. This excerpt also reveals the tension between the North and the South: “The North was wary; it feared domination of the more educated South and had always wanted a country separate from the infidel South …Nothing was done about the clamour of the minority groups and the regions were already competing so fiercely that some wanted separate foreign embassies (155).”

The fourth excerpt talks about the economy of Nigeria which was nonexistent until independence. This excerpt points to the poor governance and complex problems facing the country. It focuses on the 1966 massacres and mentions the ostensible reason for the massacre as revenge for the “Igbo Coup”. The attitude of the Igbo is shown as resilient and what mattered to them was the unity forged among the Igbo and the creation of the fervent Biafrans out of former Nigerians.

The fifth excerpt discusses the starvation that was prevalent in the Biafra war. How starvation was used by Nigeria as a weapon of war and how it drew attention to Biafra. He also talks of how people used that starvation for their own gains. For example, photographers use of the photos of the hunger stricken children to grow their careers. Parents also used the mention of starvation to get their children to eat.
The sixth excerpt discusses the reactions of the international community to the Biafran Republic. It mentions the silence and the indifference from some. “In the United States, Biafra was “Under Britain’s sphere of interest”. In Canada the prime minister quipped, “Where is Biafra?”(257). Within this portion Ugwu explains the reason for the silence of the world toward Biafra. This discussion is very crucial because it underscores the notion “The World Was Silent When We Died” which is also the title of the book Ugwu writes.

The seventh excerpt contains the epilogue which is a poem Ugwu wrote, modelled after a poem by Okeoma one of the characters. The poem is titled “Were you Silent When We Died?” This title is also related to the title of the embedded book. This linkage and repetition point to the importance of questioning the silence or attitude of indifference among nations when a nation faces a crisis especially one that leads to massive loss of human life. This is an important socio-political question for Africa since the continent continues to face crises that cause loss of lives. A current example is the South Sudan conflict where hundreds of people continue to be killed because of their ethnicity and political alignment.

The eighth and final excerpt of the embedded book constitutes one line; “Ugwu writes his dedication last: For Master, my good man” (433). This line sums up Ugwu’s appreciation to Odenigbo for his mentorship. Through this final line the issue of the ambiguity of the authorship of the book is finally put to rest. There is no doubt about whose story this is and who writes it. The embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun* serves an explicative function where the embedded narrative explains the events in the embedding narrative. It gives the reader a deeper understanding of what the scenario was during the Biafran War. This is important because some
of the readers may have no idea what the Biafran war was about, The Book functions as a device to anchor the reader. Maria Plaias in “The danger of a single story in Chimamanda N.Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” states that “the line of reasoning in “The Book” provides the basis for analysing and interpreting the characters political views in the main narrative and affirms and reinforces the major ideas of these characters” (54).

The embedding narrative presents to us the action of the story while the embedded narrative presents to us the cause of the action. An example is the issue of starvation as a tool of war. Through description Adichie paints a picture of the inhumanity of starvation; she shows girls fighting for food (270), the desperation Olanna experiences when she goes to the gate of the relief centre to collect food for five consecutive days and finds the gate locked. She details the inward rush of the crowds into the relief centre when it finally opens (271), the theft of Olanna’s corned beef by five soldiers (272). How children roasted rats to eat (370) and how every leaf became a vegetable (371). Through these scenes and many others in the book we see the effect of starvation on the Biafran people. It is only from the fifth excerpt of the embedded book that we understand that starvation was a weapon of war:

> Starvation broke Biafra and brought Biafra fame and made Biafra last as long as it did. Starvation made the people of the world take notice and sparked protests and demonstrations in London and Moscow and Czechoslovakia…Starvation made the international Red Cross call Biafra its gravest emergency since the Second World War (237).
The blog Ifemelu puts up in *Americanah* explains the countless different approaches to race, gender, ethnicity and beauty both in Nigeria and in the United States of America. From the title of the Ifemelu’s blog: “Raceteenth or Various Curious Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non American Black” it is clear that Adichie wants to tackle race from an African perspective. To avoid the subjectivity that may come from an American Black because of the history of slavery and earlier racist practises which they were subjected too; Adichie looks at it from an outsider’s perspective (through Ifemelu). Through the blogs Adichie avoids being didactic about the issue of race.

Similar to the *Half of a Yellow Sun* approach the primary narrative presents to the reader the action of the story while the blog explains the “why” and “how” of the situation in the primary text. The blog allows the public to comment on the issues at hand. The blogs in the novel play a complementary role while facilitating explanation of the primary text. An example is the case of Abe who does not see Ifemelu as female because of the racial divide:

…Abe in her ethics class, Abe was white, Abe who liked her well enough, who thought her smart and funny, even attractive but who did not see her as female. She was curious about Abe, interested in Abe… Abe would hook her up with his black friend… She was invisible to Abe (192).

Later in the novel Ifemelu is involved romantically with Curt, a wealthy white man. During the duration of this relationship she experiences racial prejudice firsthand. When Curt introduced Ifemelu as his girlfriend she saw on the faces of the white women the expression of the question
“why her” (292). Other instances are when they walked into the restaurant and the host asked Curt “Table for one?” and when the owner of the bed and breakfast in Montreal refused to acknowledge her and looked only at Curt (294). Ifemelu felt slighted by this treatment but she could not tell Curt because he would say she was overreacting. Finally when Ifemelu starts her blog her first post entails the prejudices she experienced when seen with a white man and the racially skewed magazines. She ends the blog with words she remembered a long time after that post and recited at the dinner table of a French and American couple. The blog reads:

The simplest solution to the problem of race in America? Romantic love. Not friendship. Not the kind of safe, shallow love where the objective is that both people remain comfortable. But real deep romantic love, the kind that twists you and wrings you out and makes you breathe through the nostrils of your beloved. And because that deep romantic love is so rare, because American society is set up to make it even rarer between American Black and American White, the problem of race in America will never be solved. (296)

This post explains her brutal honesty to a comment by a Haitian poet who had dated a white man for three years. The poet said that race was never an issue for them. Ifemelu reacts by saying “That’s a lie” (290) she repeats “it’s a lie” (290). Through this narration and the blog post Adichie expresses her anger at the idea of sweeping of the race issue under the carpet by saying “race is not an issue” or race does not matter (291).
The blog posts are also used to explain the meaning of concepts around the race issue that cannot be explained in the text. An example is the blog post titled “Understanding America for the Non-American Black: A few Explanations of What Things Really Mean” (350). This blog captures the evasive nature of Americans when handling conversations that address racial issues. They are reported to refer to race using abstract terms such as “simplistic” or “complex”. Among other terms the blogger discusses how diversity means different things to blacks and to whites. “To the whites diverse means nine per cent black people and if it gets to ten per cent they can’t stand it. To the blacks diverse neighbourhood means forty per cent black” (350).

Another post “What Academics Mean by White Privileges, or Yes it Sucks To Be Poor and White but Try Being Poor and Non-White”. This post is one of the lengthier posts, spanning close to two pages. It discusses, explaining at length the imbalances created by racism. An example is given about what would happen if a black person was found in possession of drugs and if a white person was found in a similar situation. The post reads “the white guy is more likely to be sent to treatment and the black guy is more likely to be sent to jail” (346).

Just like *Half of a Yellow Sun’s* embedded narrative the “Raceteenth” blog in *Americanah* helps the reader to trace the histories around the race issue, this explains to the reader how the current situation arose and why the race issue remains unresolved. In the post “Friendly Tips for the American Non-Black: How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness.” (325) Ifemelu outlines the ways in which the whites offer alternative explanations about racial issues and how they want to wish away the past. In this post she records history to anchor the reader on the race issue:
Dear Non-American Black, If an American Black person is telling you about an experience about being black, please do not eagerly bring up examples from your own life. ...Don’t be quick to find alternative explanations for what happened. Don’t say “Oh, it’s not really race, it’s class. Oh, it’s not race it’s gender... A hundred years ago the white ethnics hated being hated, but it was sort of tolerable because at least black people were below them on the ladder. ... being American means you take the whole Shebang, America’s assets and America’s debts, and Jim Crow is a big ass debt. ... Don’t say “Oh Racism is over, slavery was so long ago.” We are talking about the problem from the 1960s not 1860s ...325-327.

The mention of the historic events; the slavery, Jim Crow, blacks stepping off the curb because a white person was passing, white women standing outside schools shouting “Ape” because they did not want their children to mix with black children among other incidences mentioned in the post, gives the reader background information on why the racial wound still festers. At the end of this blog post Ifemelu does not stop at listing the do’s and don’ts of the appropriate way whites should respond to blacks discussing race. She invites the two races to a possibility of a friendship where there is mutual understanding and respect:

American Blacks are not telling you that you are to blame. They are just telling you what is. If you don’t understand, ask questions. If you are uncomfortable asking questions, say you are uncomfortable about asking questions and then ask anyway. It’s easy to tell when a question is coming from a good place...sometimes
people just want to feel heard. Here’s to possibilities of friendship connection and understanding. 327

**Thematic Function**

Rimon-Kenan defines the thematic function of the embedded narrative as one that establishes a relationship of analogy, that is, similarity and contrast” between the narrative levels (92). Genette in *Narrative Discourse* explains that this “purely thematic relationship implies no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis; a relationship of contrast or of analogy. Based on these two definitions of the embedded narratives studied, only the story nested in “Jumping Monkey Hill” serves this function. In *Americanah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* there exists a form of continuity in space and time in the events related in the embedded narratives and embedding narratives.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the untitled story Ujunwa writes has nothing to do with the primary narrative in terms of time and space. Adichie use this story to exemplify the mistaken perceptions of Africans and issues that affect them by foreigners. In the primary narrative Isabel a British assumes that only royal blood could explain the good looks of African people, Edward believes that homosexual weren’t reflective of Africa and women are never victims of sexual exploitation in crude ways. Edward has a warped idea of what the “real Africa” is and insists that his perception of Africa is correct. The story Ujunwa writes and reads unbeknownst to her audience is a true story of her experiences and so when Edward comments that; “The whole thing is implausible,”…This is agenda writing, it isn’t a story of real people.(113)” She responds: “A real story of real people? …The only thing I didn’t add in the story is that after I
left my co-worker and walked out of the alhaji’s house I got into the Jeep and insisted that the driver take me home because I knew it was the last time I would be riding it (113)“.

The revelation that the embedded story is a true story serves to show that Edward’s (foreigners) perceptions about Africa are sometimes so wrong. It gives an analogy of similarity by showing that the comments Edward had been making about the unrealistic nature of the other participants African stories was wrong.

**Actional Function**

The actional function occurs when the very telling of the embedded narrative progresses the plot. This function borrows from Genette’s third type of function expounded in *Narrative Discourse* where such an embedded narrative:“Involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content- a function of distraction, for example and/ or of obstruction (233)”.

The embeddings in the selected texts do not fit this definition completely because they are not completely independent of the diegesis and have no function of obstruction or distraction. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the attendees of the African writers’ workshop are expected to produce one story for possible publication. It therefore follows that Ujunwa the protagonist of the story writes a story which she is required to read to the other attendees.

The short story written by Ujunwa serves as a plot device employed by Adichie to advance the plot in this story. Once Ujunwa reads the story the reactions of the other participants and those of Edward form the rising action. One of the key conflicts of the story is the fixed perceptions of Africa by foreigners. The embedded narrative also makes possible the denouement of the story.
The final outcome of the events is the story is directly linked to the story Chioma writes because it is at this point that she reveals that she is the protagonist in the story that she writes. This revelation then proves Edward wrong in referring to her story as implausible.

In *Americanah* there are other characters from the primary text who are involved with the blogs either directly or indirectly. Ranyinudo for example is upset that Ifemelu had written about her in one of the blog posts. Ifemelu had posted a blog about “the expensive lifestyles of some young women in Lagos”. Ranyinudo calls Ifemelu and says “It is obviously me! Look at this! Ranyinudo paused and then began to read aloud” (422). This post was then taken down by Ifemelu.

Paula like Ranyinudo also reads a blog post to her friends. She also requires her students to read Ifemelu’s blog. It is noted that Obinze read the whole archive of Ifemelu’s blog posts, his reaction to blogs is also accounted for. Some of the experiences Ifemelu has and the observations about life and the other characters form a significant part of the blog.

Blaine contributed to the blog indirectly by influencing Ifemelu through his comments. He reminded Ifemelu what he thought was her role and what the purpose of the blog should have been “Remember people are not reading you as entertainment; they’re reading you as cultural commentary. That’s real responsibility. There are kids writing college essays about your blog” (312). To the extent that the other characters make a contribution to this blog gives it an actional function.
The actional function applies to *Half of a Yellow Sun* on a very small degree because as much as the reader knows that Ugwu is writing a book; the narratives he writes do not contribute to the progression of the plot. The embedded narrative in this novel serves an explicative function but could easily stand on its own. This is emphasized by the haphazard positioning of the embeddings and the lack of introduction to them by the primary text. Compared to *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”; there is very little interaction of the other characters with this text.

**Aesthetic Function**

Aesthetics in literature refers to the investigation of the nature and perception of beauty in a piece of literary work. Peter Lamarque in “Aesthetics and Literature: A problematic Relation?” argues that “Aesthetic characterisations have implication for how the work appears, what impact it has, what is salient in it and what merits aesthetic attention” (6). The use of embedded narratives is one of the aesthetic choices Adichie makes to creatively present her work.

The embedded narratives in Adichie’s work positively affect the presentation of the works to the reader. The external appearance reveals breaks, with an indented bolded typeface in *Americanah*. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the excerpts of “The Book” are numbered and are in bold letter title. The font of “The Book” is different from that of the primary text. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the font used to present the embedded short story is similar to that of the primary text but in smaller size and indented.

In the works selected the embedded narratives provide obstruction in the continuity of the whole. This obstruction affords the narration with more ups and downs. The continuity of the primary
narration is momentarily suspended and a heightened suspense is created. In her longer forms the embedded narratives break the monotony of reading the primary narrative by offering a shift in the reader’s thought process.

In a number of instances the embedded narratives in *Half of a Yellow Sun* help us to break from the heavy matter of the war. In chapter twelve the reader is presented with the narration of the horrendous killings at the airport which are witnessed by Richard. He witnesses Nnaemeka’s “chest blow open” (153) and the soldiers line up Igbo people and shoot them. At the end of the chapter Richard lowers his head to the sink and begins to cry. Immediately after this scene the third excerpt of “The Book” is inserted just before the next chapter.

This excerpt shifts the reader’s attention from the dreadful events of the airport killings to the narration of the independence of Nigeria. This excerpt also explains the state of the country at independence and suggests that “nothing had been done about the clamour of minority groups” (155). Apart from giving background information relating to the Biafran war, it offers a relief from the horrific details of the killings.

The same relief is offered in chapter eighteen which details the air raids that killed people and razed houses. The reader is moved by the effect of the raids on both the victims and survivors. The excerpt provides an obstruction by talking about the state of the economy of Nigeria. It also focuses on the 1966 massacres and the effect on the Biafrans.

In chapter thirty one of *Americanah* the tension raised by a heated discussion on race and relationships at a dinner party is cooled off by the insertion of a blog that discusses hair as a race metaphor: “Imagine if Michelle Obama got tired of all the heat and decided to go natural and
appeared on TV with lots of woolly hair, or tight spirally curls...She would totally rock but poor Obama would certainly lose the independent vote, even the undecided Democrat vote (297)”. The tone of the blog is that of discussing race with a light touch and is peppered with humour. The reader is expected to get relief from the humour contained in the blog. Through the description of Michelle Obama’s hair as woolly and the effect of that on his election results, the heavy matter of race is discussed albeit in a humorous way.

The embedded narratives help to break the monotony of the primary narratives. In Americanah which spans four hundred and seventy seven pages; the blogs give the reader a much needed break from the monotony. The blogs give the readers fresh perspectives offered by Ifemelu and her blog followers. Unlike Half of a Yellow Sun where the embeddings are always located at the end of chapter, the blogs in Americanah appear both within the chapter and sometimes at the end of the chapter. The embedding in “Jumping Monkey Hill” appears at different points in the short story.

The embedded narratives help to create suspense in the novels and short story. Since the reader has to wait for the reading of the embedded narrative to pass, the experience of suspense is lengthened. Any questions raised in the reader’s mind have to be held in suspense till the embedded narrative is read for a possible resolution. In Half of a Yellow Sun the abrupt presentation of the first excerpt of “The Book” in itself creates suspense. The reader has no idea who the author of “The Book” is and there is no introduction to the book. The reader wonders
what the book is about, who the author is and how long it will be. Adichie creates an urge within the readers to continue engaging with the novel.

In *Americanah* an instance of suspense is seen when a blog follows this statement- “When months later, Ifemelu had the fight with Blaine, she wondered if Shan had fuelled this anger, an anger she never fully understood” (337). While the reader is still wondering how and why the break up will take place, Adichie inserts the blog: Is Obama Anything but Black? The blog is totally unrelated to the preceding passages and thus suspense is created.

In the short story the embedded story written by Ujunwa serves as a break between different parts of the story. The embedded story appears immediately after breakfast following that excerpt it is dinner time then comes bed time; the next excerpt appears after breakfast the next day. This pattern continues dividing the primary story into various time frames. The embedded narrative also creates suspense in both the primary narrative and embedded narrative. Since the two stories obstruct each other, the reader is held in suspense as he or she awaits the next part.

The embedded narratives also slow down the tempo of the narrative. The reader is forced to slow down in order to fully comprehend the importance of a new embedding. This ensures that the reader understands its meaning and relates it to the structure of the story or novels’ total meaning. One of the concepts of Formalism is defamiliarization which Victor Shklovsky argues makes objects; “unfamiliar to makes forms difficult, to increase difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic in itself and must be prolonged (16). Borrowing from this concept this study views the use of embedded narratives as one way of
lengthening perception. The embeddings force the reader to slow down and effect a more strenuous but rewarding engagement with the text.

The embedded narratives also serve to help effectively introduce new plot lines; when Ifemelu returns to Nigeria she transitions into a home that is different from what it was thirteen years back. *Americanah* captures an aspect of the returnee narrative through a post in the blog: “The small Redemptions of Lagos”. The piece about the Nigerpolitan Club describes the arrogance of Nigerian returnees who gather on a weekly basis to moan the disparities between Lagos and the cities they come from. Ifemelu uses this post to ridicule the air of pretentiousness that surrounds them and encourages the returnees to accept the way of life back home. This post underscores the definition of an “Americanah” presented earlier in the novel, “They roared with laughter at that word “Americanah”...and at the thought of Bisi...who had come from a short trip to America with odd affectations, pretending she no longer understood Yoruba, adding a slurred r to every word she spoke” (65).

Adichie uses the embedded narratives to enhance the reader’s understanding of the primary narratives while providing her readers an experience of combinational delight unique to the reading of stories within stories.

**Advancing the Oral Storytelling Tradition**

Obiechina observes in “Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel” that “the oral tradition impulse is strong in the modern African novel, which embodies this experience especially because the writers themselves are products of both oral traditions and literate education” (199). Roger Kurtz
describes the third generation of writers; a categorization in which Adichie belongs as “labouring under an obvious but understandable anxiety of influence as the giants of Nigerian literature who preceded them cast long shadows” (25). Heather Hewett observes in “Coming of Age: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and The Voice of the Third Generation.” that “Adichie like her peers is directly engaged with the Nigerian literary canon and is furthermore making a case for her inclusion in it” (78).

Embedded narratives were common in oral storytelling in independent traditions in parts of Africa. They are also used as a bridge between oral and written narrative. Herman argues that embedded narratives describe the historical consciousness of the present. There is a link with the past and a relaying of knowledge between two or more minds. *Half of a Yellow Sun* exemplifies this scenario. The embedded narrative found in “The Book” has a relationship of mediation. Adichie uses this embedding to narrate Nigeria’s history linking past events to the prevailing circumstances in her fiction.

Adichie is conscious of her position and role as an African writer and demonstrates this by borrowing from the rich reserves of traditional oral story telling techniques. Narrative embedding is linked with the oral story telling tradition. The first narrative level functions in a similar way to a storyteller’s role. The embedded narrative is an artistic device that enhances the performance of narrating. Abiola Irele argues that the interplay between orality and literacy is:

... not merely in a purely linguistic framework, as in the early phase of Africanist Studies, but also from a literary and artistic perspective. At the same time the
dominance of orality in the cultural environment of African expression seemed to offer possibilities for validating the endeavour to state the relevance of orality not only to a general understanding of the processes involved in human communication but also, and in particular, to formulate an all-encompassing idea of imaginative expression, one that would point toward a universal concept of literature. (24)

This statement points to the benefits of creating a situation where oral culture is assimilated and reorganized in written fiction. First it enhances artistry in a piece of work. Secondly it aids in stimulating the process of understanding a text. Thirdly as Obiechina notes “as a means of giving maximum authenticity to the writing...writers look to their indigenous poetics to create works that draw upon their living oral traditions to enrich forms, techniques and styles through literate education” (199).

“Jumping Monkey Hill” has in its first narrative level an oral story telling situation. The writers congregate at Jumping Monkey Hill to write and share their stories. This resembles the traditional fireside telling of stories in parts of Africa. The reading of the stories aloud by the characters’ enacts the performance aspect of narrating. In Americanah some of the characters like Paula and Ranyinudo are shown to read the blog posts aloud thus enacting a performance. Olanna in Half of a Yellow Sun narrates her train experience to Ugwu. He then records this narration in his prologue.
Creation of Multi-vocality

Bakhtin argues that the strength of a novel stems from the co-existence of and the conflict between the different types of speech: the speech of characters, the speech of the narrators and the speech of the author. This study approaches the Bakhtinian idea from the perspective that the vocal multiplicity is a narrative strategy that forces the reader to attend to the multi-voiced potential of the text and interpret it. The embedded narratives create the infusion of a distinct quality of heteroglossia in the narrative.

The embedded narratives permit the author to create a “voice” for his narration (for example if he or she wants to use any special language effects) a voice which can be of a more closely involved narrator. This voice enables the reader to understand the effects of the action since they are immediate and clear. This second narrator or third narrator as the case may require can be made as naïve or as sophisticated as best serves the author’s purposes. This narrator may be faintly or distinctly separated from the author himself.

Aghogho Akpome in “Focalisation and Polyvocality in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun” asserts that “the generic diversity of “The Book’s” different segments – it incorporates verse, various prose forms, and journalist reportage- may be read as one way in which Adichie interrogates notions of narrative form and explores the different literary forms through which postcolonial rehistoricisation may be represented” (32). Following Akpome’s argument I add that those genres also represent the different voices or languages that give various meanings, various expressions and converse with each other.
Plaias in “The Danger of a Single Story in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* argues that the arrangement of the embedded narratives in the sequence in which they are arranged is “a way to spread and reinforce the perspective” (54) she continues to argue that “unlike the focalised perspectives the omniscient extradiegetic narrator may offer a de-personalised point of view to counterbalance or reinforce the main characters perspectives” (54). This gives the reader another opinion, through another voice.

Umelo Ojinmah in “No Humanity in War: Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” contends that the embedded narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is where Adichie’s real voice and opinion emerges. (10). Jane Bryce in “Half and Half Children: Third generation Women Writers and the New Nigerian Novel” argues that the embedding of the “The World Was Silent When We Died” is “a device that allows Adichie to gracefully relinquish her position as a narrative authority in favour of a spokesman for the voiceless, which she does not claim to be” (62). Both of these critics point to the double voiced nature of the discourse in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Through Adichie’s double voiced discourse her intentions are expressed albeit in a refracted way. The embedded narrative serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions, the express intention of the character speaking through his or her writing and the refracted intention of the author. The effect is that when the author’s words are introduced into the characters speech, they assume a new meaning and interpretation.

The writing of ‘The Book’ by Ugwu presents a voice which appeals to the reader to interpret his voice as the voice of the voiceless. This is necessitated by his position as a child narrator and as a houseboy one of the lowest cadres of employment. Richard Churchill who comes up with the
title “The World Was Silent When We Died” has an academic background, is an expatriate fascinated by the Igbo culture and history. His advantages over Ugwu not withstanding he realizes the war story is not his story to tell. If he told the story the interpretation would be different; it would not carry the same weight as a story told by a Biafran, conscripted into the army and with firsthand experience of the suffering the war caused.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the story that Ujunwa writes turns out to be autobiographical; it is written using auto-fiction techniques. The story is revealed as Ujunwa’s personal story at the end of the primary narrative to resolve the conflict in the primary narrative. The voices in this short story have a conversation about the idea of what constitutes real African experiences. Adichie chooses Ujunwa to write her own life story, which Edward refers to as implausible. This choice presents a voice that proves to the reader and the other voices in the story that foreign perceptions about Africa can be flawed.

In *Americanah* there are various voices and languages presented both in the primary narrative and the embedded narrative. The voices of Nigerian (village), Nigerian (town), accents of Nigerians who have just arrived in America and try to imitate the Americans, Americans and British mispronouncing African names to a Nigerian who’s lived in Britain for a while and has a British wife, to mention a few. The voice of the blogger and the respondents to the blog post add to the multiple voices in the text and the reader thus engages with the complex nature that is the human life.
In an interview with Brooke Obie of Ebony magazine, Adichie responds to the issue of using the blog as a “literary cheat” and editorializing through the blog by saying that she realized that if she editorialized in regular dialogue in the primary narrative it would not work. “I think that what I wanted to say (about race) and how I wanted to say it was in the kind of voice that would not have worked in dialogue or any other way (than through Ifemelu’s posts)” (n.p). Adichie through those confirms the Bakhtinian idea that the author orchestrates all other voices and directs the interactions of those voices. The author organizes the diversity of voices to achieve a desired end.

**Illusion of Reality**

I look at the subject of illusion of reality from the standpoint that illusion is essential to art and that art is an important resource for truth. The inclusion of an embedded narrative which can be oral or written is rationalized or motivated in a realistic way to preserve or imitate the illusion of reality. This illusion of reality consequently lends to both the embedded and embedding narrative credibility. Traditionally several devices are used by writers to achieve this goal. Examples include; gathering of characters who tell each other stories, dreams or hallucinations experienced by a character, the discovery of written manuscripts, diaries, letters and such other categories.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Adichie use the autobiographical genre as a textual disguise to stress the idea that the events in the embedded story are pure fact. This in effect counters the false perception about Africa by Edward in the primary narrative. As much as the primary narrative is
fictive the author creates a way for the reader to enter the characters world and therefore perceive this reality.

The use of the blog in *Americanah* creates the semblance of reality by Adichie’s accuracy in her simulation of how blogs work. This technique transports the reader to the blogosphere and the reader becomes part of the audience of the blog. Blogs provide centralized locations at which readers find web-based journals known as blogs and bloggers are able to find each other. Ifemelu’s blog has many followers, she edits her posts, comments and reactions of the blog are recorded in the text. She pulls down posts when she wants to and eventually she exits from that particular blog zone. She then begins another blog when she returns to Nigeria. All the events in the novel make for a believable story.

Another way Adichie achieves the illusion of reality in her fiction is by empowering the characters that author the embedded narratives. The characters involved all author from a point of experience. The experiences they have give them the authority to write the embedded narratives. The reader then believes the embedded narratives because he or she has shared the experiences with the character in the embedding narrative.

Adichie also accurately merges the information in the embedded narrative with that in the embedding narrative where required. An example in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is where Olanna sees the child’s head in the calabash on the train. Olanna then narrates this event to Kainene and Ugwu on separate occasions. Ugwu then includes this story in the prologue of “The Book”. The narration in the primary text corroborates the information in the embedded narrative.
Alongside other mediums employed in the novels to create an illusion of reality, the embedded narratives contribute effectively to this literary technique. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* we encounter letters, radio broadcasts, poems, songs, newspaper articles, and excerpts from a published book. In *Americanah* some of the other devices employed include emails between Ifemelu and Obinze and text messages from mobile phones.

*Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” address factual issues: war, race and the perceptions of foreigners about Africa. Since the issues discussed are real issues the author underscores their importance by employing a technique that enhances the perception by the reader that the issues are real.

**Functions of Embedded Narratives for the Characters**

Irene de Jong in “Narratological Theory on Narrators, Narratees, and Narrative” states that embedded narrative may have a function to the characters. She says “In the case of an embedded narrative told by a character it may also be relevant to distinguish between the function it has for secondary narratees, the characters who are listening and for the primary narratees”(10). This points to the usefulness of the embeddings for the characters; the characters may have been propelled or motivated by something to author the embedded narratives.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* Adichie attempts to capture the effects of the postcolonial and civil war trauma. The characters in the novel live through traumatic experiences which they struggle with. The characters in the novel experiences both personal and collective trauma. Focusing on Ugwu the author of the embedded narrative, I note that his trauma is of a different kind because he
plays the role of the perpetrator. When he is conscripted he rapes a girl at the prodding of his fellow soldiers. This action haunts him and traumatizes him. Frances White in her review of the book writes that “Ugwu takes up writing as a way of dealing with his bewildering and disturbing experiences” (n.p). Doseline Kiguru (2011) examines the role of the child figure in telling narratives based on Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow sun*. She notes that the book Ugwu writes is a reflection of the violence that defined the Biafra society and is an effort to deal with the trauma caused by the violence and destruction (68).

Maria Plaias in “The Danger of a Single Story in Chimamanda N. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” argues that “...Ugwu is atoned and healed through the process of writing and that the healing process entails a continuous engagement with the memory of the war” (64). As the scars of the war reminded Ugwu of his role as a perpetrator he tried to unburden the trauma of those episodes. “He would never be able to depict the bleakness of bombing hungry people. But he tried, and the more he wrote, the less he dreamed” (398).

The writing process is therapeutic not only to Ugwu but to Olanna and Richard as well. Adichie shows how narration may have a therapeutic effect not only to Ugwu but to her as part of the second generation Biafrans. Adichie is bruised by the war, having lost her grandfathers in it. On reasons why she wrote the book she says “my father has tears in his eyes when he speaks of losing his father and my mother still cannot speak at length about losing her father in a refugee camp” (Adichie, “The Story Behind the Book”). Olanna narrates the train episode to Ugwu and comes to a realization that her story is important when she notes Ugwu’s keenness:
Ugwu was writing as she spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of, and so she told him all she remembered about the train full of people who had cried and shouted and urinated on themselves. (410)

Richard witnessed a customs officer get shot at the airport, just because he was an Igbo. The soldiers went on to kill dozens more of Igbo people at the airport. These scenes flash through Richards mind over and over again to the point that he wishes “he would lose his mind or that his memory would suppress itself” (165). Richard desires to express his trauma through writing but he cannot get himself to do it. “The echo of unreality weighed each word down; he clearly remembered what had happened at that airport but to write about it, he would have to re-imagine it, and he was not sure if he could”(168).

Through these characters Adichie makes a point about the importance of narration and writing for the assimilation of individual and communal past. Adichie seems to feel that narration has the ability to bring on a therapeutic effect on the speaker or writer.

The blog set up by Ifemelu serves an important function in her life. As she pens down her thoughts and feelings on race, we see a metamorphosis in her. From the young lady who was unsure of herself when she arrived in America to a confident lady poised to return to Nigeria. Ifemelu uses the blog as means to understanding race and its complexities but also protecting herself from being swayed into accepting the falsehoods surrounding the race issue in America. The blog offered a catharsis to Ifemelu purging the pressures of immigrant life especially the
racism. The blog gave Ifemelu opportunity to evaluate her life, finally she senses the emptiness, the following excerpt explains:

Readers frightened and exhilarated her…made Ifemelu, nervous eager to be fresh and to impress, so that she began, over time to feel like a vulture hacking into the carcasses of people’s stories for something she could use. Sometimes making fragile links to race. Sometimes not believing herself. The more she wrote, the less sure she became. Each post scraped off yet one more scale of self until she felt naked and false (5).

Prior to the books opening scene, Ifemelu had written her final post and closed the blog. Ifemelu feared she had lost touch with part of herself and makes a decision to return home. Ifemelu feels that her personality is shaped by the blog and that she is losing her core to the blog. This revelation helps her to move to the next phase of her life.

The blog attracts comments from people affected by the issues Ifemelu blogs about. The blog gives them opportunity to vent out or to find solace from the knowledge that their experiences are not uncommon. When Ifemelu blogs about her experience with depression, a Congolese woman posts a long comment in response about a similar experience she had (158). Through the blogs Ifemelu opens up a space for people to talk about issues that disturb them but have
nowhere to air them. A comment on the blog “The Small Redemptions of Lagos” said “Thank God somebody is finally talking about this” (421). We therefore note that the embedded narratives serve different functions for different characters including those who author them.

Development of Themes through Embedded Narratives

Adichie’s fictional works address a myriad of themes among them love, violence, immigration, race, identity, sexual exploitation of women, sexuality, war and its effects. This research focuses on the themes expounded by the embedded narratives with an aim of evaluating the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique. Adichie uses the embedded narrative as a foregrounding strategy.

The term foregrounding has its origin with Czech theorist Jan Mukarovsky and other formalist critics who emphasize that stylistic features are characteristics of literary texts. The NTC’s dictionary of literary terms defines foregrounding as “calling attention to something – a rhythm, a character, an idea, a viewpoint by placing it in the foreground against a background” (87). Leech and Short in Style in Fiction have argued that “in order to make sure that the point is put across; the novelist tends to say the same thing in a number of different ways and at different levels of structure” (207). They add that “incident and mode of description combine to embody one of the major themes of the novel”. Adichie uses the embedded narratives to call attention to her major thematic concerns, the embedded narrative being in the foreground against the background of the embedding narrative.
The silence of the world is a major philosophical concern of Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Adichie questions how societies remain indifferent to others in times of war or genocide. The choice of the title of the embedded narrative, “The World Was Silent When We Died” develops a sense of curiosity within the reader to find out; who was silent? Why were they silent? This title is presented in bold text in all the eight excerpts within the book. It is highlighted in this manner to gnaw at the reader’s conscience. The reader cannot miss it and therefore is forced to think about it.

In the first excerpt the mention of the German women who fled Hamburg with charred bodies of their children stuffed in suitcases, the Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies alongside that of the woman Olanna met in a train with a dead baby’s head in a calabash (82), reminds the reader that there have been other massacres across the globe. This introduces the reader to the idea of death in Biafran war and though Ugwu is careful not to draw parallels of the Biafran war to the German or Rwandan killings, it helps us to visualize and appreciate the magnitude of the Biafran war. This then validates the questioning of the apathy expressed by the world.

It is noteworthy that the poem “Were You Silent When We Died” in excerpt seven of “The Book” (375) appears side by side with the discussion between Richard and the two American journalists about the American policy and the silence of America despite their knowledge that thousands of Biafrans were dying. On this same page the reader learns how the title “The World Was Silent We Died” comes to Richard. Richard is angry at the American journalists for their apathy towards Biafra. “He felt incredibly alone in their presence” (374) they were returning
back to America to the comfort of their homes after collecting stories and photographs from Biafra. This represents how the world left Biafra to deal with its problems.

Adichie uses the embedded narrative to emphasize concerns about the effect of the war. She does this by linking the content of the embedded narrative to the content in the embedding narrative through repetition. The poem in excerpt seven of “The Book” paints a picture of the magnitude of the starvation:

Imagine children with arms like toothpicks

With football for bellies and skin stretched thin

It was Kwashiorkor – difficult word

A word that was not quite ugly enough, a sin. (375)

This second stanza is replayed in the narration in the embedding narrative. “The nun cradled the smallest, a shrivelled doll with stick legs and a pregnant belly” (374). Through the use of rich metaphors and similes, she evokes the sympathy of the reader. The “arms like toothpicks” and “a shrivelled doll with stick legs” refer to the same situation and so does “with football for bellies” and “a pregnant belly”:

Naked children, as if the man

Would not take photos and then leave, alone. (375)
These last two lines of the same poem re-present a scene on an earlier page where the children clamoured around the American photographer begging for more sweets “Once he said, “That’s a lovely smile!” and after he left them the children went back to roasting rats” (370). The laughter referred to in the poem symbolizes the hope the children had; that some form of salvation would come from the American man and by extension the world. This hope is dashed when the photographer leaves and they return to roasting rats.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the story Ujunwa writes expounds the theme on sexual exploitation of women. Chioma the protagonist in the embedded narrative is sexually exploited by a male interviewer who after saying he will hire her “walks across and stands behind her and reaches over to squeeze her breasts” (100). Ujunwa experiences some subtle form of exploitation from Edward, the workshop organizer. When she offers Edward a seat he responds by saying “I’d rather like you to lie down for me” (106). Edward also tells the Senegalese lady that he had dreamt of her naked navel. The repetition of the theme in both diegetic levels is used by Adichie for emphasis and calls the attention of the reader to that theme. This ensures that the reader stops and attends to that theme.

The major theme developed by the blog in Americanah is race. The question of race has been discussed over many decades. Yet it remains a relevant discussion even now. Americanah published in 2013 and whose setting captures the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, correctly assesses that racism still exists. The novel starts on a train journey to Trenton where Ifemelu goes to braid her hair. On the train she remembers an incident on a plane when she had to explain what she meant by “lifestyle blog” to a man who sat next to her. This man then asks
“Ever write about adoption?” Nobody wants black babies in this country and I don’t mean biracial, I mean black. Even black families don’t want them” (4). Ifemelu blogs about this man and this post receives the highest comments for a month. The positioning of this conversation in the very first chapter is to make the reader understand that this book is about race and the blog is a space for discussing race.

The rejection of black babies plays out in Dike’s life when later in the story he attempts to commit suicide. Dike experiences racism at his tender age; because he is black he is the first suspect when the school computers are hacked. The pastor at his church says hello to all the other kids but to Dike she says “What’s up bro?” (349), this makes him feel different and he says, “I feel like I have vegetables instead of ears, like large broccoli sticking out of my head” (349). Dike feels unwanted to the extent that he nearly takes his life.

The concept of race first occurs to Ifemelu when she arrives in the United States “I come from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America” (290). The covert and overt racisms she witnesses and experiences are what make her black. Ifemelu is angered at the silence, the things “unsaid and unfinished” (296) around the race issue. Ifemelu begins longing for other listeners and she longed to hear the stories of others. “How many other people had become black in America?” (296).

At the encouragement of her friend Wambui she sets up a blog. The blog is informed by her daily encounters with racism. These encounters form the titles of her posts and make up the
content of her discussion. The blog separates the race issue from the other issues in the novel. The blog is a technique used by the writer to foreground the race issues.

The blog effectively develops the theme of race in *Americanah* because of its unique nature. The nature of the blog embedded in *Americanah* borrows heavily from the real medium that the blog is. Ruth Aylett and Sandy Louchart in “Towards A Narrative Theory of Virtual Reality” argue that a story is not told or shown in the same way according to the medium in which it is displayed, nor is its content or intensity the same” (1). The blog in the novel does not address the issue of race in the same way the embedding narrative does. The blog by its nature allows for multiple comments on the issues posted, it also allows the blogger to edit or withdraw posts accordingly. Blogs also serve a wider reach because they can be re-posted onto many other sites.

The blog in *Americanah* supports the contention by Cornel West that the race question is urgent. “For me the race question is an urgent question of power and morality; for others, it is an everyday matter of life and death” (Morrison, 61). What better way to address an urgent issue than by putting it on a medium that delivers blog posts in real time? Through the use of the blog Adichie shows the need to view the race issue as one that requires urgent attention. Adichie chooses the blog over other forms because of the advantage it offers in terms of the immediacy in communicating and ability to reach a wide audience.

The existence of racism brings up the question of identity. The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy defines one’s personal identity as “what makes one the person one is” (n.p). Identity reflects on who we are and how others perceive us. Identity is a language and culture rooted
process that includes our position in the world and others thoughts about who we are as well as who they are.

Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* discusses the complexity of the concept of “identity”. Gilroy argues that historians should reconsider how they document the past “I want to develop the suggestion that cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single complex unit of analysis in their discussion of the modern world…and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective”(15). This suggests that black is black and there are no levels of blackness. It is assumptions such as these that Adichie problematizes as she explores the various categories of identities in *Americanah.*

There are several diasporas in different chronotypes as a result of creolization being a continuous process. Globalization has made it more complicated such that within the diasporic community there are various categories of identities. In the blog post “Understanding America for the Non-American Black: American Tribalism” (184). The different kinds of black are spelt out. Ifemelu talks about the ladder of racial hierarchy in America. “White is on top, specifically White Anglo Saxon Protestant (alluding to the possibility of another type of white). American Black is always on the bottom and what’s in the middle depends on time and place.” She includes an example about how in the “ladder of races Jewish is white but also some rungs below white”.

In another blog post “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: In America You Are Black, Baby”(220), Ifemelu addresses the idea of the Non American Blacks denying that they are black
because they are from other countries where the issue of blackness does not arise. This calls attention to the creation of a racial identity “black” that confronts immigrants to America. She also looks at the generalizations and assumptions surrounding black people. Black people are treated as though they have no individual identity. If a crime is committed by a black person all other black people are stopped for fitting the profile. Black people are made to feel that they have to compensate for other black people’s behaviour by being apologetic to the whites, or always being on guard because any offensive behaviour by one black will mean the other blacks get to pay for it. This post is written in a scornful tone, scorning at the ridiculous ideas that whites have about blacks.

Chinua Achebe argued that the role of the African writer included a responsibility to educate his or her readers. In the essay “The Novelist as Teacher” in a collection of essay *Hopes and Impediments* he states “…The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and re-generation that must be done. In fact he should march right in front…” (30) He adds that the African writer is more concerned with the importance of combating “our acceptance of …racial inferiority” (29) by confronting the “disaster brought upon the African psyche in the period of subjection to alien races” (29).

Adichie seems to have heeded the call by Achebe to march right in front and re-educate especially in the area of ownership and authorship of the African story. Adichie belongs to a group of writers described as the third generation of modern Nigerian Literature. Roger Kurtz in “The Intertextual Imagination in Purple Hibiscus” has outlined the generations as follows:
The first generation consists of writers like Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Flora Nwapo and others. The second generation includes names such as Femi Osofisan, Buchi Emecheta and Tanure Ojaide. The third generation comprises of those who were born and educated in 1960 and whose writings began to appear in the mid 1980’s. They include Ben Okri, Helen Oyeyemi, Helen Habila, Seffie Atta, Chimamanda Adichie and others. (24)

Adichie and her peers have found a platform to speak from through their writing. They are able to experiment with new avenues of expressing and formulating the African experience. Through the texts studied in this research Adichie has defined the role of the African writer and then shown who should be telling the African Story. She has exemplified this by her choice of characters and the embedded narratives authored by them.

Adichie underscores the glaring need for contextualized reading of African literature and the telling of authentic African stories. In her address “The Danger of a Single Story” Adichie explains how class and culture based prejudices is often fostered by individuals adherence to hegemonic narratives of societies and histories. Adichie argues that “The single story creates stereotypes and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (7).

Adichie highlights the fundamental function of the writer, like those of storytellers in traditional African communities. Preceding writers such as Rene Wellek (238-9), Wole Soyinka (21), Chinua Achebe (7-8) and Chukwudi Maduka (11) have on various occasions agreed that the
African writer is the conscience of the society and serves as a historian, preserving its past; critic, analyzing its current state and shepherd, helping to usher it towards its future.

*Half of a Yellow Sun* addresses the question of the authorship and ownership of history. Adichie juxtaposes the characters Ugwu and Richard Churchill. The two characters represent opposite perspectives in life. Ugwu is from a small village and comes to work as a houseboy for Odenigbo in Nsuka. Richard is a British man who comes to study Igbo-Ugwu art. Through the two who are both authors in the novel Adichie points to us who the African story belongs to and who should tell it. Ugwu writes “The Book” which is a historical account from the time period of the British colonizer to the Nigeria-Biafra war. For a long time the colonizer has had an upper hand and influence about the African continent and its history.

Richard is fascinated by Igbo Ugwu art and his novel titles borrow from the Igbo past and the culture: “The Basket of hands” and “In the Time of Roped Pots”. Richard learns Igbo and gets further enmeshed into the Igbo culture. He begins considering himself a Biafran. He says “We are still extracting from some fields we control in Egbema …We move the crude to our refineries at night…”. “You keep saying we” the Redhead said. (372) Eventually Richard realizes “The war story isn’t my story to tell, really”, something that Ugwu had always known: Ugwu nodded. He had never thought that it was” (425).

This exclusion of Richard from the Biafran experience is seen earlier when Richard sense’s it from Madu’s tone: “We are running our cars with a mix of kerosene and oil or we’ve perfected the flying Ogbunigwe or we’ve made an armoured car from scrap. His we was edged with
exclusion. The deliberate emphasis, the deepened voice, meant that Richard was not part of *we*; a visitor could not take the liberties of homeowners” (304).

The subject of Richard’s exclusion is repeated for emphasis when Madu tells Richard “the truth is this is not your war, this is not your cause” (305). When Richard tells Kainene how the book title “The World Was Silent When We Died” came to him “she arched her eyebrows “We”? The world was silent when *we* died? (374). The word *we* is italicized a number of times to make the reader sense the exclusivity that surrounds the right to tell the Biafran story.

It is remarkable that the title of the book Ugwu writes originates from the words of a Nigerian. As much as Richard picks it up and hands it over to Ugwu. Colonel Madu tells Richard “The world has to know the truth about what is happening, because they simply cannot remain silent when we die” (305). At this juncture Madu was requesting Richard to write for the Propaganda Directorate as a way of him contributing to the war effort. Adichie makes an important statement that the book title and the book content had to be owned by Biafrans. They had the exclusive right to tell their true story.

An example of the falsehoods that result from a single story are shown in *Half of a Yellow Sun* where the American journalist views the belief of the woman with one arm; that Biafra would win, a result of the Biafran propaganda machine. Richard likened his thoughts to “President Nixon’s’ fact finders from Washington or Prime Minister Wilson’s commission members from London who arrived with their firm protein tables and their firmer conclusions: that Nigeria was
not bombing civilians, that the starvation was over flogged, that all was well as it should be in the war”(371). While people died of starvation or air raids the fact finders twisted the story and said Biafra’s suffering was exaggerated. In short they lied about the real situation on the ground. Just like Richard desires to write a book after the war telling “a narrative of Biafra’s difficult victory, an indictment of the world” (374); Adichie through the embedded narrative reproaches the world for its silence during the Biafran war that led to the loss of thousands of lives. The sixth excerpt of “The Book” (258) sheds light on this silence.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the characterization and the interactions presented at the writers workshop portrays the situation Adichie denounces in the TED Talk “The Danger of The Single Story”. Isabel, the wife of the workshop organizer claims that the exquisite bone structure Ujunwa has must be from Nigerian royal stock. Edward dismisses most of the writers’ stories in the workshop as un-African or implausible. Adichie points to the fact that the erroneous foreign perceptions about Africa will only be countered when Africans tell their own stories.

This is presented to the reader when Ujunwa reveals that the story she writes is based on a personal experience. When Edward refers to her story as “agenda writing” and “implausible”, convinced that it was not a “real story of real people” (114); Ujunwa responds when she sees the victory in his eyes as he says those words. She stands up and begins laughing; this act of standing up symbolizes Adichie’s call to writers to be bold and courageous, to stand up for the truth, to rise up and tell their truth. The laughter is a mockery of the lies and false perceptions that the west perceives as truth. Ujunwa asks “A real story of real people”? She goes on to reveal
that this was an autobiographical account. Ujunwa the African writer triumphs, as her story turns out to be real.

In *Americanah* we learn very early in the novel about the writer’s role and voice. Sapphic Derrida, one of the most frequent posters writes of Ifemelu “you’ve used your irreverent, hectoring, funny and thought provoking voice to create a space for real conversations about an important subject”(5). This statement carries the description of who an African writer should be; irreverent meaning fearless and bold, thought provoking voice meaning one who stimulates the readers’ interests and creating spaces for real conversation about an important subject.

The genesis of the blog stems from a desire by Ifemelu to share her stories with a larger audience and longing to hear other people’s stories. Ifemelu had a desire to tackle things “unsaid and unfinished” (295). Ifemelu wonders “How many other people had become black in America? How many had felt as though their world was wrapped in gauze” (296). Ifemelu then creates a space where people can address the issues surrounding the race discussion.

The choice of the blog, a medium new and unfamiliar to Ifemelu can be interpreted as a way writers should push boundaries through use of new forms. Like Adichie, Ifemelu experiments by using the blog a medium new to her to voice her concerns; while Adichie embeds the blog in her novel. Adichie seems to say that writers should not shy away from using different mediums to communicate important concerns. Adichie’s creation of Ifemelu as a successful blogger attests to this.
The specific authorship of the blog is spelt out in the title of the blog: “Raceteenth or Curious Observations by a Non-American Black on the Subject of Blackness in America”. This is a pointer on the importance of who the author is. The statement that observations are made by a Non-American Black separates this particular voice from the many other voices that may have an interest in this discussion. It shows that being a Non American black qualifies Ifemelu to talk about blackness.

Like in “Jumping Monkey Hill”, Americanah is also concerned about telling the truth. The remarks “That’s a lie…It’s a lie” (290) by Ifemelu match with the question raised by Ujunwa “A real story of real people? (113), these remarks exhort writers to tell the reader about the importance of the “truth” being told by the African writer. Ifemelu is angered by the silences around the race issue and invites people to “unzip themselves” as this blog post shows:

Open thread: For All the Zipped-Up Negroes

This is for the Zipped-Up Negroes, the upwardly mobile American and Non-American Blacks who don’t talk about Life Experiences That have to Do Exclusively with Being Black. Because they want to keep everyone comfortable. Tell your story here. Unzip yourself. This is a safe space. (307)

Through the characters in the three pieces studied Adichie shows who should write the African history and the concerns that plague Africa. Her opinion resonates throughout her work but it is through the exemplification in the embedded narratives that she makes her opinion clear.
Closely linked to the issue of addressing the authorship of the African story is the attitude of silence. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Ujunwa questions this attitude when the Senegalese says she did not need to say anything to Edward about his sexually suggestive remarks. “But why do we say nothing?” Ujunwa asked. She raised her voice and looked at the others. “Why do we always say nothing?”(112). Ujunwa goes on to give the black South African a tongue lash when he makes excuses for Edward. “Ujunwa shouted at him, “This kind of attitude is why they could kill you and herd you into townships and requires passes from you before you could walk on your own land!”(112). Ujunwa blames the attitude of silence for problems encountered by African states by using the example of apartheid in South Africa.

In the same story I read Edward’s comments about the stories written by the participants as a way of silencing them from telling their authentic stories. For example when he says that “homosexual stories weren’t reflective of Africa...This may indeed be the year 2000, but how African is it for a person to tell her family that she is homosexual?” Earlier on the Senegalese had mentioned to her colleagues that “her story was really her story, about how she had mourned her girlfriend...” (102). The Senegalese case matches that of Ujunwa where true stories are seen as implausible by foreigners because of their conditioned idea of what African life should be.

In Americanah Adichie addresses the issue of silence through Ifemelu’s uneasiness about the silences that surrounded the race question. Ifemelu had a desire to tackle things “unsaid and unfinished” (295). Ifemelu wonders “How many other people had become black in America (296)?” The silence of the world while Biafrans died is one of the major themes in Half of a Yellow Sun. This is repeated over and over again as the title of the embedded narrative “The
Book: The World Was Silent While we Died” and within various passages in the book. Adichie uses the embedded narratives to raise the question of why Africans choose silence. This helps the reader to reflect on the issue of silence and its consequences.

Ifemelu invites both Blacks and Whites to engage in dialogue and to ask questions. This is seen in the blog “Friendly Tips for the American Non: Black How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness” (325) quoted earlier. This blog calls for objectivity in the race discussion- “American Blacks are not telling you that you are to blame...ask questions...listen”. The Blacks are encouraged to speak about the race issue and the whites are encouraged to listen and ask questions about the concerns by blacks about race.

**Limitations of the Embedded Narrative Technique**

While this study has discussed Adichie’s skill in engaging the embedded narrative technique and evaluating the effectiveness of the use of the embedded narratives. There are a few limitations in the way Adichie uses the embedded narrative strategy. These do not overwhelm the quality of her fiction but are worth pointing out.

In *Americanah* there are places where we encounter interposition which can sometimes be exasperating and disruptive. For example in the scene where Aunty Uju tells Ifemelu about her decision to leave Bartholomew and move to Willow. The omniscient narrator says “Ifemelu liked the name of the town Willow; it sounded to her like freshly squeezed new beginnings” (221). Immediately below this line is a blog post that covers close to two pages, a new chapter then
begins after this. This has the potential of creating the feeling of being left hanging at the point the narration ends in the primary text. The reader without warning encounters a blog.

Adichie weaves full blog posts into the primary narrative. The blog posts were too many and quite lengthy. Fewer blogs would still have communicated and achieved the desired result. The too many blogs added unnecessary bulk to the text which may cause the reader to lose interest in reading them and as a result miss crucial information. The monotonous use of the blogs by Adichie makes them loose their desired impact.

Linda Alcoff in “The Problem of Speaking for Others” argues that “the practice of speaking for others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as one who more correctly understands the truth about another’s situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus achieve glory and praise” (22). Adichie creates a space for people to speak for themselves about their race issues. Though Ifemelu’s blog does not purport to speak for others it easily presents Ifemelu as one who understands the truth about others situations. The privileging of the Non-American black by creating that space for them to voice their concerns creates a situation where we cannot see or hear about whites fighting racism.

Some of the blog post titles in Americanah can be read as promoting exclusionism. The American Heritage Dictionary defines an exclusionist as one who advocates the exclusion of another or others, as from having or exercising a right or privilege. Examples are “Understanding America for the Non-American Blacks…” and “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks”. This specific categorization of who is invited to read and contribute to the blogs excludes other races.
It conflicts with the author’s desire to contribute to a debate whose ultimate purpose is to solve the race issue.

The embedded narratives in *Half of Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” could disrupt the reader in the process of reading the primary narrative. There is a possibility of the reader’s attention being diverted to the embedded narrative because of its nature. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* the embeddings are presented in a bold font, while in “Jumping Monkey Hill” they appear in a smaller font. This draws attention to them and they seem to compete with the primary narrative.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the functions of the embedded narratives in the selected works of Adichie. The chapter also evaluated the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique in communicating the author’s thematic concerns. It has also pointed out the limitations observed in Adichie’s use of this strategy. The observation is that Adichie effectively uses the embedded narrative to communicate on the themes of race, identity, the subtle sexual exploitation of women, war and the question of the authorship, the ownership of the African story and the dangers of an attitude of silence. The functions identified are actional, explicative, thematic, illusion of reality, aesthetic function, advancement of traditional oral storytelling, the development of multiple voices in the texts and the functions to the characters.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

In this research I set out to examine the nature and the function of embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works. The study of the nature of the embedded narratives included looking at the forms of the narratives, the narrative levels in the selected works and the relationships between the embedded narratives and the primary text. I also explored the functions of the embedded narratives in the selected texts. This study also evaluated the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating the author’s thematic concerns.

Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* shifts from conventional embedding and points to an alternative structural reading of her novel. The overlapping in *Half of a Yellow Sun* between the narration of the embedded narrative and the embedding narrative transgress the norms of embedding. The study reveals a limitation of the theory of narratology to the extent that it views metalepsis more of a transgression than of any merit. One of the merits of this transgression in this text is its use to connect the embedded and the embedding. The demerit is that metalepsis may cause confusion about who narrates and what they narrate.

Of the three texts studied *Americanah* employed the most extensive embedding. *Americanah* highlights how the pressure of extensive use of this literary device challenges the hierarchies in the narrative levels. Adichie creates clashes between the narrative levels; presenting a complex situation that does not amount to a structural system that would explain the relationship of the
narrative parts. This is seen where in some instances the extradiegetic narrator cuts across all possible levels of narration.

I tested the hypothesis that the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works take distinctive forms. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” a short story is inserted within the primary short story. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* a book is nested within the primary novel. In *Americanah* blog posts are embedded in the novel. I observe that the choice of those forms by the author plays a significant role in the function of the embedded narrative and in contributing to their effectiveness as tools for communicating thematic concerns. The primary texts vouch for the authenticity of the texts they embed and are presented as non-fictional texts within the fictional texts; this places them at a higher ontological level.

Apart from serving the explicative, actional and thematic function, the embedded narratives also help create vocal multiplicity in the texts, serve an aesthetic function, advance the oral storytelling technique and imitate an illusion of reality which lends the work credibility. The embedded narratives have specific functions for the characters that author them and those who either contribute to the embeddings or engage with the narrative. Ugwu’s writing is a reflection of the violence that defined the Biafran society and is an effort to deal with the trauma caused by the violence and destruction. Ifemelu uses the blog as a means of understanding race and protecting herself from the falsehoods that surround the issue of race in America.

Adichie foregrounds the core thematic issues in her works by using the embedded narrative technique. This strategy ensures that the reader attends to the issues raised. These issues are also
addressed in the primary text. The reader therefore looks at them twice thus attaining a better understanding about the concerns in question. Some of the ways Adichie effectively uses the embedded narratives to discuss her thematic concerns include the choice of the author for the narratives and the choice and meaning of the title where there is a title. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the embedded short story is untitled. In my view this is a deliberate choice by the author for the story to represent the many African stories that are classified as implausible.

The major theme developed by the embedded narratives in all the three texts is the question of ownership of the African story. Adichie underscores the glaring need for contextualized reading of African literature and the telling of authentic African stories by Africans themselves. Other themes addressed through the embedded narratives are war and the silence of the world during the Biafran war in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, race and identity in *Americanah* and sexual exploitation in “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

As this study was limited only to extensive embedding I suggest that future studies look at the nature and function of the other embeddings in the studied texts. Examples include radio broadcasts, letters, newspaper articles, speeches, poems and songs in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In *Americanah* there are emails and phone texts. It would also be worth studying the other narrative techniques employed by Adichie to fully bring out the wealth of variety in her artistry.

As the foregoing analysis has illustrated the study of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works hopes to contribute to the growing interest in her oeuvre. This research has attempted to provide a narratological inquiry to the pieces studied, the significance is that it shows how the texts make meaning and how that process contributes to the interpretation of the
text. The narrative arrangement is an effectual means to communicating the author’s themes. Adichie questions notions of form and experiments with different literary forms through which she communicates her concerns.
WORKS CITED


THE ART OF NARRATIVE EMBEDDING IN CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE’S FICTION

JACQUELINE KUBASU OJIAMBO

C50/79598/2012

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

OCTOBER, 2014
DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for examination or the award of a degree at any other university.

Signature __________________________ Date __________________________

Jacqueline Kubasu Ojiambo

This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors.

Signature __________________________ Date __________________________

Prof. Peter Wasamba

Signature __________________________ Date __________________________

Dr. Tom Odhiambo
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to

The late Reverends James and Ketry Kubasu, my inspiration

Were my love

Were (Jnr) my silly heart

Chinua my sweet laughter

And

To God Almighty, my help
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research project would not have come together in any cohesive manner without the consistent and immensely helpful guidance of my supervisors, Prof. Peter Wasamba and Dr. Tom Odhiambo. Thanks are also due to Dr. Jennifer Muchiri for her invaluable support and guidance during the conceptual stages of this project. I also thank the lecturers in the Department of Literature for providing a strong knowledge base in the course of my studies.

To my colleagues Jennifer, Jane, Kefa, Grace, Makokha, Margaret, Mike, Maureen, Munyiri, Obala, Odongo, Owiti, Amos, Angie, Korir, Winnie, Rachel, Bernard and Wafula for your moral support and genuine interest in my work. To Marciana and Doseline, thank you for being very kind “Big Sisters”. To my siblings for constant encouragement to push further. Finally but not least to Were, Were (Jnr) and Chinua for allowing me the space, time and peace required to study.
# CONTENTS

DECLARATION..............................................................................................................i  
DEDICATION...............................................................................................................ii  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..............................................................................................iii  
CONTENTS..................................................................................................................iv  
ABSTRACT....................................................................................................................vii  

## CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY..............................................1  
Introduction................................................................................................................1  
Statement of the Problem.............................................................................................4  
Objectives....................................................................................................................5  
Hypothesis...................................................................................................................5  
Justification................................................................................................................5  
Scope and Limitation..................................................................................................8  
Literature Review.......................................................................................................8  
Theoretical Framework..............................................................................................14  
Methodology.............................................................................................................17  
Chapter Outline.......................................................................................................19
CHAPTER TWO: THE NATURE OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN
ADICHE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction.........................................................................................................................21

Nature of Embedding in Adichie’s Selected Works..........................................................21

Narrative Levels in Adichie’s Selected Works.................................................................26

Relationship between Embedding Texts and Embedded Texts........................................33

Embedding and Authority................................................................................................38

Conclusion.........................................................................................................................41

CHAPTER THREE: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN
ADICHE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction.........................................................................................................................43

Functions of the Embedded Narratives............................................................................43

The Explicative Function.................................................................................................44

Thematic Function...........................................................................................................52

Actional Function............................................................................................................53

Aesthetic Function..........................................................................................................55

Advancing the Oral Storytelling Tradition.....................................................................59

Creation of Multi-vocality ...............................................................................................62
Illusion of Reality........................................................................................................65

Functions of Embedded Narratives for the Characters.................................................67

Development of Themes through the Embedded Narratives.......................................71

Limitations of the Embedded Narrative Technique ......................................................86

Conclusion..................................................................................................................88

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION...............................................................................89

WORKS CITED.............................................................................................................93
ABSTRACT

Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” feature diverse forms of narrative embedding. Although embedded narratives have attracted considerable attention, narrative analysts have not accounted for new forms of embedding such as blogs. This research examines the nature and function of embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works while evaluating the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating themes. The research draws upon Russian formalism to examine how the form of the work contributes to the overall meaning of the work. It also adopts the theory of narratology which outlines the basic approach to narrative levels. A close and comparative reading of the texts reveals the nature and function of the embedded narratives and the relationship between the primary and secondary narratives. The relationship between narrative levels in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* is complicated both by competing structural models and clashes between narrative levels. Adichie transgresses the norms of narrative embedding thus bringing into focus the assumptions that exist around it. Adichie’s deft use of embedded narratives is seen through the many functions it serves and its efficacy in developing central themes. This research adds to studies done on Adichie’s fiction by attempting a narratological inquiry. It also, hopefully, contributes to future research of structure and other narrative techniques applied in Adichie’s works.
CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction
Writers employ numerous narrative techniques in their work to achieve various outcomes. A narrative is a representation of one or more events by a narrator. This definition is derived from those of Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (2) and H. Porter Abbot, in *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (12). This definition emphasizes that a narrative requires a narrator; a narrative must be communicated by someone or a channel of communication. Narrative techniques are the methods that authors employ to tell their stories. All the techniques employed have important functions in the story. The method and means behind interesting stories are the techniques used.

Sometimes writers employ the technique of inserting one or more stories within the larger story that encompasses them. These stories within stories are referred to as embedded narratives. Some famous examples are Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* and *The Arabian Nights*. In *Canterbury Tales* the main story is about a band of pilgrims travelling to the shrine of Thomas A. Becket in Canterbury. The band passes time by having a story telling contest. The embedded narratives are the stories told by the pilgrims who participate in the storytelling contest. In *The Arabian Nights* the main story is of Scheherazade who is threatened by execution from her husband. Only if she beguiles her husband with a fascinating story will she survive. Every night she tells him a story and within that story new stories are embedded.
Embedded narratives are also common in African oral storytelling. African writers continue to merge the worlds of orality and literacy. An example is Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* where an anonymous Sudanese narrator tells of the journey of Mustafa Saeed, the protagonist of the novel. Salih’s narrative is a polyphonic novel in which the narrator assumes a crucial role as he gradually turns into a full blown character. Another example is Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* which contains nine embedded narratives; these include myths, folktales and anecdotes.

Mieke Bal in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* sees the narrator’s text as primary and the text narrated by the characters within the main primary text as the embedded text. These embedded texts have also been referred to as secondary narratives. Bal explains that she uses the term primary “without value judgement; neither (temporal) priority nor (qualitative) primacy is implied” (57). This implies that the primary text just means the text which comes first, the secondary narrative is the one which comes second and is embedded in the primary narrative. This means either the primary text or secondary text may be the main story depending on the intensity of either narrative. The primary text and secondary text are distinguished by levels in the technical sense such that the narrator’s text is the primary text and the actor’s text is secondary.

Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* distinguishes principal types of relations between embedding and embedded narrative: The first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, conferring on the second narrative an explanatory function. The second type consists of a purely thematic
relationship, therefore implying no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis: a relationship of contrast or of analogy. The third type involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content, a function of distraction, or obstruction. The most illustrious example according to Genette is found in *The Arabian Nights*, where Scheherazade holds off death with renewed narratives, (provided they interest the sultan) (232-233).

Chimamanda Adichie has earned reputation as a master story-teller with a fresh, lyrical and irreverent voice. An acclaimed contemporary African writer; Adichie has written three novels; *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Americanah* (2013), a collection of short stories *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009) and a short story “Transition to Glory” found within the anthology *African Love Stories* (2006) edited by Ama Ata Aidoo. *Half of a Yellow Sun*, which won the 2007 Orange Prize for fiction captures the experiences and impact of the Nigeria-Biafra war through the lives of its characters. “Jumping Monkey Hill”, a short story in the collection *The Thing around Your Neck* looks at the foreign perceptions of Africans in general and the subtle exploitation of women. *Americanah* which won the National Book Critics Circle award for fiction in 2014 is the story of Ifemelu a young immigrant from Nigeria to America and Obinze her boyfriend who goes to London and stays there illegally hoping to regularize his status. The authorities catch up with him and he is deported. The book details their immigrant experiences, their love, separation and eventual reunion.

It is intriguing that Adichie employs embedded narratives widely in her fiction. This research explores the significance of the embedded narrative strategy in African literature.
It is an inquiry in the nature and form of the embedded narratives and how the embedded narratives bear on ideological dimensions of literature while expounding its usefulness.

While all users of narrative embedding as literary device have their points of interest, some instances are so extreme that they call for critical attention, like in Adichie’s case. Adichie’s novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* feature highly complex structures of embedding. *Half of a Yellow Sun* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” employ the Mise en Abyme technique, a term coined in 1893 by Andre Gide that refers to a text within a text. This is a text that mirrors the text that holds it. Therefore in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, there is a book within the main book and in “Jumping Monkey Hill” a story within a story. In *Americanah*, one of the characters sets up blogs at various points in her life. Through the omniscient narrator we learn about the comments of visitors to the two blogs.

**Statement of the Problem**

Although the phenomenon of the story within a story has received considerable attention, the orientation has been towards oral narratives such as myths, folktales, fairy tales, animal fables, song tales and such other categories. The tendency of placing these oral narratives within the African novel has been used by African novelists to conjoin the creative forces from their oral tradition to those within the writer’s chosen form of writing.

Embedded narratives have received significant attention from theorists of narrative in recent years. However, narrative analysts have not sought to account for new forms of embedding such as emails, blogs or online chats. Though Adichie’s work has been received
with great interest most of it has been slanted toward the thematic concerns. There is limited narratological inquiry on her work.

The nature and function of embedded narratives vary from one piece of writing to another. This study therefore examines the narrative techniques in Adichie’s work with specific attention to the nature and function of embedded narratives in the novels *Half a Yellow sun*, *Americanah* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

**Objectives**

This research was guided by the following objectives:

i. To examine the nature of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s work;

ii. To evaluate the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating themes.

**Hypothesis**

This research tested the following hypotheses:

i. Adichie employs new forms of narrative embedding in her fiction.

ii. Embedded narratives are effective tools for communicating themes.

**Justification**

The colonial and immediate post-colonial African novelists were driven by the African experiences under the colonial system. This group of writers assimilated and synthesized
the traditions of orality and literacy. The oral tradition impulse is strong in their writing because the writers are products of both the oral and literate education. One significant aspect of merging the oral and literacy traditions is the use of story within a story technique. The writers introduce various oral narratives within the narrative structure of their work in the development of characters, plots and themes.

I define contemporary as occurring in or belonging to the present time. Contemporary writers therefore in my judgment are those whose works have been written and published from the 1980s to the present time. Adichie, born in 1977 and whose works in this study were published between the years 2006-2013 fits the description of a contemporary writer. Christina Abuk in her review of Yvonne Vera’s *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women’s Writing* defines ‘opening spaces’ as “pushing the limits of conventional expectations and then moving beyond interstitial positions, into arenas for new actions and relations.”

One of the important questions narratologists ask is; how the story is packaged. Stories are not always presented in a linear form. Writers may sometimes use frame narratives which contain within them embedded narratives. Tanure Ojaide in “Examining Canonisation in Modern African Literature” argues that the aesthetic choices African writers make in response to different social realities is important in any discussion of a literary canon. Studies on the growth of African literature have focused more on examinations of the importance of oral traditions, languages and thematic concerns at the expense of narratological observations and concerns. It is through the study of literature in terms of style, form, and narrative strategies that the thematic concerns are adequately addressed.
This research is also informed by the fact that African literature continues to grow and develop. Growth in African literature is marked by experimentation, particularly of form and by the realization that knowledge is not absolute. African writers explore new possibilities and at the same time putting into question any previously accepted means of grounding and evaluating ideas. Technological innovations, for example, contribute to modernist experimentation with new forms. Through this research I attempt to expand the observation by Ojaide that African literary canon is fluid and not cast in stone. Contemporary writers seem to follow Ezra Pound’s famous exhortation to ‘Make it new’. This exhortation encouraged writers to apply new energy to established forms.

The study of the new ways contemporary writers are telling their stories is a useful contribution to the ever-growing body of African literary criticism. Contemporary trends are expanding the African literary canon and thus literary critics need to be open minded and not biased when new forms emerge. Adichie’s choice to embed a blog within her novel is a pointer to how modern innovations affects the way writers tell their story.

The differently styled narratives and structures of embedding in Adichie’s selected works facilitate an exploration of the changing trends in writing. The study will also bring into focus the assumptions that exist around embedded narratives.

This study contributes to the studies already done on Adichie’s work by taking an approach that gives attention to the use of embedding in the selected works. This attention to the use of this narrative technique may transform readings of the text.
Scope and Limitation
In this project I focus on Chimamanda Adichie’s novels *Americanah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” from the collection of short stories *The Thing around your Neck*. I am concerned with the nature and function of embedded narratives in these texts. In *Americanah* I examine the blogs set up by Ifemelu. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* I interrogate the book Ugwu writes; “The World Was Silent When We Died.” and in the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” I examine the untitled story written by Ujunwa.

My background readings of Adichie’s published fiction revealed that of her three novels only *Purple Hibiscus* does not contain embedded narratives. In the collection of short stories; *The Thing around your Neck* only “Jumping Monkey Hill” contains an embedded narrative. I have chosen the three texts because of the extended use of embedding in those texts. For example, in *Americanah* there is extensive use of the blog within the text. This study limited itself to theseembeddings with an aim of interrogating their purpose and place in the selected works.

Literature Review
The purpose of this literature review is to provide a context for this research. I also include relevant discourses on embedding to show where this study fits in the existing body of knowledge. The literature selected has some bearing on my project and was reviewed to serve as building blocks upon which this study is pegged on.

Emmanuel Obiechina refers to the phenomenon of the story- within- the story as the narrative proverb. He explains that the embedded stories are referred to as the narrative
proverbs because they perform organic and structural functions of proverbs in oral speech and in creative literature. Obiechina argues that:

like the use of proverbs proper, the embedding of stories in the novels is based upon two main principles of the African oral tradition- authority and association through which an idea is given validity by being placed side by side with another idea that bears the stamp of communal approval and by its being linked to the storehouse of collective wisdom (201).

In discussing the embedded narratives in *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe he concludes that each embedded story brings “something total to the meaning of the novel, some insight to clarify the action, to sharpen characterization, to elaborate themes and enrich the setting and environment of action” (204). Thus narrative embedding expresses the distinctive quality of African fiction. This background points to the fact that as African literature develops it does not necessarily deviate from the historical context of embedding. Narrative embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition and has continued to be important as a way of bridging the gap between the culture of oral and communal storytelling and the experience of reading a text. In this research we look at how Adichie employs this age old technique in her contemporary style.

Abiola Irele in “Orality, Literacy and African Literature” argues that the development of the interplay between orality and literacy is “not merely in purely linguistic framework as in the phase of early Africanist studies, but also from a literacy and artistic perspective” (24). Narrative
embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition. The first narrative level functions in a similar way to the performance aspect of the storyteller’s role. The embedded narrative is an artistic device that enhances the performance of narrating.

Eileen Julien in “African Literature” says “the stuff of which literature is made of includes: language, aesthetic and literary tradition, culture and history and socio-political reality” (296). She adds that “the circumstances in which African novels, plays, and poetry are produced, many of them the legacy of colonialism, are as important to our understanding of African literature as are the style and images of texts we read” (304). This statement suggests that it is important to look at the style and form of a text in order to get a better understanding of it.

Frances E. White in her review ‘While the World Watched’, Half of a Yellow Sun by Chimamanda Adichie” views the use of a “clever book within a book” (10) in Half of a Yellow Sun as one of the effective strategies that Adichie has used to confront Nigeria’s bloody past. White argues that Ugwu the child narrator and writer of the book within a book “takes up writing as a way of dealing with his bewildering and disturbing experiences: facing both shortcomings and strengths of his master; participating in atrocities as a child soldier; and sustaining serious physical damage during battle” (11).

While appreciating White’s observation, this study looks beyond what the writing of the book does for Ugwu the child narrator. It bears asking what the purpose or function is for the narrative that embeds it, what message the book carries, and of what significance the position of the
embedding takes in the book. This study also engages with the function of narrative embedding for the primary texts and its effect on the embedded text.

Doseline Kiguru (2011) examines the role of the child figure in telling narratives based on Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Kiguru notes that the writing of the book “The World was Silent When we Died” by Ugwu, a child narrator is a strategy Adichie uses creatively to point to the reader that the entire narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is the story of Ugwu. She also adds that the strategy is used to create in the mind of the reader the illusion that the stories in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are not fictional but real. This observation points to the embedded narrative as not only a tool for expressing the author’s thematic concerns but as an artistic device. In looking at the nature of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s work this research highlights the creative strategies employed through the form of the embedded narratives.

Umelo Ojinmah in “No Humanity in War: Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” contends that the embedded narrative “The World Was Silent When We Died” within *Half of a Yellow Sun* is Adichie’s real book, real voice and opinion. Ojinmah argues that it is in the exposition of the embedded narrative that Adichie’s voice and opinion are poignant. This research puts to test Ojinmah’s argument by looking at both the embedding text and the embedded text with an aim of establishing how Adichie merges the two. I map out for each text the structure of embedding as well as its relationship with the narrative discourse, the story and the meaning of the texts.
In *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women’s Writing*, Yvonne Vera refers to the writers’ need to invent and to banish. This involves defiance of the convention of women’s silence. Writing has established a platform which is freer than speech due to comparative distance and autonomy of books. Critics of African literature have looked at the issues shaping contemporary fiction while giving little attention to how these issues are packaged in writing. Though Adichie’s work does not feature in this collection, it is worth noting that she has embraced the need to “invent and banish” through her choice of form. Adichie chooses to deviate from the common linear form of writing to extensive narrative embedding in her fiction.

David Herman in “Genette meets Vygotsky: Narrative Embedding and Distributed Intelligence” argues that “in conjunction with the cognitive activity of their interpreter embedded narratives constitute intelligent systems—systems that both stage and facilitate the process of shared thinking about past events and about one’s own and other minds” (357). Herman views narrative embedding as enhancing the overall power of the knowledge-generating system to which it lends structure. He further explains that there is a very complex process involved in comprehending the shifts between narrative levels and the changes entailed by those shifts in the status of characters doubling as narrators. In Herman’s view, the embedded text is a system for generating knowledge not just a mere vessel. This argument makes a case for a closer look at embedded narratives in search of the meaning and knowledge they hold.
William Nelles in his paper “Stories within Stories: Narrative Levels and Embedded Narratives” argues that all embedded narratives have a dramatic impact, if only that of deferring or interrupting the embedding narrative, and that all embedded narrative have a thematic function, if only one of relative contrast or analogy. I on the other hand, feel that there is more to the embedded narrative than just deferring or interrupting the embedding narrative. Rimmon-Kenan describes three classes of functions performed either individually or in combination by embedded narratives: actional, explicative and thematic. In this study I examine the function of embedded narratives without limiting the possibilities to a given standard; instead I use those as guides.

Mikhail Bakhtin in *Discourse in the Novel* defines heteroglossia in the novel as:

> A special type of double-voiced discourse (which) …serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they- as it were- know about each other (just as two exchanges in a dialogue know of each other and are structured in this mutual knowledge of each other); it is as if they actually hold conversation with each other (324).

This study approaches the Bakhtinian ideal of the heteroglossic novel from the perspective that its vocal multiplicity is a narrative strategy that signals to the reader to attend to the multi-voiced potential of the text and to interpret it. Bakhtin envisions egalitarian polyphony for the novel as a genre. Bakhtin writes: “The novel must represent all the social and ideological voices of its era
the novel must be a microcosm of heteroglossia...one single unit of social becoming. Every language in the novel is a point of view, a socio-ideological conceptual system of real social groups and their embodied representatives” (411). This study examines how the embedded narratives contribute to the multi-vocality in the selected texts.

From the literature review it is clear that various scholars have researched the area of embedded narratives. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* having been published earlier than *Americanah* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” has received more critical attention. The studies on Adichie’s work however, do not focus much on the embedded narratives save by way of mention. There exists a gap in the area of narratological inquiry in Adichie’s work. This study attempts to fill the gap by examining the use of embedded narratives in the selected works.

**Theoretical Framework**

The main focus in this research is on the nature and function of embedded narratives in Chimamanda Adichie’s work. I rely on two theories to achieve my objectives namely, Narratology and Russian Formalism.

Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* has defined narratology as “the study of how narratives make meaning, and what basic mechanisms and procedures are common to all acts of story-telling” (222). One of the most prominent narratologists Genette focuses on not just the narrative itself but how it is told, that is the process of narrating. To study the nature and function of embedded narratives I analyzed the narrative
structure of Adichie’s fiction. Narratology enabled me to answer vital questions such as: who is telling the story? And how is the story packaged?

Writers often make use of frame narratives sometimes called primary narratives which contain within them the embedded narratives also called secondary narratives. Mieke Bal in *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of Narrative* discusses the possible relationships between primary and embedded texts. In this discussion she notes that “the structure of narrative levels becomes more than a mere story-telling device; it is part of the narrative’s poetics and needs to be understood for the narrative to be fully appreciated” (59). This therefore suggests that to fully understand a text it is important to study the relationship between primary texts and embedded narratives to get the intended meaning.

This study also used formalism as an analytical tool. Formalism refers to a style of inquiry that focuses, almost exclusively, on features of the literary text itself, to the exclusion of biographical, historical or intellectual contexts. One of the central tenets of formalism thought is: that the form of any work of literature is inherently part of its content and that the attempt to separate the two is erroneous. Formalism has the advantage of forcing writers and critics to evaluate a work on its own terms rather to rely on “accepted” notions of a writer’s work.

This study will adopt the Russian formalism strand. Russian formalism refers primarily to the work of the Society for the Study of Poetic Language founded in 1916 in St. Petersburg by Boris Eichenbaum, Victor Shklovsky, and Yury Tynyanov, and secondarily to the Moscow Linguistic
Circle Founded in 1914 by Roman Jakobson. Russian formalists are interested in the analysis of the text but their main concern is with method as the scientific basis for literary theory.

One of the concepts of formalism is about, as Di Yanni Robert puts it, “how a literary work comes to mean what it does” (1580). Formalism’s concern with the formal elements of a text makes it suitable for this research because the embedded narratives take different forms and also the idea of embedding narratives in a work is an aspect of form.

Narratology and formalism have a close relationship brought about by the fact that narratology borrows elements from Russian Formalist critics such as Vladimir Propp. Propp investigates Russian fairy tales to determine there narrative functions. According to his analysis, all folk or fairy tales are based on thirty fixed elements that occur in a given sequence. Narratologists such as Genette have also developed methods of analyzing a story’s structure to uncover its meaning, each building upon the former work of another narratologist (and in some cases Russian Formalists) and adding an element or two.

The point of departure is that narratologists provide us with various systematic, thorough approaches to the mechanics of a narrative; narratology helps the reader to understand how a text makes meaning and not what it means. Formalists on the other hand emphasize the form of a literary work to determine its meaning focusing on literary elements such as plot, character, setting, diction, imagery, structure and point of view. Narratology and Formalism both look at the structure of a narrative. While narratologists study how narratives make meaning. Formalists focus almost exclusively on the form of a work.
Methodology

This study is concerned with the nature and function of the embedded narrative. To achieve my goals, my methodology included close and comparative reading of Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”. I examined Adichie’s work, narrowing down to the texts that have embedded narratives. My key focus was on the nature and function of these narratives. This process helped me to identify the relationship between the primary narrative and the secondary narratives in the texts.

I then interrogated the primary texts using the theory of narratology and the Russian formalist theory. Narratology was relevant in the analysis of the structural framework that underlies the order and manner in which a narrative is presented to the reader. Following Genette’s ideas in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* where he explains the relations between narrative levels; I studied the texts to identify the different narrative levels and the relationship between these levels. Genette suggests that in every narrative the narrator’s status is defined both by its narrative level (extra-or intradiegetic) and by its relationship to the story (hetero-or homodiegetic). Once I identified these relationships I looked at the differences and similarities in the selected texts.

The working presuppositions and the basic conceptual framework of this study were informed by the formalist approach to literary criticism so as to understand the organic unity in the text. I interpreted the texts by exploring ways in which the embedded narratives contribute to the organic unity in the selected works of Adichie.
I also reviewed secondary texts especially critical works dealing with Adichie’s works from different perspectives. Literary critics who have looked at Adichie’s work were useful in shedding light on the subject. Through the close and comparative reading I was able to further the arguments advanced or deviated from them based on my research findings.
Chapter Outline

Chapter one introduces the writer Chimamanda Adichie and the works selected for this research. Within this chapter I make a case for the study of the nature and function of embedded narratives. It also gives a background to narrative embedding as a literary technique. This chapter on the whole gives an introduction to the research, stating the objectives, scope and limitation, methodology and the theoretical framework which guided this study.

Chapter two makes an inquiry on the nature of embedded narratives in the selected texts. I examine the form the embedded narratives take, the position of the narratives in the text and the relationship between the embedded text and the embedding narrative. This chapter also looks at the differently styled narratives and structure of embedding in Adichie’s work bringing into focus the assumptions that exist around embedded narratives.

Chapter three explores the functions performed by the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works without limiting itself to the actional, explicative and thematic functions. It also examines the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating the writer’s thematic concerns. This chapter engages with the function of narrative embedding in terms of the embedding narrative’s effect on the embedded narrative and also the purpose and function of the embedded narratives for the narrative that embeds. It also addresses the function of embedded narratives to the characters.

The conclusion summarizes the research done with a focus on the findings observed in this study.
CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction
This section explores the nature of embedding in Adichie’s selected works. This has been done through an analysis of embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey” separately. This chapter discusses the forms of embedding found in the texts while examining how the embedded narratives bear on ideological dimensions of literature. In this chapter I identify the different narrative levels and the relationship between these levels.

Narrative embedding takes place where one narrative is subordinated to another narrative. Samuel Waldron in “Challenging Narrative Hierarchies: Embedded Narrative Structure in David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* and Mark Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*” suggests that narrative embedding requires a text with at least two narratives the embedded and the embedding. For the purpose of this research the embedding relationship will require the embedded narrative must be visible. The latter narrative must be present and observable in the text.

Nature of Embedding in Adichie’s selected works
“Jumping Monkey Hill” is a story set outside Cape Town in South Africa. Ujunwa the protagonist is part of a group of African writers attending a writers’ workshop. Authors from various African countries are gathered at this workshop. Within the story there is reference to the stories written by the other writers in the workshop. Only Ujunwa’s story...
is displayed and the reader journeys with Ujunwa as she writes her story. Through the third person omniscient narrator the reader gets to know Ujunwa’s thoughts.

Adichie makes use of the *Mise en abyme technique* in the packaging of “Jumping Monkey Hill”. *Mise en abyme* is the French term referring to the practice in heraldry of placing the image of a small shield on a larger shield. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Ujunwa’s story is semi-autobiographical. The story Ujunwa writes is in the third person limited point of view. Ujunwa’s story is untitled. It is indented within the primary narrative and presented in smaller font to distinguish it from the primary text. The story is complete and can be read independent from the primary narrative.

The protagonist Chioma in Ujunwa’s story faces two situations where men in authority take advantage of her position through sexual exploitation. In the first instance, “the man says he will hire her and then walks across and stands behind her and reaches over her shoulders to squeeze her breasts. She hisses, stupid man! You cannot respect yourself! and leaves” (100). In the second instance, Chioma walks away after observing Yinka sitting on a customer’s lap and realizing that this would also be her fate. The alhaji runs a finger over Yinka’s arm. When the alhaji invites them in to give them perfume Chioma walks away.

The choice of the short story form within the short story is valid because of the advantages of the short story form. An example is the ease with which an author maintains consistency of purpose since there are fewer characters and settings thus better dramatic and thematic unities.
Later when Ujunwa reads the story to the group, Edward the workshop leader says that “the whole thing is implausible”(113). At this point Adichie reveals to the reader and the other characters in the primary text that this story is the real life story of Ujunwa:

A real story of real people?” she said, with her eyes on Edward’s face.

“The only thing I didn’t add in the story is that after I left my co-worker and walked out of the alhaji’s house, I got into the jeep and insisted that the driver takes me home because I knew it was the last time I would be riding it. (114)

*Half of a Yellow Sun* recounts the ghastly historical events of the Nigeria-Biafra war. The central characters in the novel are Ugwu, the twin sisters; Olanna and Kainene, Odenigbo and Richard. To a large extent, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is Ugwu’s story, but, the chapters are written in turn from the point of view of Ugwu, Olanna and Richard. The action in the novel moves between the early and the late nineteen sixties.

Interspersed throughout the book are brief passages taken from a book entitled; “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The authorship of this book is ambiguous; Adichie leads the reader to believe that the book is written by Richard, “the title of the book came to Richard: “ ‘The World Was Silent When We Died’. He would write it after the war, a narrative of Biafra’s difficult victory…” (375) but we learn towards the end of the book that it was Ugwu who was writing the book; “Ugwu was writing as she
spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of…” (210).

*Americanah*, Adichie’s most recent novel traverses three nations and addresses a myriad of issues; identity, nationality, race, love, loneliness and aspiration. The book opens in Princeton where Ifemelu lives, as she heads to Trenton, the closest place she can get her hair braided. Her hair being braided at the salon is symbolic of Adichie braiding and weaving her story. Through flashbacks we get to know the story of Ifemelu and Obinze that begins twenty years earlier in Nigeria.

Ifemelu and her boyfriend Obinze are caught up in a state that is surrounded by dysfunction and corruption. The two respond by leaving the country in search of brighter prospects. Obinze heads to England due to rejection from post 9/11 stringent immigration policies in America. He travels on a tourist visa but extends his stay illegally. Eventually he is discovered and deported to Nigeria. Ifemelu goes to the United States and cuts all communication with Obinze. She struggles to make it and finally succeeds. Ifemelu launches a blog about race in America. By the time we meet her at the salon she has made up her mind to return to Nigeria.

*Americanah* has a seven part structure that holds fifty five chapters. The story takes the third person omniscient perspective. The chapter narration oscillates between Obinze and Ifemelu’s point of view. Adichie establishes that *Americanah* is primarily Ifemelu’s story.
by writing chapter one from Ifemelu’s point of view. Chapter two is from Obinze’s point of view, this establishes that his story is also of importance.

The frame of the story is rendered by the braid salon. From the salon the details of the story are laid out as flashback within that frame. Interestingly, Ifemelu leaves the salon at the end of chapter forty one. The following chapters deal with Ifemelu’s transition on the verge of returning to Nigeria. Chapters forty four to fifty five are set in Nigeria and deal with the issues in Ifemelu and Obinze’s relationship and provide a closure to the novel.

There are blog posts spread throughout the novel. While in America Ifemelu sets up a blog called “Raceteenth or Curious Observations by a Non-American Black on the subject of Blackness in America” (296). Ifemelu later changes its name to “Raceteenth or Various Observations in America About American Blacks (Those formerly known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black” (315). When Ifemelu returns to Nigeria she sets up another blog called “The Small Redemptions of Lagos”.

Adichie’s use of the blogosphere in Americanah is in keeping with the narrative time. The advancement of technology has significantly changed the mode of communication; people have turned to the use of Twitter, Facebook and blogs to express opinions on significant issues. Though we are not given specific dates in the novel, the allusion to 9/11 tragedy attack and the election of President Barack Obama to office helps us to place the setting as contemporary. The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines blogosphere as “an online journal where an individual, group,
or corporation presents a record of activities, thoughts or beliefs…many blogs provide a forum to allow visitors to leave comments and interact with the publisher” (n.p).

The choice of a blog as the form that carries the embedded text is very significant. Blogs are perpetual and can reach a wide audience. Each blog post has its own title and content. Visitors to the blog read the posts and share them so that other people can see and read them. Visitors can also make comments and participate in the discussion. Blogs are also easily accessible through computers and mobile phones. One of the characters in the novel, Paula reads one of Ifemelu’s blog posts in a gathering of friends from her phone (325).

**Narrative Levels in Adichie’s Selected Works**

Martin Gray’s dictionary of literary terms defines the various types of narrators and narrative levels as follows:

An extradiegetic narrator tells a story on the extradiegetic level, a ‘higher’ level that includes everyone and everything that determines how the story is told. His or her narration can include one or more other narrations (told by intradiegetic narrators). An intradiegetic narrator tells the story on the narrative level of the characters; the diegetic level which describes how the characters of a story communicate with each other and which is embedded at the extradiegetic level.

A homodiegetic narrator describes his or her own personal experience as a character in the story. Such a character cannot know more about other characters than what their
actions reveal. A heterodiegetic narrator on the other hand describes the experiences of the characters that appear in the story.

The narrator in Ujunwa’s story is presented to the reader as a heterodiegetic narrator. As we read the story we cannot link the events of the story to Ujunwa. It is only through the primary text or at the extradiegetic level that we learn that the narrator is actually homodiegetic. Ujunwa the character in “Jumping Monkey Hill” is actually Chioma in the untitled story she writes.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the reader is presented with a first narrative level through the third person omniscient narrator and then the second level narrative act Ujunwa writes a short story. At each level, the narrative is truncated before it attains closure.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in “Jumping Monkey Hill”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Narrative Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Omniscient third person narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event story</td>
<td>Intradiesgetic</td>
<td>Story about Ujunwa and other participants in a writers workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second level Narrative act</td>
<td>Intradiesgetic</td>
<td>Ujunwa writes a short story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded Narrative</td>
<td>Metadiegetic</td>
<td>Story of Chioma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, at the extradiegetic level, the third person omniscient narrator presents the events around the Nigeria-Biafra war. This constitutes the intradiegetic level in which Ugwu writes a book. This book within the primary text constitutes the metadiegetic level of narratives. This structure is similar to that of the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill”. Adichie also applies the *Mise en Abyme* technique, since the embedded narrative mirrors the embedding narrative in terms of form.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” is written from the omniscient third person point of view. The brief passages appear as summaries that tell the reader what is contained in the chapters of that book:

1. **The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died**

   For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash. She sat on the floor. Olanna tells him this story and he notes the details. She tells him how the bloodstains on the woman’s wrapper blended into the fabric to form a misty manure…(82). ¹

The omniscient narrator of the novel and the writer of “The Book” constantly overlap. In this first part it is obvious that the writer has access to the information in the novel. At this point in the story we do not know who is writing the book. The only person mentioned to have an interest in writing a book about Nigeria is Richard, a British journalist. The reader easily assumes the writer is Richard.

¹ All the excerpts from “The Book” are numbered as such I have numbered them in my quotes for ease of reference.
Genette in *Narrative Discourse* defines metalepsis as “any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a Metadiegetic universe etc) or the inverse (234-235). Metalepsis therefore is a paradoxical transgression of the boundaries between narrative levels. Dorrit Cohn in “Metalepsis and Mise en Abyme” defines interior metalepsis as “all metalepsis that occurs between two levels of the same story; that is to say, between a primary and secondary story” (106).

Interior metalepsis occurs in *Half of a Yellow Sun* when at the extradiegetic level the reader finds out that the ‘he’ referred to in the first part of “The World Was Silent when We Died” is Ugwu. This is found in part four of the novel which covers the late Sixties. “Then she described the head itself, the open eyes, the greying skin. Ugwu was writing as she spoke and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important…” (210).

The transgression here occurs between the primary narrative and the secondary narrative. It appears that the narrator of the primary narrative is the same narrator in “The Book: The World Was Silent When we Died”. The book’s passages are written from the third person point of view similar to primary text:

2. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

   He discusses the British soldier merchant Taubman Goldie, how he coerced, cajoled and killed…(115).

3. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died
He writes about independence. The second world war changed the world order: Empire was crumbling…(155).

5. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

He writes about starvation, starvation was a Nigerian weapon of war. (237)

When towards the end of the novel we realize it is Ugwu writing the book we discover that Adichie collapses the idea of narrative levels and the hierarchy of the same. There are no longer boundaries. The levels become intertwined. Adichie creates an illusion of a real book but in the real sense the passages are summaries of “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The summaries of “The Book” are presented to the reader by the same extradiegetic narrator.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>levels</th>
<th>Narrative content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Third person omniscient narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story about Nigeria-Biafra war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second level narrative</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ugwu writes a book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded narrative</td>
<td>Metadiegetic</td>
<td>The Book : The World Was Silent When We Died.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Genette suggests that “metalepsis designates the transgression of a line of demarcation that authors usually do not touch, namely the shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells and the world of which one tells” (236). Adichie looks away from
conventional embedding and points to alternative structural reading of her novel. The overlapping in *Half of a Yellow Sun* suggests links between the narrative levels. A close observation of the narrative structure in this particular text reveals a limitation of the theory of narratology to the extent that it views metalepsis more of a transgression than of any merit. One of the merits seen in this text is its use to connect the embedded and the embedding. The demerit is that metalepsis may cause confusion about who the narrators are to the readers of the novel.

It is important to note that there are other forms of embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The novel contains speeches, radio broadcasts, songs, poems, Richard’s articles, letters and such other categories. This research focuses on the major embedded narrative. The term ‘major’ for the purposes of this research refers to any narrative that takes a significant portion of the text, where significant is any narrative longer than three to four paragraphs. While this distinction may not be perfect, it is nevertheless a useful one. The intent is not to brush aside the text’s shorter narratives but to provide a clearer comprehensible picture of the predominant narrative structure.

The narrative structure in *Americanah* is multi-layered. At the extradiegetic level is the third person omniscient narrator narrating from Ifemelu’s and Obinze’s perspective at different times. The next level is the intradiegetic level where Ifemelu writes a blog and posts blogs on different topics. The reader observes the narration of ‘tales’ by the intradiegetic narrator both about the narrator (homodiegetic) and about others (heterodiegetic). The next level is the Metadiegetic, which comprises the blog posts by Ifemelu. Beyond this is the meta-metadiegetic which arises from blog comments by blog visitors on different topics.
This type of embedding presents a complex situation because the narrative levels follow no clear pattern. The result is that it does not amount to a structural system that would explain the relationship of the narrative parts. In some instances the extradiegetic narrator presents the blog contents from the meta-metadiegetic level. An example is: “Years later she would blog about this: ‘On the Subject of Non-American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know.’ A Congolese woman wrote a long comment in response: She had moved to Virginia from Kinshasa and months into her first semester of college begun to feel dizzy … (158).” In this example the extradiegetic narrator cuts across all the possible levels of narration in the novel as follows; the intradiegetic- Ifemelu writing the blog, The Metadiegetic- the blog post; “On the Subject of Non-American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know” (158) The meta-metadiegetic, the Congolese woman writing her experience of panic attacks.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in *Americanah*²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>levels</th>
<th>Narrative content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Story told from the third person omniscient point of View</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story revolves around the lives of Obinze and Ifemelu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Level Narrative</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ifemelu sets up a blog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² This table presentation is *Americanah’s* basic narrative level structure. The complex nature of the embedding caused by the overlapping of narrative levels could not be tabulated.
Relationship between embedding texts and embedded texts in Adichie’s selected works

Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* differentiates the main types of relationships that can connect the metadiegetic narrative to the primary narrative in which it is inserted. The first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, conferring on the second narrative an explanatory function. The second type consists of a purely thematic relationship, therefore implying no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis: a relationship of contrast or of analogy. The third type involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content a function of distraction, for example and/or obstruction (232-233).

Mieke Bal observes that when the embedded text presents a complete story with an elaborate fabula, we gradually forget the fabula of the primary narrative: This apparently loose relationship between primary and embedded text is relevant to the development of the primary fabula (57). Another possible relationship between the two texts presents itself when the two fabulas are
related to each other. This structure has two possible meanings. Either the embedded story explains the primary story, or it resembles the primary story. In the first case the relationship is made explicit by the actor narrating the embedded story; in the second the explanation is usually left to the reader, or merely hinted at, in the fabula (58).

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the narrator relates the writing process of one of the characters. The omniscient third person narrator says, “She sat there for a long time, moving the mouse from side to side, trying to decide whether to name her character something common, like Chioma or something exotic like Ibani” (100). From this narration we learn that Ujunwa is writing a story about a female protagonist. Just beneath this excerpt is a display of the story Ujunwa is writing.

The two texts are related to each other. The embedded story explains the primary story. Adichie uses the embedded story to develop pertinent issues that the primary text raises. This relationship is made explicit by the character Ujunwa narrating the embedded story through her writing. Though the short story written by Ujunwa is complete the primary text takes a larger part of the story “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” is interspersed throughout the novel. The distinction between the primary narrative and this narrative is that the excerpts are short passages, printed in a different typeface, they are all titled “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The primary text takes a larger part of the novel since the embeddings are summaries and not whole chapters.
The reader finds the first part of embedded book in part one of the novel which covers the early sixties. This portion summarizes the prologue of the book within the novel. It is worth noting that the presentation of the book is abrupt, no mention of what it is about or who the author is has been given this far. The embedded narratives are short passages that are presented as chapter summaries that are numbered.

The embeddings have no relation with the chapter content of the chapters that hold them. Though the arrangement of the embedded narratives within the text appears haphazard, a closer study reveals an orderly pattern. Each segment of “The Book” appears at the end of either one or two series of three chapters focalised by each of the three main focalisers. In part one and three the embeddings appear after one series and in part two and four after every two series.

In total, the embeddings are eight and the last is found on the last page of the novel:

8. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

Ugwu writes his dedication last. For my master, my good man (433).

The ending of the novel at the same time with the ending of the embedded narrative is significant because it places them on the same level. This implies that both narratives are of equal import.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the embedded narrative and the embedding narrative are related to each other. The embedded narrative explains the primary story. Bal explains in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* that “this relationship is made explicit by the
actor narrating the embedded story” (58). By stating clearly in the last chapter of the embedded narrative that Ugwu wrote, Adichie wants to ensure there is no doubt about the authorship of the book. This also reveals the connection between the two texts. Ugwu, the child narrator in the primary text rises to write about his experience and observations about the war in the embedded text.

Genette’s *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* refers to this relationship as one of “direct causality” (232). He further explains that these kinds of embedded narratives seek to answer the question “what events led to the present situation?” The information contained in “The Book: The World was Silent When We Died” gives background details to events in the extradiegetic narrative.

In *Americanah* the narrator furnishes us with background information on the blogger (Ifemelu) and the blog. The reader is introduced to the blog in the first chapter of the book. This is an indication to the reader that the blog is an important part of the novel and its story. Unlike *Half of a Yellow Sun* where the embedded narrative just appears without warning; the blog in *Americanah* has an external introduction. From the outset of the novel the reader knows there is a blog and gets a feel of what the blog is about when the narrator mentions some posts in the blog and visitor comments on the second and third page of the novel.

The blog and primary text have a close relationship. There is spatio-temporal continuity between the metadiegesis and diegesis. This relationship is not of direct causality like the one observed in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The second narrative takes on an explanatory function. Some of the
fabulas in *Americanah* also resemble one another and the blog is intertwined with the primary narrative. Contained in the blogs are incidents of interest that Ifemelu experiences or observes in her day to day life. There is a repetition within the blog of events that the reader has already seen in the primary text.

An example is when Ifemelu works as a babysitter for a white family that lived in a grand stone house with white pillars; she encounters a carpet cleaner who is hostile to her because she is black and a black should not own such a stately house: “She would begin the blog post “Sometimes in America, Race is Class” with the story of his dramatic change and end it with: *It didn’t matter to him how much money I had. As far as he was concerned I did not fit as the owner of that stately house because of the way I looked. In America’s public discourse ...* (166).”

Another example is the blog on the expensive lifestyles of some young Nigerian women posted in “The Small Redemptions of Lagos” (422). The blog post is about Ranyinudo, Ifemelu’s friend. Before the post, on an earlier page is a description of Ranyinudo that matches the blog. “Ifemelu... wondered if she would be like Ranyinudo, working for an advertising company, living in a one bedroom flat whose rent her salary could not pay...dating a married chief executive who bought her business class tickets to London ” (389). The blog reads in part;

“*There are many young women in Lagos with Unknown Sources of Wealth; they live lives they cannot afford. They have only ever travelled business class to Europe but have jobs that can’t even afford them a regular ticket. One of them is my friend a beautiful, brilliant woman who works in advertising*” (422).
Bal defines resemblance between two fabulas as follows: “we speak of resemblance when two fabulas can be paraphrased in such a way that the summaries have one or more striking elements in common” (60). In the case of the two blog posts cited above in one the resemblance with the text is that both texts address the issue of race in America using the same incident. In the second the blog and text are a social critique on the lives of certain women in Nigeria. When confronted by Ranyinudo for airing her story in public, Ifemelu says “Your story is so common” (422). Ifemelu uses Ranyinudo’s life story to talk about women “who define their lives by men they can never truly have and are crippled by a culture of dependence” (422).

**Embedding and Authority**

All the embedding narratives in Adichie’s work vouch for the authenticity of the narrative they embed. The embedding texts do not just present the embedded text; they provide a context for the embedded narrative, credit it to a specific person and establish its credentials.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” and *Americanah* it is very clear from the outset who the authors of the embedded texts are. Ifemelu sets up the two blogs in *Americanah*. Ujunwa writes the untitled story in “Jumping Monkey Hill”. *Half of a Yellow Sun* takes a different approach: the author of the book within the novel is not revealed at the outset. The reader has to contend with the ambiguity of whether it is Richard or Ugwu who writes the book. It is eventually made clear towards the end of the novel that Ugwu is the author of the book. The ambiguity of the authorship of the embedded text is employed by Adichie to create suspense and at the same time make a statement about who should tell the African story.
The embedding narratives attest to the credibility of the narratives that they embed. In *Americanah* the narrator presents Ifemelu’s blog as a successful blog with a growing readership. The omniscient narrator says this about the blog:

> She had written the final post only days ago. Trailed by two hundred and seventy-four comments so far. All those readers growing month by month, linking, cross posting, knowing so much more than she did; they had always frightened and exhilarated her (5)

In another instance, Paula one of Ifemelu and Blaine’s friends tells her students to read the blog (325). Paula equates the blog to any other authoritative text that the students are required to read. This puts forth a case about the importance of the blog. The various blog posts and comments from blog visitors create an interesting patchwork of conversations giving an impression of a series of supporting sources.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the embedding narrative backs up the information in “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” by creating an illusion that the information in the embedded narrative is true. In the first chapter of the embedded book the reader learns the source of the story in the prologue of that book is Olanna (81). To authenticate this story about the baby in calabash the extradiegetic narrator narrates this episode in chapter eleven. The narrator gives the reader details of the train journey and uses similar words; from the embedded narrative we read; “For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash. She sat on the floor of a train...” (81). From the primary text we read that; “Olanna sat on the floor of the train with her knees drawn up” (149). The narrator further endorses that prologue by narrating how the actual
process of writing that prologue takes place in chapter thirty four; “Then she described the head itself, the open eyes, the graying skin. Ugwu was writing as she spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose…” (410). Captured in that narration is an affirmation of the author of the book as earnest and keen to tell the story and a pointer to the importance of the story shared in the embedded narrative.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the reader learns that Ujunwa is a fine writer. The third person omniscient narrator says: “It was the British Council that had made the call for entries and selected the best” (96). This sets the readers expectation high; we anticipate that the story she writes will be good. After she reads her story some of the comments from the other participants were that; the story was “strong…believable…captured Lagos well…had a realistic portrayal of what women were going through in Nigeria” (113). This approval places the embedded story in good standing to counter Edward’s negative opinion about it.

An important piece of information that the embedding narrative reveals is that the story is actually Ujunwa’s real life experience. Since autobiography is more believable than fiction; Adichie effectively creates the illusion that the embedded narrative is a true story. The embedded narrative is therefore placed at a level higher than the one embedding it by being presented as a true story while the one that holds it is fictional.

The authors of the embedded narratives in the works studied write from a point of experience. Ugwu writes about his experiences during the war. Ifemelu blogs about her immigrant experiences in America. Ujunwa writes her own story. This validates their suitability to write
these stories. The experience gives them the knowledge and power to write the embedded narratives and the reader easily believes them.

Adichie’s choice to represent the embedded narratives as non-fictional text within the context of the embedding narrative elevates them in the ontological level. Ontological levels point out the subordination of worlds or realities. Waldron describes a subordinate world as one which is “fictional; it is subordinated to the real world because it has no independent existence beyond what is described or imagined in the real world” (17). In the works selected the primary narratives take a subordinate level.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the nature of the embedded narratives in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”. It has discussed the various forms that shape the embedded narratives. I have attempted to present a working narratological model for the texts; discussing the narrative levels and their relationships. I have also observed that in some cases like *Americanah* the extensive embedding creates a clash between the narrative levels. In this chapter I also looked at the relationships between the embedding narrative and embedded narratives and concluded that the relationship is one where the embedding narrative justifies the embedded narrative. This discussion leads us to the next chapter that looks at the function of the embedded texts and how it contributes to developing Adichie’s thematic concerns.
CHAPTER 3

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction

This chapter looks at the functions of the embedded narratives in the texts selected. It also evaluates the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique in communicating the author’s thematic concerns. It highlights the limitations of the embedded narrative technique in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

Functions of the Embedded Narratives

Authors choose to employ the embedded narrative technique in their work for various reasons. Some common uses are; for aesthetic purpose as a means of adding diversity to the narrative act, dramatic impact, sharpening characterization, developing thematic concerns and increasing the complexity of the narrative. This study focuses on the roles played by the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works.

Narratologists such as Genette and Bal have discussed possible functions of embedded narratives. Shlomith Rimmon Kenan builds on the earlier work of Genette and Bal in *Narrative Fiction Contemporary Poetics*. She argues that there are three types of embedded narrative function: actional, where the telling itself progresses the plot; explicative, which explain the diegesis; and thematic, which function as *Mise en abyme*, stories that reflect in some way the
narrative around them (93). This study begins the examination of the functions of the embedded narrative from the functions identified by Kenan and then expands to other functions revealed in the short stories “Jumping Monkey Hill” and the novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah.*

**The Explicative Function**

Embedded narratives may serve as an answer to questions that arise in the primary narrative. This function helps the reader to understand how the events in the primary narrative came to be. “All these narratives, explicitly or not, answer a question of the type “what events have led to the present situation?” (Genette 232).

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the excerpts of “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” focus on saying, this is how things were and this is why things turned out this way. The prologue introduces the reader to the effects of the senseless killing during the war by recounting the story of the woman with the calabash. Ugwu contextualizes the senseless killings within the wider narratives of war and violence in the world by mentioning “the German women who fled Hamburg with the charred bodies of their children in stuffed suitcases and the Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies” (82).

The second excerpt explains the colonial aspect of how Nigeria was formed. How the British preferred the North to the South. The flourishing of the Christianity and education brought by the missionaries, the merging of the North and the South in 1914 and the picking of the name Nigeria by the governor-general’s wife (115).
The third excerpt talks about independence and highlights the state of Nigeria during independence “At independence in 1960, Nigeria was a collection of a fragments held in a fragile clasp” (155). This statement is important in explaining the state of the country at independence. This signals the reader to the volatile nature of the state and it therefore does not come as a surprise that the country broke into war. This excerpt also reveals the tension between the North and the South: “The North was wary; it feared domination of the more educated South and had always wanted a country separate from the infidel South …Nothing was done about the clamour of the minority groups and the regions were already competing so fiercely that some wanted separate foreign embassies (155).”

The fourth excerpt talks about the economy of Nigeria which was nonexistent until independence. This excerpt points to the poor governance and complex problems facing the country. It focuses on the 1966 massacres and mentions the ostensible reason for the massacre as revenge for the “Igbo Coup”. The attitude of the Igbo is shown as resilient and what mattered to them was the unity forged among the Igbo and the creation of the fervent Biafrans out of former Nigerians.

The fifth excerpt discusses the starvation that was prevalent in the Biafra war. How starvation was used by Nigeria as a weapon of war and how it drew attention to Biafra. He also talks of how people used that starvation for their own gains. For example, photographers use of the photos of the hunger stricken children to grow their careers. Parents also used the mention of starvation to get their children to eat.
The sixth excerpt discusses the reactions of the international community to the Biafran Republic. It mentions the silence and the indifference from some. “In the United States, Biafra was “Under Britain’s sphere of interest”. In Canada the prime minister quipped, “Where is Biafra?”(257). Within this portion Ugwu explains the reason for the silence of the world toward Biafra. This discussion is very crucial because it underscores the notion “The World Was Silent When We Died” which is also the title of the book Ugwu writes.

The seventh excerpt contains the epilogue which is a poem Ugwu wrote, modelled after a poem by Okeoma one of the characters. The poem is titled “Were you Silent When We Died?” This title is also related to the title of the embedded book. This linkage and repetition point to the importance of questioning the silence or attitude of indifference among nations when a nation faces a crisis especially one that leads to massive loss of human life. This is an important socio-political question for Africa since the continent continues to face crises that cause loss of lives. A current example is the South Sudan conflict where hundreds of people continue to be killed because of their ethnicity and political alignment.

The eighth and final excerpt of the embedded book constitutes one line; “Ugwu writes his dedication last: For Master, my good man” (433). This line sums up Ugwu’s appreciation to Odenigbo for is mentorship. Through this final line the issue of the ambiguity of the authorship of the book is finally put to rest. There is no doubt about whose story this is and who writes it.

The embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun* serves an explicative function where the embedded narrative explains the events in the embedding narrative. It gives the reader a deeper understanding of what the scenario was during the Biafran War. This is important because some
of the readers may have no idea what the Biafran war was about, The Book functions as a device to anchor the reader. Maria Plaias in “The danger of a single story in Chimamanda N. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” states that “the line of reasoning in “The Book” provides the basis for analysing and interpreting the characters political views in the main narrative and affirms and reinforces the major ideas of these characters” (54).

The embedding narrative presents to us the action of the story while the embedded narrative presents to us the cause of the action. An example is the issue of starvation as a tool of war. Through description Adichie paints a picture of the inhumanity of starvation; she shows girls fighting for food (270), the desperation Olanna experiences when she goes to the gate of the relief centre to collect food for five consecutive days and finds the gate locked. She details the inward rush of the crowds into the relief centre when it finally opens (271), the theft of Olanna’s corned beef by five soldiers (272). How children roasted rats to eat (370) and how every leaf became a vegetable (371). Through these scenes and many others in the book we see the effect of starvation on the Biafran people. It is only from the fifth excerpt of the embedded book that we understand that starvation was a weapon of war:

> Starvation broke Biafra and brought Biafra fame and made Biafra last as long as it did. Starvation made the people of the world take notice and sparked protests and demonstrations in London and Moscow and Czechoslovakia…Starvation made the international Red Cross call Biafra its gravest emergency since the Second World War (237).
The blog Ifemelu puts up in *Americanah* explains the countless different approaches to race, gender, ethnicity and beauty both in Nigeria and in the United States of America. From the title of the Ifemelu’s blog: “Raceteenth or Various Curious Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non American Black” it is clear that Adichie wants to tackle race from an African perspective. To avoid the subjectivity that may come from an American Black because of the history of slavery and earlier racist practises which they were subjected too; Adichie looks at it from an outsider’s perspective (through Ifemelu). Through the blogs Adichie avoids being didactic about the issue of race.

Similar to the *Half of a Yellow Sun* approach the primary narrative presents to the reader the action of the story while the blog explains the “why” and “how” of the situation in the primary text. The blog allows the public to comment on the issues at hand. The blogs in the novel play a complementary role while facilitating explanation of the primary text. An example is the case of Abe who does not see Ifemelu as female because of the racial divide:

> …Abe in her ethics class, Abe was white, Abe who liked her well enough, who thought her smart and funny, even attractive but who did not see her as female. She was curious about Abe, interested in Abe… Abe would hook her up with his black friend… She was invisible to Abe (192).

Later in the novel Ifemelu is involved romantically with Curt, a wealthy white man. During the duration of this relationship she experiences racial prejudice firsthand. When Curt introduced Ifemelu as his girlfriend she saw on the faces of the white women the expression of the question
“why her” (292). Other instances are when they walked into the restaurant and the host asked Curt “Table for one?” and when the owner of the bed and breakfast in Montreal refused to acknowledge her and looked only at Curt (294). Ifemelu felt slighted by this treatment but she could not tell Curt because he would say she was overreacting. Finally when Ifemelu starts her blog her first post entails the prejudices she experienced when seen with a white man and the racially skewed magazines. She ends the blog with words she remembered a long time after that post and recited at the dinner table of a French and American couple. The blog reads:

The simplest solution to the problem of race in America? Romantic love. Not friendship. Not the kind of safe, shallow love where the objective is that both people remain comfortable. But real deep romantic love, the kind that twists you and wrings you out and makes you breathe through the nostrils of your beloved. And because that deep romantic love is so rare, because American society is set up to make it even rarer between American Black and American White, the problem of race in America will never be solved. (296)

This post explains her brutal honesty to a comment by a Haitian poet who had dated a white man for three years. The poet said that race was never an issue for them. Ifemelu reacts by saying “That’s a lie” (290) she repeats “it’s a lie” (290). Through this narration and the blog post Adichie expresses her anger at the idea of sweeping of the race issue under the carpet by saying “race is not an issue” or race does not matter (291).
The blog posts are also used to explain the meaning of concepts around the race issue that cannot be explained in the text. An example is the blog post titled “Understanding America for the Non-American Black: A few Explanations of What Things Really Mean” (350). This blog captures the evasive nature of Americans when handling conversations that address racial issues. They are reported to refer to race using abstract terms such as “simplistic” or “complex”. Among other terms the blogger discusses how diversity means different things to blacks and to whites. “To the whites diverse means nine per cent black people and if it gets to ten per cent they can’t stand it. To the blacks diverse neighbourhood means forty per cent black” (350).

Another post “What Academics Mean by White Privileges, or Yes it Sucks To Be Poor and White but Try Being Poor and Non-White”. This post is one of the lengthier posts, spanning close to two pages. It discusses, explaining at length the imbalances created by racism. An example is given about what would happen if a black person was found in possession of drugs and if a white person was found in a similar situation. The post reads “the white guy is more likely to be sent to treatment and the black guy is more likely to be sent to jail” (346).

Just like Half of a Yellow Sun’s embedded narrative the “Raceteenth” blog in Americanah helps the reader to trace the histories around the race issue, this explains to the reader how the current situation arose and why the race issue remains unresolved. In the post “Friendly Tips for the American Non-Black: How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness.” (325) Ifemelu outlines the ways in which the whites offer alternative explanations about racial issues and how they want to wish away the past. In this post she records history to anchor the reader on the race issue:
Dear Non-American Black, If an American Black person is telling you about an experience about being black, please do not eagerly bring up examples from your own life. ...Don’t be quick to find alternative explanations for what happened. Don’t say “Oh, it’s not really race, it’s class. Oh, it’s not race it’s gender... A hundred years ago the white ethnics hated being hated, but it was sort of tolerable because at least black people were below them on the ladder. ... being American means you take the whole Shebang, America’s assets and America’s debts, and Jim Crow is a big ass debt. ... Don’t say “Oh Racism is over, slavery was so long ago.” We are talking about the problem from the 1960s not 1860s ...325-327.

The mention of the historic events; the slavery, Jim Crow, blacks stepping off the curb because a white person was passing, white women standing outside schools shouting “Ape” because they did not want their children to mix with black children among other incidences mentioned in the post, gives the reader background information on why the racial wound still festers. At the end of this blog post Ifemelu does not stop at listing the do’s and don’ts of the appropriate way whites should respond to blacks discussing race. She invites the two races to a possibility of a friendship where there is mutual understanding and respect:

American Blacks are not telling you that you are to blame. They are just telling you what is. If you don’t understand, ask questions. If you are uncomfortable asking questions, say you are uncomfortable about asking questions and then ask anyway. It’s easy to tell when a question is coming from a good place...sometimes
people just want to feel heard. Here’s to possibilities of friendship connection and understanding. 327

**Thematic Function**

Rimon-Kenan defines the thematic function of the embedded narrative as one that establishes a relationship of analogy, that is, similarity and contrast” between the narrative levels (92). Genette in *Narrative Discourse* explains that this “purely thematic relationship implies no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis; a relationship of contrast or of analogy. Based on these two definitions of the embedded narratives studied, only the story nested in “Jumping Monkey Hill” serves this function. In *Americanah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* there exists a form of continuity in space and time in the events related in the embedded narratives and embedding narratives.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the untitled story Ujunwa writes has nothing to do with the primary narrative in terms of time and space. Adichie use this story to exemplify the mistaken perceptions of Africans and issues that affect them by foreigners. In the primary narrative Isabel a British assumes that only royal blood could explain the good looks of African people, Edward believes that homosexual weren’t reflective of Africa and women are never victims of sexual exploitation in crude ways. Edward has a warped idea of what the “real Africa” is and insists that his perception of Africa is correct. The story Ujunwa writes and reads unbeknownst to her audience is a true story of her experiences and so when Edward comments that; “The whole thing is implausible,”…This is agenda writing, it isn’t a story of real people.(113)”  She responds: “A real story of real people? …The only thing I didn’t add in the story is that after I
left my co-worker and walked out of the alhaji’s house I got into the Jeep and insisted that the driver take me home because I knew it was the last time I would be riding it (113)”.

The revelation that the embedded story is a true story serves to show that Edward’s (foreigners) perceptions about Africa are sometimes so wrong. It gives an analogy of similarity by showing that the comments Edward had been making about the unrealistic nature of the other participants African stories was wrong.

**Actional Function**

The actional function occurs when the very telling of the embedded narrative progresses the plot. This function borrows from Genette’s third type of function expounded in *Narrative Discourse* where such an embedded narrative: “Involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content- a function of distraction, for example and/ or of obstruction (233)”.

The embeddings in the selected texts do not fit this definition completely because they are not completely independent of the diegesis and have no function of obstruction or distraction. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the attendees of the African writers’ workshop are expected to produce one story for possible publication. It therefore follows that Ujunwa the protagonist of the story writes a story which she is required to read to the other attendees.

The short story written by Ujunwa serves as a plot device employed by Adichie to advance the plot in this story. Once Ujunwa reads the story the reactions of the other participants and those of Edward form the rising action. One of the key conflicts of the story is the fixed perceptions of Africa by foreigners. The embedded narrative also makes possible the denouement of the story.
The final outcome of the events is the story is directly linked to the story Chioma writes because it is at this point that she reveals that she is the protagonist in the story that she writes. This revelation then proves Edward wrong in referring to her story as implausible.

In *Americanah* there are other characters from the primary text who are involved with the blogs either directly or indirectly. Ranyinudo for example is upset that Ifemelu had written about her in one of the blog posts. Ifemelu had posted a blog about “the expensive lifestyles of some young women in Lagos”. Ranyinudo calls Ifemelu and says “It is obviously me! Look at this! Ranyinudo paused and then began to read aloud” (422). This post was then taken down by Ifemelu.

Paula like Ranyinudo also reads a blog post to her friends. She also requires her students to read Ifemelu’s blog. It is noted that Obinze read the whole archive of Ifemelu’s blog posts, his reaction to blogs is also accounted for. Some of the experiences Ifemelu has and the observations about life and the other characters form a significant part of the blog.

Blaine contributed to the blog indirectly by influencing Ifemelu through his comments. He reminded Ifemelu what he thought was her role and what the purpose of the blog should have been “Remember people are not reading you as entertainment; they’re reading you as cultural commentary. That’s real responsibility. There are kids writing college essays about your blog” (312). To the extent that the other characters make a contribution to this blog gives it an actional function.
The actional function applies to *Half of a Yellow Sun* on a very small degree because as much as the reader knows that Ugwu is writing a book; the narratives he writes do not contribute to the progression of the plot. The embedded narrative in this novel serves an explicative function but could easily stand on its own. This is emphasized by the haphazard positioning of the embeddings and the lack of introduction to them by the primary text. Compared to *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”; there is very little interaction of the other characters with this text.

**Aesthetic Function**

Aesthetics in literature refers to the investigation of the nature and perception of beauty in a piece of literary work. Peter Lamarque in “Aesthetics and Literature: A problematic Relation?” argues that “Aesthetic characterisations have implication for how the work appears, what impact it has, what is salient in it and what merits aesthetic attention” (6). The use of embedded narratives is one of the aesthetic choices Adichie makes to creatively present her work.

The embedded narratives in Adichie’s work positively affect the presentation of the works to the reader. The external appearance reveals breaks, with an indented bolded typeface in *Americanah*. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the excerpts of “The Book” are numbered and are in bold letter title. The font of “The Book” is different from that of the primary text. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the font used to present the embedded short story is similar to that of the primary text but in smaller size and indented.

In the works selected the embedded narratives provide obstruction in the continuity of the whole. This obstruction affords the narration with more ups and downs. The continuity of the primary
narration is momentarily suspended and a heightened suspense is created. In her longer forms the embedded narratives break the monotony of reading the primary narrative by offering a shift in the reader’s thought process.

In a number of instances the embedded narratives in *Half of a Yellow Sun* help us to break from the heavy matter of the war. In chapter twelve the reader is presented with the narration of the horrendous killings at the airport which are witnessed by Richard. He witnesses Nnaemeka’s “chest blow open” (153) and the soldiers line up Igbo people and shoot them. At the end of the chapter Richard lowers his head to the sink and begins to cry. Immediately after this scene the third excerpt of “The Book” is inserted just before the next chapter. This excerpt shifts the reader’s attention from the dreadful events of the airport killings to the narration of the independence of Nigeria. This excerpt also explains the state of the country at independence and suggests that “nothing had been done about the clamour of minority groups” (155). Apart from giving background information relating to the Biafran war, it offers a relief from the horrific details of the killings.

The same relief is offered in chapter eighteen which details the air raids that killed people and razed houses. The reader is moved by the effect of the raids on both the victims and survivors. The excerpt provides an obstruction by talking about the state of the economy of Nigeria. It also focuses on the 1966 massacres and the effect on the Biafrans.

In chapter thirty one of *Americanah* the tension raised by a heated discussion on race and relationships at a dinner party is cooled off by the insertion of a blog that discusses hair as a race metaphor: “Imagine if Michelle Obama got tired of all the heat and decided to go natural and
appeared on TV with lots of woolly hair, or tight spirally curls...She would totally rock but poor Obama would certainly lose the independent vote, even the undecided Democrat vote (297)”.

The tone of the blog is that of discussing race with a light touch and is peppered with humour. The reader is expected to get relief from the humour contained in the blog. Through the description of Michelle Obama’s hair as woolly and the effect of that on his election results, the heavy matter of race is discussed albeit in a humorous way.

The embedded narratives help to break the monotony of the primary narratives. In Americanah which spans four hundred and seventy seven pages; the blogs give the reader a much needed break from the monotony. The blogs give the readers fresh perspectives offered by Ifemelu and her blog followers. Unlike Half of a Yellow Sun where the embeddings are always located at the end of chapter, the blogs in Americanah appear both within the chapter and sometimes at the end of the chapter. The embedding in “Jumping Monkey Hill” appears at different points in the short story.

The embedded narratives help to create suspense in the novels and short story. Since the reader has to wait for the reading of the embedded narrative to pass, the experience of suspense is lengthened. Any questions raised in the reader’s mind have to be held in suspense till the embedded narrative is read for a possible resolution. In Half of a Yellow Sun the abrupt presentation of the first excerpt of “The Book” in itself creates suspense. The reader has no idea who the author of “The Book” is and there is no introduction to the book. The reader wonders
what the book is about, who the author is and how long it will be. Adichie creates an urge within
the readers to continue engaging with the novel.

In *Americanah* an instance of suspense is seen when a blog follows this statement- “When
months later, Ifemelu had the fight with Blaine, she wondered if Shan had fuelled this anger, an
anger she never fully understood” (337). While the reader is still wondering how and why the
break up will take place, Adichie inserts the blog: Is Obama Anything but Black? The blog is
totally unrelated to the preceding passages and thus suspense is created.

In the short story the embedded story written by Ujunwa serves as a break between different
parts of the story. The embedded story appears immediately after breakfast following that
excerpt it is dinner time then comes bed time; the next excerpt appears after breakfast the next
day. This pattern continues dividing the primary story into various time frames. The embedded
narrative also creates suspense in both the primary narrative and embedded narrative. Since the
two stories obstruct each other, the reader is held in suspense as he or she awaits the next part.

The embedded narratives also slow down the tempo of the narrative. The reader is forced to slow
down in order to fully comprehend the importance of a new embedding. This ensures that the
reader understands its meaning and relates it to the structure of the story or novels’ total
meaning. One of the concepts of Formalism is defamiliarization which Victor Shklovsky argues
makes objects; “unfamiliar to makes forms difficult, to increase difficulty and length of
perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic in itself and must be prolonged (16).
Borrowing from this concept this study views the use of embedded narratives as one way of
lengthening perception. The embeddings force the reader to slow down and effect a more strenuous but rewarding engagement with the text.

The embedded narratives also serve to help effectively introduce new plot lines; when Ifemelu returns to Nigeria she transitions into a home that is different from what it was thirteen years back. *Americanah* captures an aspect of the returnee narrative through a post in the blog: “The small Redemptions of Lagos”. The piece about the Nigropolitan Club describes the arrogance of Nigerian returnees who gather on a weekly basis to moan the disparities between Lagos and the cities they come from. Ifemelu uses this post to ridicule the air of pretentiousness that surrounds them and encourages the returnees to accept the way of life back home. This post underscores the definition of an “Americanah” presented earlier in the novel, “They roared with laughter at that word “Americanah”...and at the thought of Bisi...who had come from a short trip to America with odd affectations, pretending she no longer understood Yoruba, adding a slurred r to every word she spoke” (65).

Adichie uses the embedded narratives to enhance the reader’s understanding of the primary narratives while providing her readers an experience of combinational delight unique to the reading of stories within stories.

**Advancing the Oral Storytelling Tradition**

Obiechina observes in “Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel” that “the oral tradition impulse is strong in the modern African novel, which embodies this experience especially because the writers themselves are products of both oral traditions and literate education” (199). Roger Kurtz
describes the third generation of writers; a categorization in which Adichie belongs as “labouring under an obvious but understandable anxiety of influence as the giants of Nigerian literature who preceded them cast long shadows”(25) . Heather Hewett observes in “Coming of Age: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and The Voice of the Third Generation.” that “Adichie like her peers is directly engaged with the Nigerian literary canon and is furthermore making a case for her inclusion in it” (78).

Embedded narratives were common in oral storytelling in independent traditions in parts of Africa. They are also used as a bridge between oral and written narrative. Herman argues that embedded narratives describe the historical consciousness of the present. There is a link with the past and a relaying of knowledge between two or more minds. *Half of a Yellow Sun* exemplifies this scenario. The embedded narrative found in “The Book” has a relationship of mediation. Adichie uses this embedding to narrate Nigeria’s history linking past events to the prevailing circumstances in her fiction.

Adichie is conscious of her position and role as an African writer and demonstrates this by borrowing from the rich reserves of traditional oral storytelling techniques. Narrative embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition. The first narrative level functions in a similar way to a storyteller’s role. The embedded narrative is an artistic device that enhances the performance of narrating. Abiola Irele argues that the interplay between orality and literacy is:

... not merely in a purely linguistic framework, as in the early phase of Africanist Studies, but also from a literary and artistic perspective. At the same time the
dominance of orality in the cultural environment of African expression seemed to offer possibilities for validating the endeavour to state the relevance of orality not only to a general understanding of the processes involved in human communication but also, and in particular, to formulate an all-encompassing idea of imaginative expression, one that would point toward a universal concept of literature. (24)

This statement points to the benefits of creating a situation where oral culture is assimilated and reorganized in written fiction. First it enhances artistry in a piece of work. Secondly it aids in stimulating the process of understanding a text. Thirdly as Obiechina notes “as a means of giving maximum authenticity to the writing...writers look to their indigenous poetics to create works that draw upon their living oral traditions to enrich forms, techniques and styles through literate education” (199).

“Jumping Monkey Hill” has in its first narrative level an oral story telling situation. The writers congregate at Jumping Monkey Hill to write and share their stories. This resembles the traditional fireside telling of stories in parts of Africa. The reading of the stories aloud by the characters’ enacts the performance aspect of narrating. In Americanah some of the characters like Paula and Ranyinudo are shown to read the blog posts aloud thus enacting a performance. Olanna in Half of a Yellow Sun narrates her train experience to Ugwu. He then records this narration in his prologue.
Creation of Multi-vocality

Bakhtin argues that the strength of a novel stems from the co-existence of and the conflict between the different types of speech: the speech of characters, the speech of the narrators and the speech of the author. This study approaches the Bakhtinian idea from the perspective that the vocal multiplicity is a narrative strategy that forces the reader to attend to the multi-voiced potential of the text and interpret it. The embedded narratives create the infusion of a distinct quality of heteroglossia in the narrative.

The embedded narratives permit the author to create a “voice” for his narration (for example if he or she wants to use any special language effects) a voice which can be of a more closely involved narrator. This voice enables the reader to understand the effects of the action since they are immediate and clear. This second narrator or third narrator as the case may require can be made as naïve or as sophisticated as best serves the author’s purposes. This narrator may be faintly or distinctly separated from the author himself.

Aghogho Akpome in “Focalisation and Polyvocality in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” asserts that “the generic diversity of “The Book’s” different segments – it incorporates verse, various prose forms, and journalist reportage- may be read as one way in which Adichie interrogates notions of narrative form and explores the different literary forms through which postcolonial rehistoricisation may be represented” (32). Following Akpome’s argument I add that those genres also represent the different voices or languages that give various meanings, various expressions and converse with each other.
Plaia in “The Danger of a Single Story in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* argues that the arrangement of the embedded narratives in the sequence in which they are arranged is “a way to spread and reinforce the perspective” (54) she continues to argue that “unlike the focalised perspectives the omniscient extradiegetic narrator may offer a de-personalised point of view to counterbalance or reinforce the main characters perspectives” (54). This gives the reader another opinion, through another voice.

Umelo Ojinmah in “No Humanity in War: Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” contends that the embedded narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is where Adichie’s real voice and opinion emerges. (10). Jane Bryce in “Half and Half Children: Third generation Women Writers and the New Nigerian Novel” argues that the embedding of the “The World Was Silent When We Died” is “a device that allows Adichie to gracefully relinquish her position as a narrative authority in favour of a spokesman for the voiceless, which she does not claim to be” (62). Both of these critics point to the double voiced nature of the discourse in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Through Adichie’s double voiced discourse her intentions are expressed albeit in a refracted way. The embedded narrative serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions, the express intention of the character speaking through his or her writing and the refracted intention of the author. The effect is that when the author’s words are introduced into the characters speech, they assume a new meaning and interpretation.

The writing of ‘The Book’ by Ugwu presents a voice which appeals to the reader to interpret his voice as the voice of the voiceless. This is necessitated by his position as a child narrator and as a houseboy one of the lowest cadres of employment. Richard Churchill who comes up with the
title “The World Was Silent When We Died” has an academic background, is an expatriate fascinated by the Igbo culture and history. His advantages over Ugwu not withstanding he realizes the war story is not his story to tell. If he told the story the interpretation would be different; it would not carry the same weight as a story told by a Biafran, conscripted into the army and with firsthand experience of the suffering the war caused.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the story that Ujunwa writes turns out to be autobiographical; it is written using auto-fiction techniques. The story is revealed as Ujunwa’s personal story at the end of the primary narrative to resolve the conflict in the primary narrative. The voices in this short story have a conversation about the idea of what constitutes real African experiences. Adichie chooses Ujunwa to write her own life story, which Edward refers to as implausible. This choice presents a voice that proves to the reader and the other voices in the story that foreign perceptions about Africa can be flawed.

In Americanah there are various voices and languages presented both in the primary narrative and the embedded narrative. The voices of Nigerian (village), Nigerian (town), accents of Nigerians who have just arrived in America and try to imitate the Americans, Americans and British mispronouncing African names to a Nigerian who’s lived in Britain for a while and has a British wife, to mention a few. The voice of the blogger and the respondents to the blog post add to the multiple voices in the text and the reader thus engages with the complex nature that is the human life.
In an interview with Brooke Obie of Ebony magazine, Adichie responds to the issue of using the blog as a “literary cheat” and editorializing through the blog by saying that she realized that if she editorialized in regular dialogue in the primary narrative it would not work. “I think that what I wanted to say (about race) and how I wanted to say it was in the kind of voice that would not have worked in dialogue or any other way (than through Ifemelu’s posts)” (n.p). Adichie through those confirms the Bakhtinian idea that the author orchestrates all other voices and directs the interactions of those voices. The author organizes the diversity of voices to achieve a desired end.

**Illusion of Reality**

I look at the subject of illusion of reality from the standpoint that illusion is essential to art and that art is an important resource for truth. The inclusion of an embedded narrative which can be oral or written is rationalized or motivated in a realistic way to preserve or imitate the illusion of reality. This illusion of reality consequently lends to both the embedded and embedding narrative credibility. Traditionally several devices are used by writers to achieve this goal. Examples include; gathering of characters who tell each other stories, dreams or hallucinations experienced by a character, the discovery of written manuscripts, diaries, letters and such other categories.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Adichie use the autobiographical genre as a textual disguise to stress the idea that the events in the embedded story are pure fact. This in effect counters the false perception about Africa by Edward in the primary narrative. As much as the primary narrative is
fictive the author creates a way for the reader to enter the characters world and therefore perceive this reality.

The use of the blog in Americanah creates the semblance of reality by Adichie’s accuracy in her simulation of how blogs work. This technique transports the reader to the blogosphere and the reader becomes part of the audience of the blog. Blogs provide centralized locations at which readers find web-based journals known as blogs and bloggers are able to find each other. Ifemelu’s blog has many followers, she edits her posts, comments and reactions of the blog are recorded in the text. She pulls down posts when she wants to and eventually she exits from that particular blog zone. She then begins another blog when she returns to Nigeria. All the events in the novel make for a believable story.

Another way Adichie achieves the illusion of reality in her fiction is by empowering the characters that author the embedded narratives. The characters involved all author from a point of experience. The experiences they have give them the authority to write the embedded narratives. The reader then believes the embedded narratives because he or she has shared the experiences with the character in the embedding narrative.

Adichie also accurately merges the information in the embedded narrative with that in the embedding narrative where required. An example in Half of a Yellow Sun is where Olanna sees the child’s head in the calabash on the train. Olanna then narrates this event to Kainene and Ugwu on separate occasions. Ugwu then includes this story in the prologue of “The Book”. The narration in the primary text corroborates the information in the embedded narrative.
Alongside other mediums employed in the novels to create an illusion of reality, the embedded narratives contribute effectively to this literary technique. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* we encounter letters, radio broadcasts, poems, songs newspaper articles and excerpts from a published book. In *Americanah* some of the other devices employed include emails between Ifemelu and Obinze and text messages from mobile phones.

*Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” address factual issues: war, race and the perceptions of foreigners about Africa. Since the issues discussed are real issues the author underscores their importance by employing a technique that enhances the perception by the reader that the issues are real.

**Functions of Embedded Narratives for the Characters**

Irene de Jong in “Narratological Theory on Narrators, Narratees, and Narrative” states that embedded narrative may have a function to the characters. She says “In the case of an embedded narrative told by a character it may also be relevant to distinguish between the function it has for secondary narratees, the characters who are listening and for the primary narratees”(10). This points to the usefulness of the embeddings for the characters; the characters may have been propelled or motivated by something to author the embedded narratives.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* Adichie attempts to capture the effects of the postcolonial and civil war trauma. The characters in the novel live through traumatic experiences which they struggle with. The characters in the novel experiences both personal and collective trauma. Focusing on Ugwu the author of the embedded narrative, I note that his trauma is of a different kind because he
plays the role of the perpetrator. When he is conscripted he rapes a girl at the prodding of his fellow soldiers. This action haunts him and traumatizes him. Frances White in her review of the book writes that “Ugwu takes up writing as a way of dealing with his bewildering and disturbing experiences” (n.p). Doseline Kiguru (2011) examines the role of the child figure in telling narratives based on Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow sun*. She notes that the book Ugwu writes is a reflection of the violence that defined the Biafra society and is an effort to deal with the trauma caused by the violence and destruction (68).

Maria Plaias in “The Danger of a Single Story in Chimamanda N. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” argues that “...Ugwu is atoned and healed through the process of writing and that the healing process entails a continuous engagement with the memory of the war” (64). As the scars of the war reminded Ugwu of his role as a perpetrator he tried to unburden the trauma of those episodes. “He would never be able to depict the bleakness of bombing hungry people. But he tried, and the more he wrote, the less he dreamed” (398).

The writing process is therapeutic not only to Ugwu but to Olanna and Richard as well. Adichie shows how narration may have a therapeutic effect not only to Ugwu but to her as part of the second generation Biafrans. Adichie is bruised by the war, having lost her grandfathers in it. On reasons why she wrote the book she says “my father has tears in his eyes when he speaks of losing his father and my mother still cannot speak at length about losing her father in a refugee camp”. (Adichie, “The Story Behind the Book”). Olanna narrates the train episode to Ugwu and comes to a realization that her story is important when she notes Ugwu’s keenness:
Ugwu was writing as she spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of, and so she told him all she remembered about the train full of people who had cried and shouted and urinated on themselves. (410)

Richard witnessed a customs officer get shot at the airport, just because he was an Igbo. The soldiers went on to kill dozens more of Igbo people at the airport. These scenes flash through Richards mind over and over again to the point that he wishes “he would lose his mind or that his memory would suppress itself” (165). Richard desires to express his trauma through writing but he cannot get himself to do it. “The echo of unreality weighed each word down; he clearly remembered what had happened at that airport but to write about it, he would have to re-imagine it, and he was not sure if he could”(168).

Through these characters Adichie makes a point about the importance of narration and writing for the assimilation of individual and communal past. Adichie seems to feel that narration has the ability to bring on a therapeutic effect on the speaker or writer.

The blog set up by Ifemelu serves an important function in her life. As she pens down her thoughts and feelings on race, we see a metamorphosis in her. From the young lady who was unsure of herself when she arrived in America to a confident lady poised to return to Nigeria. Ifemelu uses the blog as means to understanding race and its complexities but also protecting herself from being swayed into accepting the falsehoods surrounding the race issue in America. The blog offered a catharsis to Ifemelu purging the pressures of immigrant life especially the
racism. The blog gave Ifemelu opportunity to evaluate her life, finally she senses the emptiness, the following excerpt explains:

Readers frightened and exhilarated her…made Ifemelu, nervous eager to be fresh and to impress, so that she began, over time to feel like a vulture hacking into the carcasses of people’s stories for something she could use. Sometimes making fragile links to race. Sometimes not believing herself. The more she wrote, the less sure she became. Each post scraped off yet one more scale of self until she felt naked and false (5).

Prior to the books opening scene, Ifemelu had written her final post and closed the blog. Ifemelu feared she had lost touch with part of herself and makes a decision to return home. Ifemelu feels that her personality is shaped by the blog and that she is losing her core to the blog. This revelation helps her to move to the next phase of her life.

The blog attracts comments from people affected by the issues Ifemelu blogs about. The blog gives them opportunity to vent out or to find solace from the knowledge that their experiences are not uncommon. When Ifemelu blogs about her experience with depression, a Congolese woman posts a long comment in response about a similar experience she had (158). Through the blogs Ifemelu opens up a space for people to talk about issues that disturb them but have
nowhere to air them. A comment on the blog “The Small Redemptions of Lagos” said “Thank God somebody is finally talking about this” (421). We therefore note that the embedded narratives serve different functions for different characters including those who author them.

Development of Themes through Embedded Narratives

Adichie’s fictional works address a myriad of themes among them love, violence, immigration, race, identity, sexual exploitation of women, sexuality, war and its effects. This research focuses on the themes expounded by the embedded narratives with an aim of evaluating the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique. Adichie uses the embedded narrative as a foregrounding strategy.

The term foregrounding has its origin with Czech theorist Jan Mukarovsky and other formalist critics who emphasize that stylistic features are characteristics of literary texts. The NTC’s dictionary of literary terms defines foregrounding as “calling attention to something—a rhythm, a character, an idea, a viewpoint by placing it in the foreground against a background” (87). Leech and Short in *Style in Fiction* have argued that “in order to make sure that the point is put across; the novelist tends to say the same thing in a number of different ways and at different levels of structure” (207). They add that “incident and mode of description combine to embody one of the major themes of the novel”. Adichie uses the embedded narratives to call attention to her major thematic concerns, the embedded narrative being in the foreground against the background of the embedding narrative.
The silence of the world is a major philosophical concern of Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Adichie questions how societies remain indifferent to others in times of war or genocide. The choice of the title of the embedded narrative, “The World Was Silent When We Died” develops a sense of curiosity within the reader to find out; who was silent? Why were they silent? This title is presented in bold text in all the eight excerpts within the book. It is highlighted in this manner to gnaw at the reader’s conscience. The reader cannot miss it and therefore is forced to think about it.

In the first excerpt the mention of the German women who fled Hamburg with charred bodies of their children stuffed in suitcases, the Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies alongside that of the woman Olanna met in a train with a dead baby’s head in a calabash (82), reminds the reader that there have been other massacres across the globe. This introduces the reader to the idea of death in Biafran war and though Ugwu is careful not to draw parallels of the Biafran war to the German or Rwandan killings, it helps us to visualize and appreciate the magnitude of the Biafran war. This then validates the questioning of the apathy expressed by the world.

It is noteworthy that the poem “Were You Silent When We Died” in excerpt seven of “The Book” (375) appears side by side with the discussion between Richard and the two American journalists about the American policy and the silence of America despite their knowledge that thousands of Biafrans were dying. On this same page the reader learns how the title “The World Was Silent We Died” comes to Richard. Richard is angry at the American journalists for their apathy towards Biafra. “He felt incredibly alone in their presence” (374) they were returning
back to America to the comfort of their homes after collecting stories and photographs from Biafra. This represents how the world left Biafra to deal with its problems.

Adichie uses the embedded narrative to emphasize concerns about the effect of the war. She does this by linking the content of the embedded narrative to the content in the embedding narrative through repetition. The poem in excerpt seven of “The Book” paints a picture of the magnitude of the starvation:

Imagine children with arms like toothpicks
With football for bellies and skin stretched thin
It was Kwashiorkor – difficult word
A word that was not quite ugly enough, a sin. (375)

This second stanza is replayed in the narration in the embedding narrative. “The nun cradled the smallest, a shrivelled doll with stick legs and a pregnant belly” (374). Through the use of rich metaphors and similes, she evokes the sympathy of the reader. The “arms like toothpicks” and “a shrivelled doll with stick legs” refer to the same situation and so does “with football for bellies” and “a pregnant belly”:

Naked children, as if the man
Would not take photos and then leave, alone. (375)
These last two lines of the same poem re-present a scene on an earlier page where the children clamoured around the American photographer begging for more sweets “Once he said, “That’s a lovely smile!” and after he left them the children went back to roasting rats” (370). The laughter referred to in the poem symbolizes the hope the children had; that some form of salvation would come from the American man and by extension the world. This hope is dashed when the photographer leaves and they return to roasting rats.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the story Ujunwa writes expounds the theme on sexual exploitation of women. Chioma the protagonist in the embedded narrative is sexually exploited by a male interviewer who after saying he will hire her “walks across and stands behind her and reaches over to squeeze her breasts” (100). Ujunwa experiences some subtle form of exploitation from Edward, the workshop organizer. When she offers Edward a seat he responds by saying “I’d rather like you to lie down for me” (106). Edward also tells the Senegalese lady that he had dreamt of her naked navel. The repetition of the theme in both diegetic levels is used by Adichie for emphasis and calls the attention of the reader to that theme. This ensures that the reader stops and attends to that theme.

The major theme developed by the blog in Americanah is race. The question of race has been discussed over many decades. Yet it remains a relevant discussion even now. Americanah published in 2013 and whose setting captures the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, correctly assesses that racism still exists. The novel starts on a train journey to Trenton where Ifemelu goes to braid her hair. On the train she remembers an incident on a plane when she had to explain what she meant by “lifestyle blog” to a man who sat next to her. This man then asks
“Ever write about adoption?” Nobody wants black babies in this country and I don’t mean biracial, I mean black. Even black families don’t want them” (4). Ifemelu blogs about this man and this post receives the highest comments for a month. The positioning of this conversation in the very first chapter is to make the reader understand that this book is about race and the blog is a space for discussing race.

The rejection of black babies plays out in Dike’s life when later in the story he attempts to commit suicide. Dike experiences racism at his tender age; because he is black he is the first suspect when the school computers are hacked. The pastor at his church says hello to all the other kids but to Dike she says “What’s up bro?” (349), this makes him feel different and he says, “I feel like I have vegetables instead of ears, like large broccoli sticking out of my head” (349). Dike feels unwanted to the extent that he nearly takes his life.

The concept of race first occurs to Ifemelu when she arrives in the United States “I come from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America” (290). The covert and overt racisms she witnesses and experiences are what make her black. Ifemelu is angered at the silence, the things “unsaid and unfinished” (296) around the race issue. Ifemelu begins longing for other listeners and she longed to hear the stories of others. “How many other people had become black in America?” (296).

At the encouragement of her friend Wambui she sets up a blog. The blog is informed by her daily encounters with racism. These encounters form the titles of her posts and make up the
content of her discussion. The blog separates the race issue from the other issues in the novel. The blog is a technique used by the writer to foreground the race issues.

The blog effectively develops the theme of race in *Americanah* because of its unique nature. The nature of the blog embedded in *Americanah* borrows heavily from the real medium that the blog is. Ruth Aylett and Sandy Louchart in “Towards A Narrative Theory of Virtual Reality” argue that a story is not told or shown in the same way according to the medium in which it is displayed, nor is its content or intensity the same” (1). The blog in the novel does not address the issue of race in the same way the embedding narrative does. The blog by its nature allows for multiple comments on the issues posted, it also allows the blogger to edit or withdraw posts accordingly. Blogs also serve a wider reach because they can be re-posted onto many other sites.

The blog in *Americanah* supports the contention by Cornel West that the race question is urgent. “For me the race question is an urgent question of power and morality; for others, it is an everyday matter of life and death” (Morrison, 61). What better way to address an urgent issue than by putting it on a medium that delivers blog posts in real time? Through the use of the blog Adichie shows the need to view the race issue as one that requires urgent attention. Adichie chooses the blog over other forms because of the advantage it offers in terms of the immediacy in communicating and ability to reach a wide audience.

The existence of racism brings up the question of identity. The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy defines one’s personal identity as “what makes one the person one is” (n.p). Identity reflects on who we are and how others perceive us. Identity is a language and culture rooted
process that includes our position in the world and others thoughts about who we are as well as who they are.

Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* discusses the complexity of the concept of “identity”. Gilroy argues that historians should reconsider how they document the past “I want to develop the suggestion that cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single complex unit of analysis in their discussion of the modern world…and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective”(15). This suggests that black is black and there are no levels of blackness. It is assumptions such as these that Adichie problematizes as she explores the various categories of identities in *Americanah*.

There are several diasporas in different chronotypes as a result of creolization being a continuous process. Globalization has made it more complicated such that within the diasporic community there are various categories of identities. In the blog post “Understanding America for the Non-American Black: American Tribalism” (184). The different kinds of black are spelt out. Ifemelu talks about the ladder of racial hierarchy in America. “White is on top, specifically White Anglo Saxon Protestant (alluding to the possibility of another type of white). American Black is always on the bottom and what’s in the middle depends on time and place.” She includes an example about how in the “ladder of races Jewish is white but also some rungs below white”.

In another blog post “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: In America You Are Black, Baby”(220), Ifemelu addresses the idea of the Non American Blacks denying that they are black
because they are from other countries where the issue of blackness does not arise. This calls attention to the creation of a racial identity “black” that confronts immigrants to America. She also looks at the generalizations and assumptions surrounding black people. Black people are treated as though they have no individual identity. If a crime is committed by a black person all other black people are stopped for fitting the profile. Black people are made to feel that they have to compensate for other black people’s behaviour by being apologetic to the whites, or always being on guard because any offensive behaviour by one black will mean the other blacks get to pay for it. This post is written in a scornful tone, scorning at the ridiculous ideas that whites have about blacks.

Chinua Achebe argued that the role of the African writer included a responsibility to educate his or her readers. In the essay “The Novelist as Teacher” in a collection of essay *Hopes and Impediments* he states “…The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and re-generation that must be done. In fact he should march right in front…” (30) He adds that the African writer is more concerned with the importance of combating “our acceptance of …racial inferiority” (29) by confronting the “disaster brought upon the African psyche in the period of subjection to alien races” (29).

Adichie seems to have heeded the call by Achebe to march right in front and re-educate especially in the area of ownership and authorship of the African story. Adichie belongs to a group of writers described as the third generation of modern Nigerian Literature. Roger Kurtz in “The Intertextual Imagination in Purple Hibiscus” has outlined the generations as follows:
The first generation consists of writers like Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Flora Nwapa and others. The second generation includes names such as Femi Osofisan, Buchi Emecheta and Tanure Ojaide. The third generation comprises of those who were born and educated in 1960 and whose writings began to appear in the mid 1980’s. They include Ben Okri, Helen Oyeyemi, Helen Habila, Seffie Atta, Chimamanda Adichie and others. (24)

Adichie and her peers have found a platform to speak from through their writing. They are able to experiment with new avenues of expressing and formulating the African experience. Through the texts studied in this research Adichie has defined the role of the African writer and then shown who should be telling the African Story. She has exemplified this by her choice of characters and the embedded narratives authored by them.

Adichie underscores the glaring need for contextualized reading of African literature and the telling of authentic African stories. In her address “The Danger of a Single Story” Adichie explains how class and culture based prejudices is often fostered by individuals adherence to hegemonic narratives of societies and histories. Adichie argues that “The single story creates stereotypes and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (7).

Adichie highlights the fundamental function of the writer, like those of storytellers in traditional African communities. Preceding writers such as Rene Wellek (238-9), Wole Soyinka (21), Chinua Achebe (7-8) and Chukwudi Maduka (11) have on various occasions agreed that the
African writer is the conscience of the society and serves as a historian, preserving its past; critic, analyzing its current state and shepherd, helping to usher it towards its future.

*Half of a Yellow Sun* addresses the question of the authorship and ownership of history. Adichie juxtaposes the characters Ugwu and Richard Churchill. The two characters represent opposite perspectives in life. Ugwu is from a small village and comes to work as a houseboy for Odenigbo inNsuka. Richard is a British man who comes to study Igbo-Ugwu art. Through the two who are both authors in the novel Adichie points to us who the African story belongs to and who should tell it. Ugwu writes “The Book” which is a historical account from the time period of the British colonizer to the Nigeria-Biafra war. For a long time the colonizer has had an upper hand and influence about the African continent and its history.

Richard is fascinated by Igbo Ugwu art and his novel titles borrow from the Igbo past and the culture: “The Basket of hands” and “In the Time of Roped Pots”. Richard learns Igbo and gets further enmeshed into the Igbo culture. He begins considering himself a Biafran. He says “We are still extracting from some fields we control in Egbema …We move the crude to our refineries at night…” “You keep saying we” the Redhead said. (372) Eventually Richard realizes “The war story isn’t my story to tell, really”, something that Ugwu had always known: Ugwu nodded. He had never thought that it was” (425).

This exclusion of Richard from the Biafran experience is seen earlier when Richard sense’s it from Madu’s tone: “We are running our cars with a mix of kerosene and oil or we’ve perfected the flying Ogbunigwe or we’ve made an armoured car from scrap. His we was edged with
exclusion. The deliberate emphasis, the deepened voice, meant that Richard was not part of we; a visitor could not take the liberties of homeowners” (304).

The subject of Richard’s exclusion is repeated for emphasis when Madu tells Richard” the truth is this is not your war, this is not your cause” (305). When Richard tells Kainene how the book title “The World Was Silent When We Died” came to him “she arched her eyebrows “We”? The world was silent when we died? (374). The word we is italicized a number of times to make the reader sense the exclusivity that surrounds the right to tell the Biafran story.

It is remarkable that the title of the book Ugwu writes originates from the words of a Nigerian. As much as Richard picks it up and hands it over to Ugwu. Colonel Madu tells Richard “The world has to know the truth about what is happening, because they simply cannot remain silent when we die” (305). At this juncture Madu was requesting Richard to write for the Propaganda Directorate as a way of him contributing to the war effort. Adichie makes an important statement that the book title and the book content had to be owned by Biafrans. They had the exclusive right to tell their true story.

An example of the falsehoods that result from a single story are shown in Half of a Yellow Sun where the American journalist views the belief of the woman with one arm; that Biafra would win, a result of the Biafran propaganda machine. Richard likened his thoughts to “President Nixon’s” fact finders from Washington or Prime Minister Wilson’s commission members from London who arrived with their firm protein tables and their firmer conclusions: that Nigeria was
not bombing civilians, that the starvation was over flogged, that all was well as it should be in the war” (371). While people died of starvation or air raids the fact finders twisted the story and said Biafra’s suffering was exaggerated. In short they lied about the real situation on the ground. Just like Richard desires to write a book after the war telling “a narrative of Biafra’s difficult victory, an indictment of the world” (374); Adichie through the embedded narrative reproaches the world for its silence during the Biafran war that led to the loss of thousands of lives. The sixth excerpt of “The Book” (258) sheds light on this silence.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the characterization and the interactions presented at the writers workshop portrays the situation Adichie denounces in the TED Talk “The Danger of The Single Story”. Isabel, the wife of the workshop organizer claims that the exquisite bone structure Ujunwa has must be from Nigerian royal stock. Edward dismisses most of the writers’ stories in the workshop as un-African or implausible. Adichie points to the fact that the erroneous foreign perceptions about Africa will only be countered when Africans tell their own stories.

This is presented to the reader when Ujunwa reveals that the story she writes is based on a personal experience. When Edward refers to her story as “agenda writing” and “implausible”, convinced that it was not a “real story of real people” (114); Ujunwa responds when she sees the victory in his eyes as he says those words. She stands up and begins laughing; this act of standing up symbolizes Adichie’s call to writers to be bold and courageous, to stand up for the truth, to rise up and tell their truth. The laughter is a mockery of the lies and false perceptions that the west perceives as truth. Ujunwa asks “A real story of real people”? She goes on to reveal
that this was an autobiographical account. Ujunwa the African writer triumphs, as her story turns out to be real.

In *Americanah* we learn very early in the novel about the writer’s role and voice. Sapphic Derrida, one of the most frequent posters writes of Ifemelu “you’ve used your irreverent, hectoring, funny and thought provoking voice to create a space for real conversations about an important subject” (5). This statement carries the description of who an African writer should be; irreverent meaning fearless and bold, thought provoking voice meaning one who stimulates the readers’ interests and creating spaces for real conversation about an important subject.

The genesis of the blog stems from a desire by Ifemelu to share her stories with a larger audience and longing to hear other people’s stories. Ifemelu had a desire to tackle things “unsaid and unfinished” (295). Ifemelu wonders “How many other people had become black in America? How many had felt as though their world was wrapped in gauze” (296). Ifemelu then creates a space where people can address the issues surrounding the race discussion.

The choice of the blog, a medium new and unfamiliar to Ifemelu can be interpreted as a way writers should push boundaries through use of new forms. Like Adichie, Ifemelu experiments by using the blog a medium new to her to voice her concerns; while Adichie embeds the blog in her novel. Adichie seems to say that writers should not shy away from using different mediums to communicate important concerns. Adichie’s creation of Ifemelu as a successful blogger attests to this.
The specific authorship of the blog is spelt out in the title of the blog: “Raceteenth or Curious Observations by a Non-American Black on the Subject of Blackness in America”. This is a pointer on the importance of who the author is. The statement that observations are made by a Non-American Black separates this particular voice from the many other voices that may have an interest in this discussion. It shows that being a Non American black qualifies Ifemelu to talk about blackness.

Like in “Jumping Monkey Hill”, Americanah is also concerned about telling the truth. The remarks “That’s a lie…It’s a lie” (290) by Ifemelu match with the question raised by Ujunwa “A real story of real people? (113), these remarks exhort writers to tell the reader about the importance of the “truth” being told by the African writer. Ifemelu is angered by the silences around the race issue and invites people to “unzip themselves” as this blog post shows:

Open thread: For All the Zipped-Up Negroes

This is for the Zipped-Up Negroes, the upwardly mobile American and Non-American Blacks who don’t talk about Life Experiences That have to Do Exclusively with Being Black. Because they want to keep everyone comfortable. Tell your story here. Unzip yourself. This is a safe space. (307)

Through the characters in the three pieces studied Adichie shows who should write the African history and the concerns that plague Africa. Her opinion resonates throughout her work but it is through the exemplification in the embedded narratives that she makes her opinion clear.
Closely linked to the issue of addressing the authorship of the African story is the attitude of silence. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Ujunwa questions this attitude when the Senegalese says she did not need to say anything to Edward about his sexually suggestive remarks. “But why do we say nothing?“ Ujunwa asked. She raised her voice and looked at the others. “Why do we always say nothing?” (112). Ujunwa goes on to give the black South African a tongue lash when he makes excuses for Edward. “Ujunwa shouted at him, “This kind of attitude is why they could kill you and herd you into townships and requires passes from you before you could walk on your own land!” (112). Ujunwa blames the attitude of silence for problems encountered by African states by using the example of apartheid in South Africa.

In the same story I read Edward’s comments about the stories written by the participants as a way of silencing them from telling their authentic stories. For example when he says that “homosexual stories weren’t reflective of Africa...This may indeed be the year 2000, but how African is it for a person to tell her family that she is homosexual?” Earlier on the Senegalese had mentioned to her colleagues that “her story was really her story, about how she had mourned her girlfriend...” (102). The Senegalese case matches that of Ujunwa where true stories are seen as implausible by foreigners because of their conditioned idea of what African life should be.

In Americanah Adichie addresses the issue of silence through Ifemelu’s uneasiness about the silences that surrounded the race question. Ifemelu had a desire to tackle things “unsaid and unfinished” (295). Ifemelu wonders “How many other people had become black in America (296)?” The silence of the world while Biafrans died is one of the major themes in Half of a Yellow Sun. This is repeated over and over again as the title of the embedded narrative “The
Book: The World Was Silent While we Died” and within various passages in the book. Adichie uses the embedded narratives to raise the question of why Africans choose silence. This helps the reader to reflect on the issue of silence and its consequences.

Ifemelu invites both Blacks and Whites to engage in dialogue and to ask questions. This is seen in the blog “Friendly Tips for the American Non: Black How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness” (325) quoted earlier. This blog calls for objectivity in the race discussion- “American Blacks are not telling you that you are to blame...ask questions...listen”. The Blacks are encouraged to speak about the race issue and the whites are encouraged to listen and ask questions about the concerns by blacks about race.

**Limitations of the Embedded Narrative Technique**

While this study has discussed Adichie’s skill in engaging the embedded narrative technique and evaluating the effectiveness of the use of the embedded narratives. There are a few limitations in the way Adichie uses the embedded narrative strategy. These do not overwhelm the quality of her fiction but are worth pointing out.

In *Americanah* there are places where we encounter interposition which can sometimes be exasperating and disruptive. For example in the scene where Aunty Uju tells Ifemelu about her decision to leave Bartholomew and move to Willow. The omniscient narrator says “Ifemelu liked the name of the town Willow; it sounded to her like freshly squeezed new beginnings” (221). Immediately below this line is a blog post that covers close to two pages, a new chapter then
begins after this. This has the potential of creating the feeling of being left hanging at the point the narration ends in the primary text. The reader without warning encounters a blog.

Adichie weaves full blog posts into the primary narrative. The blog posts were too many and quite lengthy. Fewer blogs would still have communicated and achieved the desired result. The too many blogs added unnecessary bulk to the text which may cause the reader to lose interest in reading them and as a result miss crucial information. The monotonous use of the blogs by Adichie makes them lose their desired impact.

Linda Alcoff in “The Problem of Speaking for Others” argues that “the practice of speaking for others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as one who more correctly understands the truth about another’s situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus achieve glory and praise” (22). Adichie creates a space for people to speak for themselves about their race issues. Though Ifemelu’s blog does not purport to speak for others it easily presents Ifemelu as one who understands the truth about others situations. The privileging of the Non-American black by creating that space for them to voice their concerns creates a situation where we cannot see or hear about whites fighting racism.

Some of the blog post titles in Americanah can be read as promoting exclusionism. The American Heritage Dictionary defines an exclusionist as one who advocates the exclusion of another or others, as from having or exercising a right or privilege. Examples are “Understanding America for the Non-American Blacks…” and “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks”. This specific categorization of who is invited to read and contribute to the blogs excludes other races.
It conflicts with the author’s desire to contribute to a debate whose ultimate purpose is to solve the race issue.

The embedded narratives in *Half of Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” could disrupt the reader in the process of reading the primary narrative. There is a possibility of the reader’s attention being diverted to the embedded narrative because of its nature. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* the embeddings are presented in a bold font, while in “Jumping Monkey Hill” they appear in a smaller font. This draws attention to them and they seem to compete with the primary narrative.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the functions of the embedded narratives in the selected works of Adichie. The chapter also evaluated the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique in communicating the author’s thematic concerns. It has also pointed out the limitations observed in Adichie’s use of this strategy. The observation is that Adichie effectively uses the embedded narrative to communicate on the themes of race, identity, the subtle sexual exploitation of women, war and the question of the authorship, the ownership of the African story and the dangers of an attitude of silence. The functions identified are actional, explicative, thematic, illusion of reality, aesthetic function, advancement of traditional oral storytelling, the development of multiple voices in the texts and the functions to the characters.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

In this research I set out to examine the nature and the function of embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works. The study of the nature of the embedded narratives included looking at the forms of the narratives, the narrative levels in the selected works and the relationships between the embedded narratives and the primary text. I also explored the functions of the embedded narratives in the selected texts. This study also evaluated the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating the author’s thematic concerns.

Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* shifts from conventional embedding and points to an alternative structural reading of her novel. The overlapping in *Half of a Yellow Sun* between the narration of the embedded narrative and the embedding narrative transgress the norms of embedding. The study reveals a limitation of the theory of narratology to the extent that it views metalepsis more of a transgression than of any merit. One of the merits of this transgression in this text is its use to connect the embedded and the embedding. The demerit is that metalepsis may cause confusion about who narrates and what they narrate.

Of the three texts studied *Americanah* employed the most extensive embedding. *Americanah* highlights how the pressure of extensive use of this literary device challenges the hierarchies in the narrative levels. Adichie creates clashes between the narrative levels; presenting a complex situation that does not amount to a structural system that would explain the relationship of the
narrative parts. This is seen where in some instances the extradiegetic narrator cuts across all possible levels of narration.

I tested the hypothesis that the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works take distinctive forms. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” a short story is inserted within the primary short story. In Half of a Yellow Sun a book is nested within the primary novel. In Americanah blog posts are embedded in the novel. I observe that the choice of those forms by the author plays a significant role in the function of the embedded narrative and in contributing to their effectiveness as tools for communicating thematic concerns. The primary texts vouch for the authenticity of the texts they embed and are presented as non-fictional texts within the fictional texts; this places them at a higher ontological level.

Apart from serving the explicative, actional and thematic function, the embedded narratives also help create vocal multiplicity in the texts, serve an aesthetic function, advance the oral storytelling technique and imitate an illusion of reality which lends the work credibility. The embedded narratives have specific functions for the characters that author them and those who either contribute to the embeddings or engage with the narrative. Ugwu’s writing is a reflection of the violence that defined the Biafran society and is an effort to deal with the trauma caused by the violence and destruction. Ifemelu uses the blog as a means of understanding race and protecting herself from the falsehoods that surround the issue of race in America.

Adichie foregrounds the core thematic issues in her works by using the embedded narrative technique. This strategy ensures that the reader attends to the issues raised. These issues are also
addressed in the primary text. The reader therefore looks at them twice thus attaining a better understanding about the concerns in question. Some of the ways Adichie effectively uses the embedded narratives to discuss her thematic concerns include the choice of the author for the narratives and the choice and meaning of the title where there is a title. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the embedded short story is untitled. In my view this is a deliberate choice by the author for the story to represent the many African stories that are classified as implausible.

The major theme developed by the embedded narratives in all the three texts is the question of ownership of the African story. Adichie underscores the glaring need for contextualized reading of African literature and the telling of authentic African stories by Africans themselves. Other themes addressed through the embedded narratives are war and the silence of the world during the Biafran war in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, race and identity in *Americanah* and sexual exploitation in “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

As this study was limited only to extensive embedding I suggest that future studies look at the nature and function of the other embeddings in the studied texts. Examples include radio broadcasts, letters, newspaper articles, speeches, poems and songs in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In *Americanah* there are emails and phone texts. It would also be worth studying the other narrative techniques employed by Adichie to fully bring out the wealth of variety in her artistry.

As the foregoing analysis has illustrated the study of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works hopes to contribute to the growing interest in her oeuvre. This research has attempted to provide a narratological inquiry to the pieces studied, the significance is that it shows how the texts make meaning and how that process contributes to the interpretation of the
text. The narrative arrangement is an effectual means to communicating the author’s themes. Adichie questions notions of form and experiments with different literary forms through which she communicates her concerns.
WORKS CITED


Web. 15 April 2014.


THE ART OF NARRATIVE EMBEDDING IN CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE’S FICTION

JACQUELINE KUBASU OJIAMBO

C50/79598/2012

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

OCTOBER, 2014
DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for examination or the award of a degree at any other university.

Signature.................................. Date................................

Jacqueline Kubasu Ojianbo

This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as

University supervisors.

Signature .................................. Date................................

Prof. Peter Wasamba

Signature .................................. Date................................

Dr. Tom Odhiambo
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to

The late Reverends James and Ketry Kubasu, my inspiration

Were my love

Were (Jnr) my silly heart

Chinua my sweet laughter

And

To God Almighty, my help
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research project would not have come together in any cohesive manner without the consistent and immensely helpful guidance of my supervisors, Prof. Peter Wasamba and Dr. Tom Odhiambo. Thanks are also due to Dr. Jennifer Muchiri for her invaluable support and guidance during the conceptual stages of this project. I also thank the lecturers in the Department of Literature for providing a strong knowledge base in the course of my studies.

To my colleagues Jennifer, Jane, Kefa, Grace, Makokha, Margaret, Mike, Maureen, Munyiri, Obala, Odongo, Owiti, Amos, Angie, Korir, Winnie, Rachel, Bernard and Wafula for your moral support and genuine interest in my work. To Marciana and Doseline, thank you for being very kind “Big Sisters”. To my siblings for constant encouragement to push further. Finally but not least to Were, Were (Jnr) and Chinua for allowing me the space, time and peace required to study.
CONTENTS

DECLARATION..........................................................................................................................i

DEDICATION............................................................................................................................ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..........................................................................................................iii

CONTENTS................................................................................................................................iv

ABSTRACT..............................................................................................................................vii

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY.................................................................1

Introduction.............................................................................................................................1

Statement of the Problem.........................................................................................................4

Objectives...............................................................................................................................5

Hypothesis...............................................................................................................................5

Justification.............................................................................................................................5

Scope and Limitation...............................................................................................................8

Literature Review...................................................................................................................8

Theoretical Framework..........................................................................................................14

Methodology..........................................................................................................................17

Chapter Outline....................................................................................................................19
CHAPTER TWO: THE NATURE OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction.......................................................................................... ..............................21

Nature of Embedding in Adichie’s Selected Works.........................................................21

Narrative Levels in Adichie’s Selected Works.................................................................26

Relationship between Embedding Texts and Embedded Texts........................................33

Embedding and Authority...............................................................................................38

Conclusion.....................................................................................................................41

CHAPTER THREE: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction....................................................................................................................43

Functions of the Embedded Narratives.............................................................................43

The Explicative Function.................................................................................................44

Thematic Function...........................................................................................................52

Actional Function............................................................................................................53

Aesthetic Function...........................................................................................................55

Advancing the Oral Storytelling Tradition......................................................................59

Creation of Multi-vocality ...............................................................................................62
Illusion of Reality.................................................................65

Functions of Embedded Narratives for the Characters..................67

Development of Themes through the Embedded Narratives...............71

Limitations of the Embedded Narrative Technique .........................86

Conclusion..............................................................................88

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION.................................................89

WORKS CITED..........................................................................93
ABSTRACT

Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” feature diverse forms of narrative embedding. Although embedded narratives have attracted considerable attention, narrative analysts have not accounted for new forms of embedding such as blogs. This research examines the nature and function of embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works while evaluating the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating themes. The research draws upon Russian formalism to examine how the form of the work contributes to the overall meaning of the work. It also adopts the theory of narratology which outlines the basic approach to narrative levels. A close and comparative reading of the texts reveals the nature and function of the embedded narratives and the relationship between the primary and secondary narratives. The relationship between narrative levels in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* is complicated both by competing structural models and clashes between narrative levels. Adichie transgresses the norms of narrative embedding thus bringing into focus the assumptions that exist around it. Adichie’s deft use of embedded narratives is seen through the many functions it serves and its efficacy in developing central themes. This research adds to studies done on Adichie’s fiction by attempting a narratological inquiry. It also, hopefully, contributes to future research of structure and other narrative techniques applied in Adichie’s works.
CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Writers employ numerous narrative techniques in their work to achieve various outcomes. A narrative is a representation of one or more events by a narrator. This definition is derived from those of Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (2) and H. Porter Abbot, in *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (12). This definition emphasizes that a narrative requires a narrator; a narrative must be communicated by someone or a channel of communication. Narrative techniques are the methods that authors employ to tell their stories. All the techniques employed have important functions in the story. The method and means behind interesting stories are the techniques used.

Sometimes writers employ the technique of inserting one or more stories within the larger story that encompasses them. These stories within stories are referred to as embedded narratives. Some famous examples are Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* and *The Arabian Nights*. In *Canterbury Tales* the main story is about a band of pilgrims travelling to the shrine of Thomas A. Becket in Canterbury. The band passes time by having a story telling contest. The embedded narratives are the stories told by the pilgrims who participate in the storytelling contest. In *The Arabian Nights* the main story is of Scheherazade who is threatened by execution from her husband. Only if she beguiles her husband with a fascinating story will she survive. Every night she tells him a story and within that story new stories are embedded.
Embedded narratives are also common in African oral storytelling. African writers continue to merge the worlds of orality and literacy. An example is Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* where an anonymous Sudanese narrator tells of the journey of Mustafa Saeed, the protagonist of the novel. Salih’s narrative is a polyphonic novel in which the narrator assumes a crucial role as he gradually turns into a full blown character. Another example is Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* which contains nine embedded narratives; these include myths, folktales and anecdotes.

Mieke Bal in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* sees the narrator’s text as primary and the text narrated by the characters within the main primary text as the embedded text. These embedded texts have also been referred to as secondary narratives. Bal explains that she uses the term primary “without value judgement; neither (temporal) priority nor (qualitative) primacy is implied” (57). This implies that the primary text just means the text which comes first, the secondary narrative is the one which comes second and is embedded in the primary narrative. This means either the primary text or secondary text may be the main story depending on the intensity of either narrative. The primary text and secondary text are distinguished by levels in the technical sense such that the narrator’s text is the primary text and the actor’s text is secondary.

Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* distinguishes principal types of relations between embedding and embedded narrative: The first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, conferring on the second narrative an explanatory function. The second type consists of a purely thematic
relationship, therefore implying no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis: a relationship of contrast or of analogy. The third type involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content, a function of distraction, or obstruction. The most illustrious example according to Genette is found in *The Arabian Nights*, where Scheherazade holds off death with renewed narratives, (provided they interest the sultan) (232-233).

Chimamanda Adichie has earned reputation as a master story-teller with a fresh, lyrical and irreverent voice. An acclaimed contemporary African writer; Adichie has written three novels; *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Americanah* (2013), a collection of short stories *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009) and a short story “Transition to Glory” found within the anthology *African Love Stories* (2006) edited by Ama Ata Aidoo. *Half of a Yellow Sun*, which won the 2007 Orange Prize for fiction captures the experiences and impact of the Nigeria-Biafra war through the lives of its characters. “Jumping Monkey Hill”, a short story in the collection *The Thing around Your Neck* looks at the foreign perceptions of Africans in general and the subtle exploitation of women. *Americanah* which won the National Book Critics Circle award for fiction in 2014 is the story of Ifemelu a young immigrant from Nigeria to America and Obinze her boyfriend who goes to London and stays there illegally hoping to regularize his status. The authorities catch up with him and he is deported. The book details their immigrant experiences, their love, separation and eventual reunion.

It is intriguing that Adichie employs embedded narratives widely in her fiction. This research explores the significance of the embedded narrative strategy in African literature.
It is an inquiry in the nature and form of the embedded narratives and how the embedded narratives bear on ideological dimensions of literature while expounding its usefulness.

While all users of narrative embedding as a literary device have their points of interest, some instances are so extreme that they call for critical attention, like in Adichie’s case. Adichie’s novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* feature highly complex structures of embedding. *Half of a Yellow Sun* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” employ the Mise en Abyme technique, a term coined in 1893 by Andre Gide that refers to a text within a text. This is a text that mirrors the text that holds it. Therefore in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, there is a book within the main book and in “Jumping Monkey Hill” a story within a story. In *Americanah*, one of the characters sets up blogs at various points in her life. Through the omniscient narrator we learn about the comments of visitors to the two blogs.

**Statement of the Problem**

Although the phenomenon of the story within a story has received considerable attention, the orientation has been towards oral narratives such as myths, folktales, fairy tales, animal fables, song tales and such other categories. The tendency of placing these oral narratives within the African novel has been used by African novelists to conjoin the creative forces from their oral tradition to those within the writer’s chosen form of writing.

Embedded narratives have received significant attention from theorists of narrative in recent years. However, narrative analysts have not sought to account for new forms of embedding such as emails, blogs or online chats. Though Adichie’s work has been received
with great interest most of it has been slanted toward the thematic concerns. There is limited narratological inquiry on her work.

The nature and function of embedded narratives vary from one piece of writing to another. This study therefore examines the narrative techniques in Adichie’s work with specific attention to the nature and function of embedded narratives in the novels *Half a Yellow sun*, *Americanah* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

**Objectives**

This research was guided by the following objectives:

i. To examine the nature of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s work;

ii. To evaluate the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating themes.

**Hypothesis**

This research tested the following hypotheses:

i. Adichie employs new forms of narrative embedding in her fiction.

ii. Embedded narratives are effective tools for communicating themes.

**Justification**

The colonial and immediate post-colonial African novelists were driven by the African experiences under the colonial system. This group of writers assimilated and synthesized
the traditions of orality and literacy. The oral tradition impulse is strong in their writing because the writers are products of both the oral and literate education. One significant aspect of merging the oral and literacy traditions is the use of story within a story technique. The writers introduce various oral narratives within the narrative structure of their work in the development of characters, plots and themes.

I define contemporary as occurring in or belonging to the present time. Contemporary writers therefore in my judgment are those whose works have been written and published from the 1980s to the present time. Adichie, born in 1977 and whose works in this study were published between the years 2006-2013 fits the description of a contemporary writer. Christina Abuk in her review of Yvonne Vera’s *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women’s Writing* defines ‘opening spaces’ as “pushing the limits of conventional expectations and then moving beyond interstitial positions, into arenas for new actions and relations.”

One of the important questions narratologists ask is; how the story is packaged. Stories are not always presented in a linear form. Writers may sometimes use frame narratives which contain within them embedded narratives. Tanure Ojaide in “Examining Canonisation in Modern African Literature” argues that the aesthetic choices African writers make in response to different social realities is important in any discussion of a literary canon. Studies on the growth of African literature have focused more on examinations of the importance of oral traditions, languages and thematic concerns at the expense of narratological observations and concerns. It is through the study of literature in terms of style, form, and narrative strategies that the thematic concerns are adequately addressed.
This research is also informed by the fact that African literature continues to grow and develop. Growth in African literature is marked by experimentation, particularly of form and by the realization that knowledge is not absolute. African writers explore new possibilities and at the same time putting into question any previously accepted means of grounding and evaluating ideas. Technological innovations, for example, contribute to modernist experimentation with new forms. Through this research I attempt to expand the observation by Ojaide that African literary canon is fluid and not cast in stone. Contemporary writers seem to follow Ezra Pound’s famous exhortation to ‘Make it new’. This exhortation encouraged writers to apply new energy to established forms.

The study of the new ways contemporary writers are telling their stories is a useful contribution to the ever-growing body of African literary criticism. Contemporary trends are expanding the African literary canon and thus literary critics need to be open minded and not biased when new forms emerge. Adichie’s choice to embed a blog within her novel is a pointer to how modern innovations affects the way writers tell their story.

The differently styled narratives and structures of embedding in Adichie’s selected works facilitate an exploration of the changing trends in writing. The study will also bring into focus the assumptions that exist around embedded narratives.

This study contributes to the studies already done on Adichie’s work by taking an approach that gives attention to the use of embedding in the selected works. This attention to the use of this narrative technique may transform readings of the text.
Scope and Limitation
In this project I focus on Chimamanda Adichie’s novels *Americanah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” from the collection of short stories *The Thing around your Neck*. I am concerned with the nature and function of embedded narratives in these texts. In *Americanah* I examine the blogs set up by Ifemelu. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* I interrogate the book Ugwu writes; “The World Was Silent When We Died.” and in the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” I examine the untitled story written by Ujunwa.

My background readings of Adichie’s published fiction revealed that of her three novels only *Purple Hibiscus* does not contain embedded narratives. In the collection of short stories; *The Thing around your Neck* only “Jumping Monkey Hill” contains an embedded narrative. I have chosen the three texts because of the extended use of embedding in those texts. For example, in *Americanah* there is extensive use of the blog within the text. This study limited itself to these embeddings with an aim of interrogating their purpose and place in the selected works.

Literature Review
The purpose of this literature review is to provide a context for this research. I also include relevant discourses on embedding to show where this study fits in the existing body of knowledge. The literature selected has some bearing on my project and was reviewed to serve as building blocks upon which this study is pegged on.

Emmanuel Obiechina refers to the phenomenon of the story- within- the story as the narrative proverb. He explains that the embedded stories are referred to as the narrative
proverbs because they perform organic and structural functions of proverbs in oral speech and in creative literature. Obiechina argues that:

like the use of proverbs proper, the embedding of stories in the novels is based upon two main principles of the African oral tradition—authority and association through which an idea is given validity by being placed side by side with another idea that bears the stamp of communal approval and by its being linked to the storehouse of collective wisdom (201).

In discussing the embedded narratives in *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe he concludes that each embedded story brings “something total to the meaning of the novel, some insight to clarify the action, to sharpen characterization, to elaborate themes and enrich the setting and environment of action” (204). Thus narrative embedding expresses the distinctive quality of African fiction. This background points to the fact that as African literature develops it does not necessarily deviate from the historical context of embedding. Narrative embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition and has continued to be important as a way of bridging the gap between the culture of oral and communal storytelling and the experience of reading a text. In this research we look at how Adichie employs this age old technique in her contemporary style.

Abiola Irele in “Orality, Literacy and African Literature” argues that the development of the interplay between orality and literacy is “not merely in purely linguistic framework as in the phase of early Africanist studies, but also from a literacy and artistic perspective” (24). Narrative
embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition. The first narrative level functions in a similar way to the performance aspect of the storyteller’s role. The embedded narrative is an artistic device that enhances the performance of narrating.

Eileen Julien in “African Literature” says “the stuff of which literature is made of includes: language, aesthetic and literary tradition, culture and history and socio-political reality” (296). She adds that “the circumstances in which African novels, plays, and poetry are produced, many of them the legacy of colonialism, are as important to our understanding of African literature as are the style and images of texts we read” (304). This statement suggests that it is important to look at the style and form of a text in order to get a better understanding of it.

Frances E. White in her review ‘While the World Watched’, Half of a Yellow Sun by Chimamanda Adichie” views the use of a “clever book within a book” (10) in Half of a Yellow Sun as one of the effective strategies that Adichie has used to confront Nigeria’s bloody past. White argues that Ugwu the child narrator and writer of the book within a book “takes up writing as a way of dealing with his bewildering and disturbing experiences: facing both shortcomings and strengths of his master; participating in atrocities as a child soldier; and sustaining serious physical damage during battle” (11).

While appreciating White’s observation, this study looks beyond what the writing of the book does for Ugwu the child narrator. It bears asking what the purpose or function is for the narrative that embeds it, what message the book carries, and of what significance the position of the
embedding takes in the book. This study also engages with the function of narrative embedding for the primary texts and its effect on the embedded text.

Doseline Kiguru (2011) examines the role of the child figure in telling narratives based on Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Kiguru notes that the writing of the book “The World was Silent When we Died” by Ugwu, a child narrator is a strategy Adichie uses creatively to point to the reader that the entire narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is the story of Ugwu. She also adds that the strategy is used to create in the mind of the reader the illusion that the stories in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are not fictional but real. This observation points to the embedded narrative as not only a tool for expressing the author’s thematic concerns but as an artistic device. In looking at the nature of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s work this research highlights the creative strategies employed through the form of the embedded narratives.

Umelo Ojinmah in “No Humanity in War: Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” contends that the embedded narrative “The World Was Silent When We Died” within *Half of a Yellow Sun* is Adichie’s real book, real voice and opinion. Ojinmah argues that it is in the exposition of the embedded narrative that Adichie’s voice and opinion are poignant. This research puts to test Ojinmah’s argument by looking at both the embedding text and the embedded text with an aim of establishing how Adichie merges the two. I map out for each text the structure of embedding as well as its relationship with the narrative discourse, the story and the meaning of the texts.
In *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women’s Writing* Yvonne Vera refers to the writers’ need to invent and to banish. This involves defiance of the convention of women’s silence. Writing has established a platform which is freer than speech due to comparative distance and autonomy of books. Critics of African literature have looked at the issues shaping contemporary fiction while giving little attention to how these issues are packaged in writing. Though Adichie’s work does not feature in this collection, it is worth noting that she has embraced the need to “invent and banish” through her choice of form. Adichie chooses to deviate from the common linear form of writing to extensive narrative embedding in her fiction.

David Herman in “Genette meets Vygotsky: Narrative Embedding and Distributed Intelligence” argues that “in conjunction with the cognitive activity of their interpreter embedded narratives constitute intelligent systems- systems that both stage and facilitate the process of shared thinking about past events and about one’s own and other minds” (357). Herman views narrative embedding as enhancing the overall power of the knowledge-generating system to which it lends structure. He further explains that there is a very complex process involved in comprehending the shifts between narrative levels and the changes entailed by those shifts in the status of characters doubling as narrators. In Herman’s view, the embedded text is a system for generating knowledge not just a mere vessel. This argument makes a case for a closer look at embedded narratives in search of the meaning and knowledge they hold.
William Nelles in his paper “Stories within Stories: Narrative Levels and Embedded Narratives” argues that all embedded narratives have a dramatic impact, if only that of deferring or interrupting the embedding narrative, and that all embedded narrative have a thematic function, if only one of relative contrast or analogy. I on the other hand, feel that there is more to the embedded narrative than just deferring or interrupting the embedding narrative. Rimmon-Kenan describes three classes of functions performed either individually or in combination by embedded narratives: actional, explicative and thematic. In this study I examine the function of embedded narratives without limiting the possibilities to a given standard; instead I use those as guides.

Mikhail Bakhtin in *Discourse in the Novel* defines heteroglossia in the novel as:

A special type of double-voiced discourse (which) …serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they-as it were-know about each other (just as two exchanges in a dialogue know of each other and are structured in this mutual knowledge of each other); it is as if they actually hold conversation with each other (324).

This study approaches the Bakhtinian ideal of the heteroglossic novel from the perspective that its vocal multiplicity is a narrative strategy that signals to the reader to attend to the multi-voiced potential of the text and to interpret it. Bakhtin envisions egalitarian polyphony for the novel as a genre. Bakhtin writes: “The novel must represent all the social and ideological voices of its era
the novel must be a microcosm of heteroglossia...one single unit of social becoming. Every language in the novel is a point of view, a socio-ideological conceptual system of real social groups and their embodied representatives” (411). This study examines how the embedded narratives contribute to the multi-vocality in the selected texts.

From the literature review it is clear that various scholars have researched the area of embedded narratives. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* having been published earlier than *Americanah* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” has received more critical attention. The studies on Adichie’s work however, do not focus much on the embedded narratives save by way of mention. There exists a gap in the area of narratological inquiry in Adichie’s work. This study attempts to fill the gap by examining the use of embedded narratives in the selected works.

**Theoretical Framework**

The main focus in this research is on the nature and function of embedded narratives in Chimamanda Adichie’s work. I rely on two theories to achieve my objectives namely, Narratology and Russian Formalism.

Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* has defined narratology as “the study of how narratives make meaning, and what basic mechanisms and procedures are common to all acts of story-telling” (222). One of the most prominent narratologists Genette focuses on not just the narrative itself but how it is told, that is the process of narrating. To study the nature and function of embedded narratives I analyzed the narrative
structure of Adichie’s fiction. Narratology enabled me to answer vital questions such as: who is telling the story? And how is the story packaged?

Writers often make use of frame narratives sometimes called primary narratives which contain within them the embedded narratives also called secondary narratives. Mieke Bal in *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of Narrative* discusses the possible relationships between primary and embedded texts. In this discussion she notes that “the structure of narrative levels becomes more than a mere story-telling device; it is part of the narrative’s poetics and needs to be understood for the narrative to be fully appreciated” (59). This therefore suggests that to fully understand a text it is important to study the relationship between primary texts and embedded narratives to get the intended meaning.

This study also used formalism as an analytical tool. Formalism refers to a style of inquiry that focuses, almost exclusively, on features of the literary text itself, to the exclusion of biographical, historical or intellectual contexts. One of the central tenets of formalism thought is: that the form of any work of literature is inherently part of its content and that the attempt to separate the two is erroneous. Formalism has the advantage of forcing writers and critics to evaluate a work on its own terms rather to rely on “accepted” notions of a writer’s work.

This study will adopt the Russian formalism strand. Russian formalism refers primarily to the work of the Society for the Study of Poetic Language founded in 1916 in St. Petersburg by Boris Eichenbaum, Victor Shklovsky, and Yury Tynyanov, and secondarily to the Moscow Linguistic
Circle Founded in 1914 by Roman Jakobson. Russian formalists are interested in the analysis of the text but their main concern is with method as the scientific basis for literary theory. One of the concepts of formalism is about, as Di Yanni Robert puts it, “how a literary work comes to mean what it does” (1580). Formalism’s concern with the formal elements of a text makes it suitable for this research because the embedded narratives take different forms and also the idea of embedding narratives in a work is an aspect of form.

Narratology and formalism have a close relationship brought about by the fact that narratology borrows elements from Russian Formalist critics such as Vladimir Propp. Propp investigates Russian fairy tales to determine there narrative functions. According to his analysis, all folk or fairy tales are based on thirty fixed elements that occur in a given sequence. Narratologists such as Genette have also developed methods of analyzing a story’s structure to uncover its meaning, each building upon the former work of another narratologist (and in some cases Russian Formalists) and adding an element or two.

The point of departure is that narratologists provide us with various systematic, thorough approaches to the mechanics of a narrative; narratology helps the reader to understand how a text makes meaning and not what it means. Formalists on the other hand emphasize the form of a literary work to determine its meaning focusing on literary elements such as plot, character, setting, diction, imagery, structure and point of view. Narratology and Formalism both look at the structure of a narrative. While narratologists study how narratives make meaning. Formalists focus almost exclusively on the form of a work.
Methodology

This study is concerned with the nature and function of the embedded narrative. To achieve my goals, my methodology included close and comparative reading of Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”. I examined Adichie’s work, narrowing down to the texts that have embedded narratives. My key focus was on the nature and function of these narratives. This process helped me to identify the relationship between the primary narrative and the secondary narratives in the texts.

I then interrogated the primary texts using the theory of narratology and the Russian formalist theory. Narratology was relevant in the analysis of the structural framework that underlies the order and manner in which a narrative is presented to the reader. Following Genette’s ideas in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* where he explains the relations between narrative levels; I studied the texts to identify the different narrative levels and the relationship between these levels. Genette suggests that in every narrative the narrator’s status is defined both by its narrative level (extra-or intradiegetic) and by its relationship to the story (hetero-or homodiegetic). Once I identified these relationships I looked at the differences and similarities in the selected texts.

The working presuppositions and the basic conceptual framework of this study were informed by the formalist approach to literary criticism so as to understand the organic unity in the text. I interpreted the texts by exploring ways in which the embedded narratives contribute to the organic unity in the selected works of Adichie.
I also reviewed secondary texts especially critical works dealing with Adichie’s works from different perspectives. Literary critics who have looked at Adichie’s work were useful in shedding light on the subject. Through the close and comparative reading I was able to further the arguments advanced or deviated from them based on my research findings.
**Chapter Outline**

Chapter one introduces the writer Chimamanda Adichie and the works selected for this research. Within this chapter I make a case for the study of the nature and function of embedded narratives. It also gives a background to narrative embedding as a literary technique. This chapter on the whole gives an introduction to the research, stating the objectives, scope and limitation, methodology and the theoretical framework which guided this study.

Chapter two makes an inquiry on the nature of embedded narratives in the selected texts. I examine the form the embedded narratives take, the position of the narratives in the text and the relationship between the embedded text and the embedding narrative. This chapter also looks at the differently styled narratives and structure of embedding in Adichie’s work bringing into focus the assumptions that exist around embedded narratives.

Chapter three explores the functions performed by the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works without limiting itself to the actional, explicative and thematic functions. It also examines the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating the writer’s thematic concerns. This chapter engages with the function of narrative embedding in terms of the embedding narrative’s effect on the embedded narrative and also the purpose and function of the embedded narratives for the narrative that embeds. It also addresses the function of embedded narratives to the characters.

The conclusion summarizes the research done with a focus on the findings observed in this study.
CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction
This section explores the nature of embedding in Adichie’s selected works. This has been done through an analysis of embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey” separately. This chapter discusses the forms of embedding found in the texts while examining how the embedded narratives bear on ideological dimensions of literature. In this chapter I identify the different narrative levels and the relationship between these levels.

Narrative embedding takes place where one narrative is subordinated to another narrative. Samuel Waldron in “Challenging Narrative Hierarchies: Embedded Narrative Structure in David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* and Mark Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*” suggests that narrative embedding requires a text with at least two narratives the embedded and the embedding. For the purpose of this research the embedding relationship will require the embedded narrative must be visible. The latter narrative must be present and observable in the text.

Nature of Embedding in Adichie’s selected works
“Jumping Monkey Hill” is a story set outside Cape Town in South Africa. Ujunwa the protagonist is part of a group of African writers attending a writers’ workshop. Authors from various African countries are gathered at this workshop. Within the story there is reference to the stories written by the other writers in the workshop. Only Ujunwa’s story
is displayed and the reader journeys with Ujunwa as she writes her story. Through the third person omniscient narrator the reader gets to know Ujunwa’s thoughts.

Adichie makes use of the *Mise en abyme technique* in the packaging of “Jumping Monkey Hill”. *Mise en abyme* is the French term referring to the practice in heraldry of placing the image of a small shield on a larger shield. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Ujunwa’s story is semi-autobiographical. The story Ujunwa writes is in the third person limited point of view. Ujunwa’s story is untitled. It is indented within the primary narrative and presented in smaller font to distinguish it from the primary text. The story is complete and can be read independent from the primary narrative.

The protagonist Chioma in Ujunwa’s story faces two situations where men in authority take advantage of her position through sexual exploitation. In the first instance, “the man says he will hire her and then walks across and stands behind her and reaches over her shoulders to squeeze her breasts. She hisses, stupid man! You cannot respect yourself! and leaves” (100). In the second instance, Chioma walks away after observing Yinka sitting on a customer’s lap and realizing that this would also be her fate. The alhaji runs a finger over Yinka’s arm. When the alhaji invites them in to give them perfume Chioma walks away. The choice of the short story form within the short story is valid because of the advantages of the short story form. An example is the ease with which an author maintains consistency of purpose since there are fewer characters and settings thus better dramatic and thematic unities.
Later when Ujunwa reads the story to the group, Edward the workshop leader says that “the whole thing is implausible” (113). At this point Adichie reveals to the reader and the other characters in the primary text that this story is the real life story of Ujunwa:

A real story of real people?” she said, with her eyes on Edward’s face. “The only thing I didn’t add in the story is that after I left my co-worker and walked out of the alhaji’s house, I got into the jeep and insisted that the driver takes me home because I knew it was the last time I would be riding it. (114)

Half of a Yellow Sun recounts the ghastly historical events of the Nigeria-Biafra war. The central characters in the novel are Ugwu, the twin sisters; Olanna and Kainene, Odenigbo and Richard. To a large extent, Half of a Yellow Sun is Ugwu’s story, but, the chapters are written in turn from the point of view of Ugwu, Olanna and Richard. The action in the novel moves between the early and the late nineteen sixties.

Interspersed throughout the book are brief passages taken from a book entitled; “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The authorship of this book is ambiguous; Adichie leads the reader to believe that the book is written by Richard, “the title of the book came to Richard: “‘The World Was Silent When We Died’. He would write it after the war, a narrative of Biafra’s difficult victory…” (375) but we learn towards the end of the book that it was Ugwu who was writing the book; “Ugwu was writing as she...
spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of…” (210).

*Americanah*, Adichie’s most recent novel traverses three nations and addresses a myriad of issues; identity, nationality, race, love, loneliness and aspiration. The book opens in Princeton where Ifemelu lives, as she heads to Trenton, the closest place she can get her hair braided. Her hair being braided at the salon is symbolic of Adichie braiding and weaving her story. Through flashbacks we get to know the story of Ifemelu and Obinze that begins twenty years earlier in Nigeria.

Ifemelu and her boyfriend Obinze are caught up in a state that is surrounded by dysfunction and corruption. The two respond by leaving the country in search of brighter prospects. Obinze heads to England due to rejection from post 9/11 stringent immigration policies in America. He travels on a tourist visa but extends his stay illegally. Eventually he is discovered and deported to Nigeria. Ifemelu goes to the United States and cuts all communication with Obinze. She struggles to make it and finally succeeds. Ifemelu launches a blog about race in America. By the time we meet her at the salon she has made up her mind to return to Nigeria.

*Americanah* has a seven part structure that holds fifty five chapters. The story takes the third person omniscient perspective. The chapter narration oscillates between Obinze and Ifemelu’s point of view. Adichie establishes that *Americanah* is primarily Ifemelu’s story.
by writing chapter one from Ifemelu’s point of view. Chapter two is from Obinze’s point of view, this establishes that his story is also of importance.

The frame of the story is rendered by the braid salon. From the salon the details of the story are laid out as flashback within that frame. Interestingly, Ifemelu leaves the salon at the end of chapter forty one. The following chapters deal with Ifemelu’s transition on the verge of returning to Nigeria. Chapters forty four to fifty five are set in Nigeria and deal with the issues in Ifemelu and Obinze’s relationship and provide a closure to the novel.

There are blog posts spread throughout the novel. While in America Ifemelu sets up a blog called “Raceteenth or Curious Observations by a Non-American Black on the subject of Blackness in America” (296). Ifemelu later changes its name to “Raceteenth or Various Observations in America About American Blacks (Those formerly known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black” (315). When Ifemelu returns to Nigeria she sets up another blog called “The Small Redemptions of Lagos”.

Adichie’s use of the blogosphere in Americanah is in keeping with the narrative time. The advancement of technology has significantly changed the mode of communication; people have turned to the use of Twitter, Facebook and blogs to express opinions on significant issues. Though we are not given specific dates in the novel, the allusion to 9/11 tragedy attack and the election of President Barack Obama to office helps us to place the setting as contemporary. The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines blogosphere as “an online journal where an individual, group,
or corporation presents a record of activities, thoughts or beliefs…many blogs provide a forum to allow visitors to leave comments and interact with the publisher” (n.p).

The choice of a blog as the form that carries the embedded text is very significant. Blogs are perpetual and can reach a wide audience. Each blog post has its own title and content. Visitors to the blog read the posts and share them so that other people can see and read them. Visitors can also make comments and participate in the discussion. Blogs are also easily accessible through computers and mobile phones. One of the characters in the novel, Paula reads one of Ifemelu’s blog posts in a gathering of friends from her phone (325).

**Narrative Levels in Adichie’s Selected Works**

Martin Gray’s dictionary of literary terms defines the various types of narrators and narrative levels as follows:

An extradiegetic narrator tells a story on the extradiegetic level, a ‘higher’ level that includes everyone and everything that determines how the story is told. His or her narration can include one or more other narrations (told by intradiegetic narrators). An intradiegetic narrator tells the story on the narrative level of the characters; the diegetic level which describes how the characters of a story communicate with each other and which is embedded at the extradiegetic level.

A homodiegetic narrator describes his or her own personal experience as a character in the story. Such a character cannot know more about other characters than what their
actions reveal. A heterodiegetic narrator on the other hand describes the experiences of the characters that appear in the story.

The narrator in Ujunwa’s story is presented to the reader as a heterodiegetic narrator. As we read the story we cannot link the events of the story to Ujunwa. It is only through the primary text or at the extradiegetic level that we learn that the narrator is actually homodiegetic. Ujunwa the character in “Jumping Monkey Hill” is actually Chioma in the untitled story she writes.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the reader is presented with a first narrative level through the third person omniscient narrator and then the second level narrative act Ujunwa writes a short story. At each level, the narrative is truncated before it attains closure.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in “Jumping Monkey Hill”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Narrative Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Omniscient third person narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story about Ujunwa and other participants in a writers workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second level</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ujunwa writes a short story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative act</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded Narrative</td>
<td>Metadiegetic</td>
<td>Story of Chioma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, at the extradiegetic level, the third person omniscient narrator presents the events around the Nigeria-Biafra war. This constitutes the intradiegetic level in which Ugwu writes a book. This book within the primary text constitutes the metadiegetic level of narratives. This structure is similar to that of the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill”. Adichie also applies the *Mise en Abyme* technique, since the embedded narrative mirrors the embedding narrative in terms of form.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” is written from the omniscient third person point of view. The brief passages appear as summaries that tell the reader what is contained in the chapters of that book:

1. **The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died**

   For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash. She sat on the floor. Olanna tells him this story and he notes the details. She tells him how the bloodstains on the woman’s wrapper blended into the fabric to form a misty manure…(82). 

The omniscient narrator of the novel and the writer of “The Book” constantly overlap. In this first part it is obvious that the writer has access to the information in the novel. At this point in the story we do not know who is writing the book. The only person mentioned to have an interest in writing a book about Nigeria is Richard, a British journalist. The reader easily assumes the writer is Richard.

---

1 All the excerpts from “The Book” are numbered as such I have numbered them in my quotes for ease of reference.
Genette in *Narrative Discourse* defines metalepsis as “any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a Metadiegetic universe etc) or the inverse (234-235). Metalepsis therefore is a paradoxical transgression of the boundaries between narrative levels. Dorrit Cohn in “Metalepsis and Mise en Abyme” defines interior metalepsis as “all metalepsis that occurs between two levels of the same story; that is to say, between a primary and secondary story” (106).

Interior metalepsis occurs in *Half of a Yellow Sun* when at the extradiegetic level the reader finds out that the ‘he’ referred to in the first part of “The World Was Silent when We Died” is Ugwu. This is found in part four of the novel which covers the late Sixties. “Then she described the head itself, the open eyes, the greying skin. Ugwu was writing as she spoke and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important…” (210).

The transgression here occurs between the primary narrative and the secondary narrative. It appears that the narrator of the primary narrative is the same narrator in “The Book: The World Was Silent When we Died”. The book’s passages are written from the third person point of view similar to primary text:

2. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

   He discusses the British soldier merchant Taubman Goldie, how he coerced, cajoled and killed…(115).

3. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died
He writes about independence. The second world war changed the world order: Empire was crumbling…(155).

5. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

He writes about starvation, starvation was a Nigerian weapon of war. (237)

When towards the end of the novel we realize it is Ugwu writing the book we discover that Adichie collapses the idea of narrative levels and the hierarchy of the same. There are no longer boundaries. The levels become intertwined. Adichie creates an illusion of a real book but in the real sense the passages are summaries of “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The summaries of “The Book” are presented to the reader by the same extradiegetic narrator.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>levels</th>
<th>Narrative content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradigetic</td>
<td>Third person omniscient narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story about Nigeria-Biafra war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second level narrative</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ugwu writes a book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded narrative</td>
<td>Metadiegetic</td>
<td>The Book : The World Was Silent When We Died.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Genette suggests that “metalepsis designates the transgression of a line of demarcation that authors usually do not touch, namely the shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells and the world of which one tells” (236). Adichie looks away from
conventional embedding and points to alternative structural reading of her novel. The overlapping in *Half of a Yellow Sun* suggests links between the narrative levels. A close observation of the narrative structure in this particular text reveals a limitation of the theory of narratology to the extent that it views metalepsis more of a transgression than of any merit. One of the merits seen in this text is its use to connect the embedded and the embedding. The demerit is that metalepsis may cause confusion about who the narrators are to the readers of the novel.

It is important to note that there are other forms of embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The novel contains speeches, radio broadcasts, songs, poems, Richard’s articles, letters and such other categories. This research focuses on the major embedded narrative. The term ‘major’ for the purposes of this research refers to any narrative that takes a significant portion of the text, where significant is any narrative longer than three to four paragraphs. While this distinction may not be perfect, it is nevertheless a useful one. The intent is not to brush aside the text’s shorter narratives but to provide a clearer comprehensible picture of the predominant narrative structure.

The narrative structure in *Americanah* is multi-layered. At the extradiegetic level is the third person omniscient narrator narrating from Ifemelu’s and Obinze’s perspective at different times. The next level is the intradiegetic level where Ifemelu writes a blog and posts blogs on different topics. The reader observes the narration of ‘tales’ by the intradiegetic narrator both about the narrator (homodiegetic) and about others (heterodiegetic). The next level is the Metadiegetic, which comprises the blog posts by Ifemelu. Beyond this is the meta-metadiegetic which arises from blog comments by blog visitors on different topics.
This type of embedding presents a complex situation because the narrative levels follow no clear pattern. The result is that it does not amount to a structural system that would explain the relationship of the narrative parts. In some instances the extradiegetic narrator presents the blog contents from the meta-metadiegetic level. An example is: “Years later she would blog about this: ‘On the Subject of Non-American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know.’ A Congolese woman wrote a long comment in response: She had moved to Virginia from Kinshasa and months into her first semester of college begun to feel dizzy … (158).” In this example the extradiegetic narrator cuts across all the possible levels of narration in the novel as follows; the intradiegetic- Ifemelu writing the blog, The Metadiegetic- the blog post; “On the Subject of Non-American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know” (158) The meta-metadiegetic, the Congolese woman writing her experience of panic attacks.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in *Americanah*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>levels</th>
<th>Narrative content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Story told from the third person omniscient point of View</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story revolves around the lives of Obinze and Ifemelu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Level</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ifemelu sets up a blog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 This table presentation is *Americanah’s* basic narrative level structure. The complex nature of the embedding caused by the overlapping of narrative levels could not be tabulated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embedded Narrative</th>
<th>Metadiegetic</th>
<th>Blog – Raceteenth or Various observations about American Blacks (Those Formerly known as Negroes) by a Non-American black Blog – The Small Redemptions of Lagos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third Level Narrative</td>
<td>Meta-metadiegetic</td>
<td>Comments and stories posted by blog visitors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Relationship between embedding texts and embedded texts in Adichie’s selected works**

Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* differentiates the main types of relationships that can connect the metadiegetic narrative to the primary narrative in which it is inserted. The first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, conferring on the second narrative an explanatory function. The second type consists of a purely thematic relationship, therefore implying no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis: a relationship of contrast or of analogy. The third type involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content a function of distraction, for example and/or obstruction (232-233).

Mieke Bal observes that when the embedded text presents a complete story with an elaborate fabula, we gradually forget the fabula of the primary narrative: This apparently loose relationship between primary and embedded text is relevant to the development of the primary fabula (57). Another possible relationship between the two texts presents itself when the two fabulas are
related to each other. This structure has two possible meanings. Either the embedded story explains the primary story, or it resembles the primary story. In the first case the relationship is made explicit by the actor narrating the embedded story; in the second the explanation is usually left to the reader, or merely hinted at, in the fabula (58).

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the narrator relates the writing process of one of the characters. The omniscient third person narrator says, “She sat there for a long time, moving the mouse from side to side, trying to decide whether to name her character something common, like Chioma or something exotic like Ibani” (100). From this narration we learn that Ujunwa is writing a story about a female protagonist. Just beneath this excerpt is a display of the story Ujunwa is writing.

The two texts are related to each other. The embedded story explains the primary story. Adichie uses the embedded story to develop pertinent issues that the primary text raises. This relationship is made explicit by the character Ujunwa narrating the embedded story through her writing. Though the short story written by Ujunwa is complete the primary text takes a larger part of the story “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” is interspersed throughout the novel. The distinction between the primary narrative and this narrative is that the excerpts are short passages, printed in a different typeface, they are all titled “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The primary text takes a larger part of the novel since the embeddings are summaries and not whole chapters.
The reader finds the first part of embedded book in part one of the novel which covers the early sixties. This portion summarizes the prologue of the book within the novel. It is worth noting that the presentation of the book is abrupt, no mention of what it is about or who the author is has been given this far. The embedded narratives are short passages that are presented as chapter summaries that are numbered.

The embeddings have no relation with the chapter content of the chapters that hold them. Though the arrangement of the embedded narratives within the text appears haphazard, a closer study reveals an orderly pattern. Each segment of “The Book” appears at the end of either one or two series of three chapters focalised by each of the three main focalisers. In part one and three the embeddings appear after one series and in part two and four after every two series.

In total, the embeddings are eight and the last is found on the last page of the novel:

8. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

Ugwu writes his dedication last. For my master, my good man (433).

The ending of the novel at the same time with the ending of the embedded narrative is significant because it places them on the same level. This implies that both narratives are of equal import.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the embedded narrative and the embedding narrative are related to each other. The embedded narrative explains the primary story. Bal explains in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* that “this relationship is made explicit by the
actor narrating the embedded story” (58). By stating clearly in the last chapter of the embedded narrative that Ugwu wrote, Adichie wants to ensure there is no doubt about the authorship of the book. This also reveals the connection between the two texts. Ugwu, the child narrator in the primary text rises to write about his experience and observations about the war in the embedded text.

Genette’s *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* refers to this relationship as one of “direct causality” (232). He further explains that these kinds of embedded narratives seek to answer the question “what events led to the present situation?” The information contained in “The Book: The World was Silent When We Died” gives background details to events in the extradiegetic narrative.

In *Americanah* the narrator furnishes us with background information on the blogger (Ifemelu) and the blog. The reader is introduced to the blog in the first chapter of the book. This is an indication to the reader that the blog is an important part of the novel and its story. Unlike *Half of a Yellow Sun* where the embedded narrative just appears without warning; the blog in *Americanah* has an external introduction. From the outset of the novel the reader knows there is a blog and gets a feel of what the blog is about when the narrator mentions some posts in the blog and visitor comments on the second and third page of the novel.

The blog and primary text have a close relationship. There is spatio-temporal continuity between the metadiegesis and diegesis. This relationship is not of direct causality like the one observed in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The second narrative takes on an explanatory function. Some of the
fabulas in *Americanah* also resemble one another and the blog is intertwined with the primary narrative. Contained in the blogs are incidents of interest that Ifemelu experiences or observes in her day to day life. There is a repetition within the blog of events that the reader has already seen in the primary text.

An example is when Ifemelu works as a babysitter for a white family that lived in a grand stone house with white pillars; she encounters a carpet cleaner who is hostile to her because she is black and a black should not own such a stately house: “She would begin the blog post “Sometimes in America, Race is Class” with the story of his dramatic change and end it with: *It didn’t matter to him how much money I had. As far as he was concerned I did not fit as the owner of that stately house because of the way I looked. In America’s public discourse ...* (166).”

Another example is the blog on the expensive lifestyles of some young Nigerian women posted in “The Small Redemptions of Lagos” (422). The blog post is about Ranyinudo, Ifemelu’s friend. Before the post, on an earlier page is a description of Ranyinudo that matches the blog. “Ifemelu... wondered if she would be like Ranyinudo, working for an advertising company, living in a one bedroom flat whose rent her salary could not pay...dating a married chief executive who bought her business class tickets to London ” (389). The blog reads in part;

“*There are many young women in Lagos with Unknown Sources of Wealth; they live lives they cannot afford. They have only ever travelled business class to Europe but have jobs that can’t even afford them a regular ticket. One of them is my friend a beautiful, brilliant woman who works in advertising”* (422).
Bal defines resemblance between two fabulas as follows: “we speak of resemblance when two fabulas can be paraphrased in such a way that the summaries have one or more striking elements in common” (60). In the case of the two blog posts cited above in one the resemblance with the text is that both texts address the issue of race in America using the same incident. In the second the blog and text are a social critique on the lives of certain women in Nigeria. When confronted by Ranyinudo for airing her story in public, Ifemelu says “Your story is so common” (422). Ifemelu uses Ranyinudo’s life story to talk about women “who define their lives by men they can never truly have and are crippled by a culture of dependence” (422).

**Embedding and Authority**

All the embedding narratives in Adichie’s work vouch for the authenticity of the narrative they embed. The embedding texts do not just present the embedded text; they provide a context for the embedded narrative, credit it to a specific person and establish its credentials.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” and *Americanah* it is very clear from the outset who the authors of the embedded texts are. Ifemelu sets up the two blogs in Americanah. Ujunwa writes the untitled story in “Jumping Monkey Hill”. *Half of a Yellow Sun* takes a different approach: the author of the book within the novel is not revealed at the outset. The reader has to contend with the ambiguity of whether it is Richard or Ugwu who writes the book. It is eventually made clear towards the end of the novel that Ugwu is the author of the book. The ambiguity of the authorship of the embedded text is employed by Adichie to create suspense and at the same time make a statement about who should tell the African story.
The embedding narratives attest to the credibility of the narratives that they embed. In *Americanah* the narrator presents Ifemelu’s blog as a successful blog with a growing readership. The omniscient narrator says this about the blog:

She had written the final post only days ago. Trailed by two hundred and seventy-four comments so far. All those readers growing month by month, linking, cross posting, knowing so much more than she did; they had always frightened and exhilarated her (5).

In another instance, Paula one of Ifemelu and Blaine’s friends tells her students to read the blog (325). Paula equates the blog to any other authoritative text that the students are required to read. This puts forth a case about the importance of the blog. The various blog posts and comments from blog visitors create an interesting patchwork of conversations giving an impression of a series of supporting sources.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the embedding narrative backs up the information in “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” by creating an illusion that the information in the embedded narrative is true. In the first chapter of the embedded book the reader learns the source of the story in the prologue of that book is Olanna (81). To authenticate this story about the baby in calabash the extradiegetic narrator narrates this episode in chapter eleven. The narrator gives the reader details of the train journey and uses similar words; from the embedded narrative we read; “For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash. She sat on the floor of a train...” (81). From the primary text we read that; “Olanna sat on the floor of the train with her knees drawn up” (149). The narrator further endorses that prologue by narrating how the actual
process of writing that prologue takes place in chapter thirty four; “Then she described the head itself, the open eyes, the graying skin. Ugwu was writing as she spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose…” (410). Captured in that narration is an affirmation of the author of the book as earnest and keen to tell the story and a pointer to the importance of the story shared in the embedded narrative.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the reader learns that Ujunwa is a fine writer. The third person omniscient narrator says: “It was the British Council that had made the call for entries and selected the best” (96). This sets the readers expectation high; we anticipate that the story she writes will be good. After she reads her story some of the comments from the other participants were that; the story was “strong…believable…captured Lagos well…had a realistic portrayal of what women were going through in Nigeria” (113). This approval places the embedded story in good standing to counter Edward’s negative opinion about it.

An important piece of information that the embedding narrative reveals is that the story is actually Ujunwa’s real life experience. Since autobiography is more believable than fiction; Adichie effectively creates the illusion that the embedded narrative is a true story. The embedded narrative is therefore placed at a level higher than the one embedding it by being presented as a true story while the one that holds it is fictional.

The authors of the embedded narratives in the works studied write from a point of experience. Ugwu writes about his experiences during the war. Ifemelu blogs about her immigrant experiences in America. Ujunwa writes her own story. This validates their suitability to write
these stories. The experience gives them the knowledge and power to write the embedded narratives and the reader easily believes them.

Adichie’s choice to represent the embedded narratives as non-fictional text within the context of the embedding narrative elevates them in the ontological level. Ontological levels point out the subordination of worlds or realities. Waldron describes a subordinate world as one which is “fictional; it is subordinated to the real world because it has no independent existence beyond what is described or imagined in the real world” (17). In the works selected the primary narratives take a subordinate level.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the nature of the embedded narratives in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”. It has discussed the various forms that shape the embedded narratives. I have attempted to present a working narratological model for the texts; discussing the narrative levels and their relationships. I have also observed that in some cases like *Americanah* the extensive embedding creates a clash between the narrative levels. In this chapter I also looked at the relationships between the embedding narrative and embedded narratives and concluded that the relationship is one where the embedding narrative justifies the embedded narrative. This discussion leads us to the next chapter that looks at the function of the embedded texts and how it contributes to developing Adichie’s thematic concerns.
CHAPTER 3

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction

This chapter looks at the functions of the embedded narratives in the texts selected. It also evaluates the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique in communicating the author’s thematic concerns. It highlights the limitations of the embedded narrative technique in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

Functions of the Embedded Narratives

Authors choose to employ the embedded narrative technique in their work for various reasons. Some common uses are; for aesthetic purpose as a means of adding diversity to the narrative act, dramatic impact, sharpening characterization, developing thematic concerns and increasing the complexity of the narrative. This study focuses on the roles played by the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works.

Narratologists such as Genette and Bal have discussed possible functions of embedded narratives. Shlomith Rimmon Kenan builds on the earlier work of Genette and Bal in *Narrative Fiction Contemporary Poetics*. She argues that there are three types of embedded narrative function: actional, where the telling itself progresses the plot; explicative, which explain the diegesis; and thematic, which function as *Mise en abyme*, stories that reflect in some way the
narrative around them (93). This study begins the examination of the functions of the embedded narrative from the functions identified by Kenan and then expands to other functions revealed in the short stories “Jumping Monkey Hill” and the novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*.

**The Explicative Function**

Embedded narratives may serve as an answer to questions that arise in the primary narrative. This function helps the reader to understand how the events in the primary narrative came to be. “All these narratives, explicitly or not, answer a question of the type “what events have led to the present situation?” (Genette 232).

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the excerpts of “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” focus on saying, this is how things were and this is why things turned out this way. The prologue introduces the reader to the effects of the senseless killing during the war by recounting the story of the woman with the calabash. Ugwu contextualizes the senseless killings within the wider narratives of war and violence in the world by mentioning “the German women who fled Hamburg with the charred bodies of their children in stuffed suitcases and the Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies” (82).

The second excerpt explains the colonial aspect of how Nigeria was formed. How the British preferred the North to the South. The flourishing of the Christianity and education brought by the missionaries, the merging of the North and the South in 1914 and the picking of the name Nigeria by the governor-general’s wife (115).
The third excerpt talks about independence and highlights the state of Nigeria during independence. “At independence in 1960, Nigeria was a collection of fragments held in a fragile clasp” (155). This statement is important in explaining the state of the country at independence. This signals the reader to the volatile nature of the state and it therefore does not come as a surprise that the country broke into war. This excerpt also reveals the tension between the North and the South: “The North was wary; it feared domination of the more educated South and had always wanted a country separate from the infidel South …Nothing was done about the clamour of the minority groups and the regions were already competing so fiercely that some wanted separate foreign embassies (155).”

The fourth excerpt talks about the economy of Nigeria which was nonexistent until independence. This excerpt points to the poor governance and complex problems facing the country. It focuses on the 1966 massacres and mentions the ostensible reason for the massacre as revenge for the “Igbo Coup”. The attitude of the Igbo is shown as resilient and what mattered to them was the unity forged among the Igbo and the creation of the fervent Biafrans out of former Nigerians.

The fifth excerpt discusses the starvation that was prevalent in the Biafra war. How starvation was used by Nigeria as a weapon of war and how it drew attention to Biafra. He also talks of how people used that starvation for their own gains. For example, photographers use of the photos of the hunger stricken children to grow their careers. Parents also used the mention of starvation to get their children to eat.
The sixth excerpt discusses the reactions of the international community to the Biafran Republic. It mentions the silence and the indifference from some. “In the United States, Biafra was “Under Britain’s sphere of interest”. In Canada the prime minister quipped, “Where is Biafra?”(257). Within this portion Ugwu explains the reason for the silence of the world toward Biafra. This discussion is very crucial because it underscores the notion “The World Was Silent When We Died” which is also the title of the book Ugwu writes.

The seventh excerpt contains the epilogue which is a poem Ugwu wrote, modelled after a poem by Okeoma one of the characters. The poem is titled “Were you Silent When We Died?” This title is also related to the title of the embedded book. This linkage and repetition point to the importance of questioning the silence or attitude of indifference among nations when a nation faces a crisis especially one that leads to massive loss of human life. This is an important socio-political question for Africa since the continent continues to face crises that cause loss of lives. A current example is the South Sudan conflict where hundreds of people continue to be killed because of their ethnicity and political alignment.

The eighth and final excerpt of the embedded book constitutes one line; “Ugwu writes his dedication last: For Master, my good man” (433). This line sums up Ugwu’s appreciation to Odenigbo for is mentorship. Through this final line the issue of the ambiguity of the authorship of the book is finally put to rest. There is no doubt about whose story this is and who writes it.

The embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun* serves an explicative function where the embedded narrative explains the events in the embedding narrative. It gives the reader a deeper understanding of what the scenario was during the Biafran War. This is important because some
of the readers may have no idea what the Biafran war was about. The Book functions as a device to anchor the reader. Maria Plaias in “The danger of a single story in Chimamanda N.Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” states that “the line of reasoning in “The Book” provides the basis for analysing and interpreting the characters political views in the main narrative and affirms and reinforces the major ideas of these characters” (54).

The embedding narrative presents to us the action of the story while the embedded narrative presents to us the cause of the action. An example is the issue of starvation as a tool of war. Through description Adichie paints a picture of the inhumanity of starvation; she shows girls fighting for food (270), the desperation Olanna experiences when she goes to the gate of the relief centre to collect food for five consecutive days and finds the gate locked. She details the inward rush of the crowds into the relief centre when it finally opens (271), the theft of Olanna’s corned beef by five soldiers (272). How children roasted rats to eat (370) and how every leaf became a vegetable (371). Through these scenes and many others in the book we see the effect of starvation on the Biafran people. It is only from the fifth excerpt of the embedded book that we understand that starvation was a weapon of war:

> Starvation broke Biafra and brought Biafra fame and made Biafra last as long as it did. Starvation made the people of the world take notice and sparked protests and demonstrations in London and Moscow and Czechoslovakia…Starvation made the international Red Cross call Biafra its gravest emergency since the Second World War (237).
The blog Ifemelu puts up in *Americanah* explains the countless different approaches to race, gender, ethnicity and beauty both in Nigeria and in the United States of America. From the title of the Ifemelu’s blog: “Raceteenth or Various Curious Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non American Black” it is clear that Adichie wants to tackle race from an African perspective. To avoid the subjectivity that may come from an American Black because of the history of slavery and earlier racist practises which they were subjected too; Adichie looks at it from an outsider’s perspective (through Ifemelu). Through the blogs Adichie avoids being didactic about the issue of race.

Similar to the *Half of a Yellow Sun* approach the primary narrative presents to the reader the action of the story while the blog explains the “why” and “how” of the situation in the primary text. The blog allows the public to comment on the issues at hand. The blogs in the novel play a complementary role while facilitating explanation of the primary text. An example is the case of Abe who does not see Ifemelu as female because of the racial divide:

…Abe in her ethics class, Abe was white, Abe who liked her well enough, who thought her smart and funny, even attractive but who did not see her as female. She was curious about Abe, interested in Abe… Abe would hook her up with his black friend… She was invisible to Abe (192).

Later in the novel Ifemelu is involved romantically with Curt, a wealthy white man. During the duration of this relationship she experiences racial prejudice firsthand. When Curt introduced Ifemelu as his girlfriend she saw on the faces of the white women the expression of the question
“why her” (292). Other instances are when they walked into the restaurant and the host asked Curt “Table for one?” and when the owner of the bed and breakfast in Montreal refused to acknowledge her and looked only at Curt (294). Ifemelu felt slighted by this treatment but she could not tell Curt because he would say she was overreacting. Finally when Ifemelu starts her blog her first post entails the prejudices she experienced when seen with a white man and the racially skewed magazines. She ends the blog with words she remembered a long time after that post and recited at the dinner table of a French and American couple. The blog reads:

The simplest solution to the problem of race in America? Romantic love. Not friendship. Not the kind of safe, shallow love where the objective is that both people remain comfortable. But real deep romantic love, the kind that twists you and wrings you out and makes you breathe through the nostrils of your beloved. And because that deep romantic love is so rare, because American society is set up to make it even rarer between American Black and American White, the problem of race in America will never be solved. (296)

This post explains her brutal honesty to a comment by a Haitian poet who had dated a white man for three years. The poet said that race was never an issue for them. Ifemelu reacts by saying “That’s a lie” (290) she repeats “it’s a lie” (290). Through this narration and the blog post Adichie expresses her anger at the idea of sweeping of the race issue under the carpet by saying “race is not an issue” or race does not matter (291).
The blog posts are also used to explain the meaning of concepts around the race issue that cannot be explained in the text. An example is the blog post titled “Understanding America for the Non-American Black: A few Explanations of What Things Really Mean” (350). This blog captures the evasive nature of Americans when handling conversations that address racial issues. They are reported to refer to race using abstract terms such as “simplistic” or “complex”. Among other terms the blogger discusses how diversity means different things to blacks and to whites. “To the whites diverse means nine per cent black people and if it gets to ten per cent they can’t stand it. To the blacks diverse neighbourhood means forty per cent black” (350).

Another post “What Academics Mean by White Privileges, or Yes it Sucks To Be Poor and White but Try Being Poor and Non-White”. This post is one of the lengthier posts, spanning close to two pages. It discusses, explaining at length the imbalances created by racism. An example is given about what would happen if a black person was found in possession of drugs and if a white person was found in a similar situation. The post reads “the white guy is more likely to be sent to treatment and the black guy is more likely to be sent to jail” (346).

Just like Half of a Yellow Sun’s embedded narrative the “Raceteenth” blog in Americanah helps the reader to trace the histories around the race issue, this explains to the reader how the current situation arose and why the race issue remains unresolved. In the post “Friendly Tips for the American Non-Black: How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness.” (325) Ifemelu outlines the ways in which the whites offer alternative explanations about racial issues and how they want to wish away the past. In this post she records history to anchor the reader on the race issue:
Dear Non-American Black, If an American Black person is telling you about an experience about being black, please do not eagerly bring up examples from your own life. ...Don’t be quick to find alternative explanations for what happened. Don’t say “Oh, it’s not really race, it’s class. Oh, it’s not race it’s gender... A hundred years ago the white ethnics hated being hated, but it was sort of tolerable because at least black people were below them on the ladder. ... being American means you take the whole Shebang, America’s assets and America’s debts, and Jim Crow is a big ass debt. ... Don’t say “Oh Racism is over, slavery was so long ago.” We are talking about the problem from the 1960s not 1860s ...325-327.

The mention of the historic events; the slavery, Jim Crow, blacks stepping off the curb because a white person was passing, white women standing outside schools shouting “Ape” because they did not want their children to mix with black children among other incidences mentioned in the post, gives the reader background information on why the racial wound still festers. At the end of this blog post Ifemelu does not stop at listing the do’s and don’ts of the appropriate way whites should respond to blacks discussing race. She invites the two races to a possibility of a friendship where there is mutual understanding and respect:

American Blacks are not telling you that you are to blame. They are just telling you what is. If you don’t understand, ask questions. If you are uncomfortable asking questions, say you are uncomfortable about asking questions and then ask anyway. It’s easy to tell when a question is coming from a good place...sometimes
people just want to feel heard. Here’s to possibilities of friendship connection and understanding. 327

**Thematic Function**

Rimon-Kenan defines the thematic function of the embedded narrative as one that establishes a relationship of analogy, that is, similarity and contrast” between the narrative levels (92). Genette in *Narrative Discourse* explains that this “purely thematic relationship implies no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis; a relationship of contrast or of analogy. Based on these two definitions of the embedded narratives studied, only the story nested in “Jumping Monkey Hill” serves this function. In *Americanah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* there exists a form of continuity in space and time in the events related in the embedded narratives and embedding narratives.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the untitled story Ujunwa writes has nothing to do with the primary narrative in terms of time and space. Adichie use this story to exemplify the mistaken perceptions of Africans and issues that affect them by foreigners. In the primary narrative Isabel a British assumes that only royal blood could explain the good looks of African people, Edward believes that homosexual weren’t reflective of Africa and women are never victims of sexual exploitation in crude ways. Edward has a warped idea of what the “real Africa” is and insists that his perception of Africa is correct. The story Ujunwa writes and reads unbeknownst to her audience is a true story of her experiences and so when Edward comments that; “The whole thing is implausible,”…This is agenda writing, it isn’t a story of real people.(113)” She responds: “A real story of real people? …The only thing I didn’t add in the story is that after I
left my co-worker and walked out of the alhaji’s house I got into the Jeep and insisted that the driver take me home because I knew it was the last time I would be riding it (113).”

The revelation that the embedded story is a true story serves to show that Edward’s (foreigners) perceptions about Africa are sometimes so wrong. It gives an analogy of similarity by showing that the comments Edward had been making about the unrealistic nature of the other participants African stories was wrong.

**Actional Function**

The actional function occurs when the very telling of the embedded narrative progresses the plot. This function borrows from Genette’s third type of function expounded in *Narrative Discourse* where such an embedded narrative: “Involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content- a function of distraction, for example and/ or of obstruction (233)”.

The embeddings in the selected texts do not fit this definition completely because they are not completely independent of the diegesis and have no function of obstruction or distraction. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the attendees of the African writers’ workshop are expected to produce one story for possible publication. It therefore follows that Ujunwa the protagonist of the story writes a story which she is required to read to the other attendees.

The short story written by Ujunwa serves as a plot device employed by Adichie to advance the plot in this story. Once Ujunwa reads the story the reactions of the other participants and those of Edward form the rising action. One of the key conflicts of the story is the fixed perceptions of Africa by foreigners. The embedded narrative also makes possible the denouement of the story.
The final outcome of the events is the story is directly linked to the story Chioma writes because it is at this point that she reveals that she is the protagonist in the story that she writes. This revelation then proves Edward wrong in referring to her story as implausible.

In *Americanah* there are other characters from the primary text who are involved with the blogs either directly or indirectly. Ranyinudo for example is upset that Ifemelu had written about her in one of the blog posts. Ifemelu had posted a blog about “the expensive lifestyles of some young women in Lagos”. Ranyinudo calls Ifemelu and says “It is obviously me! Look at this! Ranyinudo paused and then began to read aloud” (422). This post was then taken down by Ifemelu.

Paula like Ranyinudo also reads a blog post to her friends. She also requires her students to read Ifemelu’s blog. It is noted that Obinze read the whole archive of Ifemelu’s blog posts, his reaction to blogs is also accounted for. Some of the experiences Ifemelu has and the observations about life and the other characters form a significant part of the blog.

Blaine contributed to the blog indirectly by influencing Ifemelu through his comments. He reminded Ifemelu what he thought was her role and what the purpose of the blog should have been “Remember people are not reading you as entertainment; they’re reading you as cultural commentary. That’s real responsibility. There are kids writing college essays about your blog” (312). To the extent that the other characters make a contribution to this blog gives it an actional function.
The actional function applies to *Half of a Yellow Sun* on a very small degree because as much as the reader knows that Ugwu is writing a book; the narratives he writes do not contribute to the progression of the plot. The embedded narrative in this novel serves an explicative function but could easily stand on its own. This is emphasized by the haphazard positioning of the embeddings and the lack of introduction to them by the primary text. Compared to *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”; there is very little interaction of the other characters with this text.

**Aesthetic Function**

Aesthetics in literature refers to the investigation of the nature and perception of beauty in a piece of literary work. Peter Lamarque in “Aesthetics and Literature: A problematic Relation?” argues that “Aesthetic characterisations have implication for how the work appears, what impact it has, what is salient in it and what merits aesthetic attention” (6). The use of embedded narratives is one of the aesthetic choices Adichie makes to creatively present her work.

The embedded narratives in Adichie’s work positively affect the presentation of the works to the reader. The external appearance reveals breaks, with an indented bolded typeface in *Americanah*. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the excerpts of “The Book” are numbered and are in bold letter title. The font of “The Book” is different from that of the primary text. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the font used to present the embedded short story is similar to that of the primary text but in smaller size and indented.

In the works selected the embedded narratives provide obstruction in the continuity of the whole. This obstruction affords the narration with more ups and downs. The continuity of the primary
narration is momentarily suspended and a heightened suspense is created. In her longer forms the embedded narratives break the monotony of reading the primary narrative by offering a shift in the reader’s thought process.

In a number of instances the embedded narratives in Half of a Yellow Sun help us to break from the heavy matter of the war. In chapter twelve the reader is presented with the narration of the horrendous killings at the airport which are witnessed by Richard. He witnesses Nnaemeka’s “chest blow open” (153) and the soldiers line up Igbo people and shoot them. At the end of the chapter Richard lowers his head to the sink and begins to cry. Immediately after this scene the third excerpt of “The Book” is inserted just before the next chapter.

This excerpt shifts the reader’s attention from the dreadful events of the airport killings to the narration of the independence of Nigeria. This excerpt also explains the state of the country at independence and suggests that “nothing had been done about the clamour of minority groups” (155). Apart from giving background information relating to the Biafran war, it offers a relief from the horrific details of the killings.

The same relief is offered in chapter eighteen which details the air raids that killed people and razed houses. The reader is moved by the effect of the raids on both the victims and survivors. The excerpt provides an obstruction by talking about the state of the economy of Nigeria. It also focuses on the 1966 massacres and the effect on the Biafrans.

In chapter thirty one of Americanah the tension raised by a heated discussion on race and relationships at a dinner party is cooled off by the insertion of a blog that discusses hair as a race metaphor: “Imagine if Michelle Obama got tired of all the heat and decided to go natural and
appeared on TV with lots of woolly hair, or tight spirally curls...She would totally rock but poor Obama would certainly lose the independent vote, even the undecided Democrat vote (297)”.

The tone of the blog is that of discussing race with a light touch and is peppered with humour. The reader is expected to get relief from the humour contained in the blog. Through the description of Michelle Obama’s hair as woolly and the effect of that on his election results, the heavy matter of race is discussed albeit in a humorous way.

The embedded narratives help to break the monotony of the primary narratives. In Americanah which spans four hundred and seventy seven pages; the blogs give the reader a much needed break from the monotony. The blogs give the readers fresh perspectives offered by Ifemelu and her blog followers. Unlike Half of a Yellow Sun where the embeddings are always located at the end of chapter, the blogs in Americanah appear both within the chapter and sometimes at the end of the chapter. The embedding in “Jumping Monkey Hill” appears at different points in the short story.

The embedded narratives help to create suspense in the novels and short story. Since the reader has to wait for the reading of the embedded narrative to pass, the experience of suspense is lengthened. Any questions raised in the reader’s mind have to be held in suspense till the embedded narrative is read for a possible resolution. In Half of a Yellow Sun the abrupt presentation of the first excerpt of “The Book” in itself creates suspense. The reader has no idea who the author of “The Book” is and there is no introduction to the book. The reader wonders
what the book is about, who the author is and how long it will be. Adichie creates an urge within
the readers to continue engaging with the novel.

In *Americanah* an instance of suspense is seen when a blog follows this statement- “When
months later, Ifemelu had the fight with Blaine, she wondered if Shan had fuelled this anger, an
anger she never fully understood” (337). While the reader is still wondering how and why the
break up will take place, Adichie inserts the blog: Is Obama Anything but Black? The blog is
totally unrelated to the preceding passages and thus suspense is created.

In the short story the embedded story written by Ujunwa serves as a break between different
parts of the story. The embedded story appears immediately after breakfast following that
excerpt it is dinner time then comes bed time; the next excerpt appears after breakfast the next
day. This pattern continues dividing the primary story into various time frames. The embedded
narrative also creates suspense in both the primary narrative and embedded narrative. Since the
two stories obstruct each other, the reader is held in suspense as he or she awaits the next part.

The embedded narratives also slow down the tempo of the narrative. The reader is forced to slow
down in order to fully comprehend the importance of a new embedding. This ensures that the
reader understands its meaning and relates it to the structure of the story or novels’ total
meaning. One of the concepts of Formalism is defamiliarization which Victor Shklovsky argues
makes objects; “unfamiliar to makes forms difficult, to increase difficulty and length of
perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic in itself and must be prolonged (16).
Borrowing from this concept this study views the use of embedded narratives as one way of
lengthening perception. The embeddings force the reader to slow down and effect a more strenuous but rewarding engagement with the text.

The embedded narratives also serve to help effectively introduce new plot lines; when Ifemelu returns to Nigeria she transitions into a home that is different from what it was thirteen years back. *Americanah* captures an aspect of the returnee narrative through a post in the blog: “The small Redemptions of Lagos”. The piece about the Nigerpolitan Club describes the arrogance of Nigerian returnees who gather on a weekly basis to moan the disparities between Lagos and the cities they come from. Ifemelu uses this post to ridicule the air of pretentiousness that surrounds them and encourages the returnees to accept the way of life back home. This post underscores the definition of an “Americanah” presented earlier in the novel, “They roared with laughter at that word “Americanah”...and at the thought of Bisi...who had come from a short trip to America with odd affectations, pretending she no longer understood Yoruba, adding a slurred r to every word she spoke” (65).

Adichie uses the embedded narratives to enhance the reader’s understanding of the primary narratives while providing her readers an experience of combinational delight unique to the reading of stories within stories.

**Advancing the Oral Storytelling Tradition**

Obiechina observes in “Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel” that “the oral tradition impulse is strong in the modern African novel, which embodies this experience especially because the writers themselves are products of both oral traditions and literate education” (199). Roger Kurtz
describes the third generation of writers; a categorization in which Adichie belongs as “labouring under an obvious but understandable anxiety of influence as the giants of Nigerian literature who preceded them cast long shadows” (25). Heather Hewett observes in “Coming of Age: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and The Voice of the Third Generation.” that “Adichie like her peers is directly engaged with the Nigerian literary canon and is furthermore making a case for her inclusion in it” (78).

Embedded narratives were common in oral storytelling in independent traditions in parts of Africa. They are also used as a bridge between oral and written narrative. Herman argues that embedded narratives describe the historical consciousness of the present. There is a link with the past and a relaying of knowledge between two or more minds. *Half of a Yellow Sun* exemplifies this scenario. The embedded narrative found in “The Book” has a relationship of mediation. Adichie uses this embedding to narrate Nigeria’s history linking past events to the prevailing circumstances in her fiction.

Adichie is conscious of her position and role as an African writer and demonstrates this by borrowing from the rich reserves of traditional oral storytelling techniques. Narrative embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition. The first narrative level functions in a similar way to a storyteller’s role. The embedded narrative is an artistic device that enhances the performance of narrating. Abiola Irele argues that the interplay between orality and literacy is:

... not merely in a purely linguistic framework, as in the early phase of Africanist Studies, but also from a literary and artistic perspective. At the same time the
dominance of orality in the cultural environment of African expression seemed to offer possibilities for validating the endeavour to state the relevance of orality not only to a general understanding of the processes involved in human communication but also, and in particular, to formulate an all-encompassing idea of imaginative expression, one that would point toward a universal concept of literature. (24)

This statement points to the benefits of creating a situation where oral culture is assimilated and reorganized in written fiction. First it enhances artistry in a piece of work. Secondly it aids in stimulating the process of understanding a text. Thirdly as Obiechina notes “as a means of giving maximum authenticity to the writing...writers look to their indigenous poetics to create works that draw upon their living oral traditions to enrich forms, techniques and styles through literate education” (199).

“Jumping Monkey Hill” has in its first narrative level an oral story telling situation. The writers congregate at Jumping Monkey Hill to write and share their stories. This resembles the traditional fireside telling of stories in parts of Africa. The reading of the stories aloud by the characters’ enacts the performance aspect of narrating. In Americanah some of the characters like Paula and Ranyinudo are shown to read the blog posts aloud thus enacting a performance. Olanna in Half of a Yellow Sun narrates her train experience to Ugwu. He then records this narration in his prologue.
Creation of Multi-vocality

Bakhtin argues that the strength of a novel stems from the co-existence of and the conflict between the different types of speech: the speech of characters, the speech of the narrators and the speech of the author. This study approaches the Bakhtinian idea from the perspective that the vocal multiplicity is a narrative strategy that forces the reader to attend to the multi voiced potential of the text and interpret it. The embedded narratives create the infusion of a distinct quality of heterologlossia in the narrative.

The embedded narratives permit the author to create a “voice” for his narration (for example if he or she wants to use any special language effects) a voice which can be of a more closely involved narrator. This voice enables the reader to understand the effects of the action since they are immediate and clear. This second narrator or third narrator as the case may require can be made as naïve or as sophisticated as best serves the author’s purposes. This narrator may be faintly or distinctly separated from the author himself.

Aghogho Akpome in “Focalisation and Polyvocality in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun” asserts that “the generic diversity of “The Book’s” different segments – it incorporates verse, various prose forms, and journalist reportage- may be read as one way in which Adichie interrogates notions of narrative form and explores the different literary forms through which postcolonial rehistoricisation may be represented” (32). Following Akpome’s argument I add that those genres also represent the different voices or languages that give various meanings, various expressions and converse with each other.
Plais in “The Danger of a Single Story in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* argues that the arrangement of the embedded narratives in the sequence in which they are arranged is “a way to spread and reinforce the perspective” (54) she continues to argue that “unlike the focalised perspectives the omniscient extradiegetic narrator may offer a de-personalised point of view to counterbalance or reinforce the main characters perspectives” (54). This gives the reader another opinion, through another voice.

Umelo Ojinmah in “No Humanity in War: Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” contends that the embedded narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is where Adichie’s real voice and opinion emerges. (10). Jane Bryce in “Half and Half Children: Third generation Women Writers and the New Nigerian Novel” argues that the embedding of the “The World Was Silent When We Died” is “a device that allows Adichie to gracefully relinquish her position as a narrative authority in favour of a spokesman for the voiceless, which she does not claim to be” (62). Both of these critics point to the double voiced nature of the discourse in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Through Adichie’s double voiced discourse her intentions are expressed albeit in a refracted way. The embedded narrative serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions, the express intention of the character speaking through his or her writing and the refracted intention of the author. The effect is that when the author’s words are introduced into the characters speech, they assume a new meaning and interpretation.

The writing of ‘The Book’ by Ugwu presents a voice which appeals to the reader to interpret his voice as the voice of the voiceless. This is necessitated by his position as a child narrator and as a houseboy one of the lowest cadres of employment. Richard Churchill who comes up with the
title “The World Was Silent When We Died” has an academic background, is an expatriate fascinated by the Igbo culture and history. His advantages over Ugwu not withstanding he realizes the war story is not his story to tell. If he told the story the interpretation would be different; it would not carry the same weight as a story told by a Biafran, conscripted into the army and with firsthand experience of the suffering the war caused.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the story that Ujunwa writes turns out to be autobiographical; it is written using auto-fiction techniques. The story is revealed as Ujunwa’s personal story at the end of the primary narrative to resolve the conflict in the primary narrative. The voices in this short story have a conversation about the idea of what constitutes real African experiences. Adichie chooses Ujunwa to write her own life story, which Edward refers to as implausible. This choice presents a voice that proves to the reader and the other voices in the story that foreign perceptions about Africa can be flawed.

In Americanah there are various voices and languages presented both in the primary narrative and the embedded narrative. The voices of Nigerian (village), Nigerian (town), accents of Nigerians who have just arrived in America and try to imitate the Americans, Americans and British mispronouncing African names to a Nigerian who’s lived in Britain for a while and has a British wife, to mention a few. The voice of the blogger and the respondents to the blog post add to the multiple voices in the text and the reader thus engages with the complex nature that is the human life.
In an interview with Brooke Obie of Ebony magazine, Adichie responds to the issue of using the blog as a “literary cheat” and editorializing through the blog by saying that she realized that if she editorialized in regular dialogue in the primary narrative it would not work. “I think that what I wanted to say (about race) and how I wanted to say it was in the kind of voice that would not have worked in dialogue or any other way (than through Ifemelu’s posts)” (n.p). Adichie through those confirms the Bakhtinian idea that the author orchestrates all other voices and directs the interactions of those voices. The author organizes the diversity of voices to achieve a desired end.

**Illusion of Reality**

I look at the subject of illusion of reality from the standpoint that illusion is essential to art and that art is an important resource for truth. The inclusion of an embedded narrative which can be oral or written is rationalized or motivated in a realistic way to preserve or imitate the illusion of reality. This illusion of reality consequently lends to both the embedded and embedding narrative credibility. Traditionally several devices are used by writers to achieve this goal. Examples include; gathering of characters who tell each other stories, dreams or hallucinations experienced by a character, the discovery of written manuscripts, diaries, letters and such other categories.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Adichie use the autobiographical genre as a textual disguise to stress the idea that the events in the embedded story are pure fact. This in effect counters the false perception about Africa by Edward in the primary narrative. As much as the primary narrative is
fictive the author creates a way for the reader to enter the characters world and therefore perceive this reality.

The use of the blog in *Americanah* creates the semblance of reality by Adichie’s accuracy in her simulation of how blogs work. This technique transports the reader to the blogosphere and the reader becomes part of the audience of the blog. Blogs provide centralized locations at which readers find web-based journals known as blogs and bloggers are able to find each other. Ifemelu’s blog has many followers, she edits her posts, comments and reactions of the blog are recorded in the text. She pulls down posts when she wants to and eventually she exits from that particular blog zone. She then begins another blog when she returns to Nigeria. All the events in the novel make for a believable story.

Another way Adichie achieves the illusion of reality in her fiction is by empowering the characters that author the embedded narratives. The characters involved all author from a point of experience. The experiences they have give them the authority to write the embedded narratives. The reader then believes the embedded narratives because he or she has shared the experiences with the character in the embedding narrative.

Adichie also accurately merges the information in the embedded narrative with that in the embedding narrative where required. An example in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is where Olanna sees the child’s head in the calabash on the train. Olanna then narrates this event to Kainene and Ugwu on separate occasions. Ugwu then includes this story in the prologue of “The Book”. The narration in the primary text corroborates the information in the embedded narrative.
Alongside other mediums employed in the novels to create an illusion of reality, the embedded narratives contribute effectively to this literary technique. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* we encounter letters, radio broadcasts, poems, songs newspaper articles and excerpts from a published book. In *Americanah* some of the other devices employed include emails between Ifemelu and Obinze and text messages from mobile phones.

*Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” address factual issues: war, race and the perceptions of foreigners about Africa. Since the issues discussed are real issues the author underscores their importance by employing a technique that enhances the perception by the reader that the issues are real.

**Functions of Embedded Narratives for the Characters**

Irene de Jong in “Narratological Theory on Narrators, Narratees, and Narrative” states that embedded narrative may have a function to the characters. She says “In the case of an embedded narrative told by a character it may also be relevant to distinguish between the function it has for secondary narratees, the characters who are listening and for the primary narratees”(10). This points to the usefulness of the embeddings for the characters; the characters may have been propelled or motivated by something to author the embedded narratives.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* Adichie attempts to capture the effects of the postcolonial and civil war trauma. The characters in the novel live through traumatic experiences which they struggle with. The characters in the novel experiences both personal and collective trauma. Focusing on Ugwu the author of the embedded narrative, I note that his trauma is of a different kind because he
plays the role of the perpetrator. When he is conscripted he rapes a girl at the prodding of his fellow soldiers. This action haunts him and traumatizes him. Frances White in her review of the book writes that “Ugwu takes up writing as a way of dealing with his bewildering and disturbing experiences” (n.p). Doseline Kiguru (2011) examines the role of the child figure in telling narratives based on Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow sun*. She notes that the book Ugwu writes is a reflection of the violence that defined the Biafra society and is an effort to deal with the trauma caused by the violence and destruction (68).

Maria Plaias in “The Danger of a Single Story in Chimamanda N. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” argues that “...Ugwu is atoned and healed through the process of writing and that the healing process entails a continuous engagement with the memory of the war” (64). As the scars of the war reminded Ugwu of his role as a perpetrator he tried to unburden the trauma of those episodes. “He would never be able to depict the bleakness of bombing hungry people. But he tried, and the more he wrote, the less he dreamed” (398).

The writing process is therapeutic not only to Ugwu but to Olanna and Richard as well. Adichie shows how narration may have a therapeutic effect not only to Ugwu but to her as part of the second generation Biafrans. Adichie is bruised by the war, having lost her grandfathers in it. On reasons why she wrote the book she says “my father has tears in his eyes when he speaks of losing his father and my mother still cannot speak at length about losing her father in a refugee camp”.(Adichie, “The Story Behind the Book”). Olanna narrates the train episode to Ugwu and comes to a realization that her story is important when she notes Ugwu’s keenness:
Ugwu was writing as she spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of, and so she told him all she remembered about the train full of people who had cried and shouted and urinated on themselves. (410)

Richard witnessed a customs officer get shot at the airport, just because he was an Igbo. The soldiers went on to kill dozens more of Igbo people at the airport. These scenes flash through Richards mind over and over again to the point that he wishes “he would lose his mind or that his memory would suppress itself” (165). Richard desires to express his trauma through writing but he cannot get himself to do it. “The echo of unreality weighed each word down; he clearly remembered what had happened at that airport but to write about it, he would have to re-imagine it, and he was not sure if he could”(168).

Through these characters Adichie makes a point about the importance of narration and writing for the assimilation of individual and communal past. Adichie seems to feel that narration has the ability to bring on a therapeutic effect on the speaker or writer.

The blog set up by Ifemelu serves an important function in her life. As she pens down her thoughts and feelings on race, we see a metamorphosis in her. From the young lady who was unsure of herself when she arrived in America to a confident lady poised to return to Nigeria. Ifemelu uses the blog as means to understanding race and its complexities but also protecting herself from being swayed into accepting the falsehoods surrounding the race issue in America. The blog offered a catharsis to Ifemelu purging the pressures of immigrant life especially the
racism. The blog gave Ifemelu opportunity to evaluate her life, finally she senses the emptiness, the following excerpt explains:

Readers frightened and exhilarated her...made Ifemelu, nervous eager to be fresh and to impress, so that she began, over time to feel like a vulture hacking into the carcasses of people’s stories for something she could use. Sometimes making fragile links to race. Sometimes not believing herself. The more she wrote, the less sure she became. Each post scraped off yet one more scale of self until she felt naked and false (5).

Prior to the books opening scene, Ifemelu had written her final post and closed the blog. Ifemelu feared she had lost touch with part of herself and makes a decision to return home. Ifemelu feels that her personality is shaped by the blog and that she is losing her core to the blog. This revelation helps her to move to the next phase of her life.

The blog attracts comments from people affected by the issues Ifemelu blogs about. The blog gives them opportunity to vent out or to find solace from the knowledge that their experiences are not uncommon. When Ifemelu blogs about her experience with depression, a Congolese woman posts a long comment in response about a similar experience she had (158). Through the blogs Ifemelu opens up a space for people to talk about issues that disturb them but have
nowhere to air them. A comment on the blog “The Small Redemptions of Lagos” said “Thank God somebody is finally talking about this” (421). We therefore note that the embedded narratives serve different functions for different characters including those who author them.

**Development of Themes through Embedded Narratives**

Adichie’s fictional works address a myriad of themes among them love, violence, immigration, race, identity, sexual exploitation of women, sexuality, war and its effects. This research focuses on the themes expounded by the embedded narratives with an aim of evaluating the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique. Adichie uses the embedded narrative as a foregrounding strategy.

The term foregrounding has its origin with Czech theorist Jan Mukarovsky and other formalist critics who emphasize that stylistic features are characteristics of literary texts. The NTC’s dictionary of literary terms defines foregrounding as “calling attention to something – a rhythm, a character, an idea, a viewpoint by placing it in the foreground against a background” (87). Leech and Short in *Style in Fiction* have argued that “in order to make sure that the point is put across; the novelist tends to say the same thing in a number of different ways and at different levels of structure” (207). They add that “incident and mode of description combine to embody one of the major themes of the novel”. Adichie uses the embedded narratives to call attention to her major thematic concerns, the embedded narrative being in the foreground against the background of the embedding narrative.
The silence of the world is a major philosophical concern of Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Adichie questions how societies remain indifferent to others in times of war or genocide. The choice of the title of the embedded narrative, “The World Was Silent When We Died” develops a sense of curiosity within the reader to find out; who was silent? Why were they silent? This title is presented in bold text in all the eight excerpts within the book. It is highlighted in this manner to gnaw at the reader’s conscience. The reader cannot miss it and therefore is forced to think about it.

In the first excerpt the mention of the German women who fled Hamburg with charred bodies of their children stuffed in suitcases, the Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies alongside that of the woman Olanna met in a train with a dead baby’s head in a calabash (82), reminds the reader that there have been other massacres across the globe. This introduces the reader to the idea of death in Biafran war and though Ugwu is careful not to draw parallels of the Biafran war to the German or Rwandan killings, it helps us to visualize and appreciate the magnitude of the Biafran war. This then validates the questioning of the apathy expressed by the world.

It is noteworthy that the poem “Were You Silent When We Died” in excerpt seven of “The Book” (375) appears side by side with the discussion between Richard and the two American journalists about the American policy and the silence of America despite their knowledge that thousands of Biafrans were dying. On this same page the reader learns how the title “The World Was Silent We Died” comes to Richard. Richard is angry at the American journalists for their apathy towards Biafra. “He felt incredibly alone in their presence” (374) they were returning
back to America to the comfort of their homes after collecting stories and photographs from Biafra. This represents how the world left Biafra to deal with its problems.

Adichie uses the embedded narrative to emphasize concerns about the effect of the war. She does this by linking the content of the embedded narrative to the content in the embedding narrative through repetition. The poem in excerpt seven of “The Book” paints a picture of the magnitude of the starvation:

Imagine children with arms like toothpicks

With football for bellies and skin stretched thin

It was Kwashiorkor –difficult word

A word that was not quite ugly enough, a sin. (375)

This second stanza is replayed in the narration in the embedding narrative. “The nun cradled the smallest, a shrivelled doll with stick legs and a pregnant belly” (374). Through the use of rich metaphors and similes, she evokes the sympathy of the reader. The “arms like toothpicks” and “a shrivelled doll with stick legs” refer to the same situation and so does “with football for bellies” and “a pregnant belly”:

Naked children, as if the man

Would not take photos and then leave, alone. (375)
These last two lines of the same poem re-present a scene on an earlier page where the children clamoured around the American photographer begging for more sweets “Once he said, “That’s a lovely smile!” and after he left them the children went back to roasting rats” (370). The laughter referred to in the poem symbolizes the hope the children had; that some form of salvation would come from the American man and by extension the world. This hope is dashed when the photographer leaves and they return to roasting rats.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the story Ujunwa writes expounds the theme on sexual exploitation of women. Chioma the protagonist in the embedded narrative is sexually exploited by a male interviewer who after saying he will hire her “walks across and stands behind her and reaches over to squeeze her breasts” (100). Ujunwa experiences some subtle form of exploitation from Edward, the workshop organizer. When she offers Edward a seat he responds by saying “I’d rather like you to lie down for me” (106). Edward also tells the Senegalese lady that he had dreamt of her naked navel. The repetition of the theme in both diegetic levels is used by Adichie for emphasis and calls the attention of the reader to that theme. This ensures that the reader stops and attends to that theme.

The major theme developed by the blog in Americanah is race. The question of race has been discussed over many decades. Yet it remains a relevant discussion even now. Americanah published in 2013 and whose setting captures the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, correctly assesses that racism still exists. The novel starts on a train journey to Trenton where Ifemelu goes to braid her hair. On the train she remembers an incident on a plane when she had to explain what she meant by “lifestyle blog” to a man who sat next to her. This man then asks
“Ever write about adoption?” Nobody wants black babies in this country and I don’t mean biracial, I mean black. Even black families don’t want them” (4). Ifemelu blogs about this man and this post receives the highest comments for a month. The positioning of this conversation in the very first chapter is to make the reader understand that this book is about race and the blog is a space for discussing race.

The rejection of black babies plays out in Dike’s life when later in the story he attempts to commit suicide. Dike experiences racism at his tender age; because he is black he is the first suspect when the school computers are hacked. The pastor at his church says hello to all the other kids but to Dike she says “What’s up bro?” (349), this makes him feel different and he says, “I feel like I have vegetables instead of ears, like large broccoli sticking out of my head” (349). Dike feels unwanted to the extent that he nearly takes his life.

The concept of race first occurs to Ifemelu when she arrives in the United States “I come from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America” (290). The covert and overt racisms she witnesses and experiences are what make her black. Ifemelu is angered at the silence, the things “unsaid and unfinished” (296) around the race issue. Ifemelu begins longing for other listeners and she longed to hear the stories of others. “How many other people had become black in America?” (296).

At the encouragement of her friend Wambui she sets up a blog. The blog is informed by her daily encounters with racism. These encounters form the titles of her posts and make up the
The blog effectively develops the theme of race in *Americanah* because of its unique nature. The nature of the blog embedded in *Americanah* borrows heavily from the real medium that the blog is. Ruth Aylett and Sandy Louchart in “Towards A Narrative Theory of Virtual Reality” argue that a story is not told or shown in the same way according to the medium in which it is displayed, nor is its content or intensity the same” (1). The blog in the novel does not address the issue of race in the same way the embedding narrative does. The blog by its nature allows for multiple comments on the issues posted, it also allows the blogger to edit or withdraw posts accordingly. Blogs also serve a wider reach because they can be re-posted onto many other sites.

The blog in *Americanah* supports the contention by Cornel West that the race question is urgent. “For me the race question is an urgent question of power and morality; for others, it is an everyday matter of life and death” (Morrison, 61). What better way to address an urgent issue than by putting it on a medium that delivers blog posts in real time? Through the use of the blog Adichie shows the need to view the race issue as one that requires urgent attention. Adichie chooses the blog over other forms because of the advantage it offers in terms of the immediacy in communicating and ability to reach a wide audience.

The existence of racism brings up the question of identity. The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy defines one’s personal identity as “what makes one the person one is” (n.p). Identity reflects on who we are and how others perceive us. Identity is a language and culture rooted
process that includes our position in the world and others thoughts about who we are as well as who they are.

Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* discusses the complexity of the concept of “identity”. Gilroy argues that historians should reconsider how they document the past “I want to develop the suggestion that cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single complex unit of analysis in their discussion of the modern world…and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective”(15). This suggests that black is black and there are no levels of blackness. It is assumptions such as these that Adichie problematizes as she explores the various categories of identities in *Americanah*.

There are several diasporas in different chronotypes as a result of creolization being a continuous process. Globalization has made it more complicated such that within the diasporic community there are various categories of identities. In the blog post “Understanding America for the Non-American Black: American Tribalism” (184). The different kinds of black are spelt out. Ifemelu talks about the ladder of racial hierarchy in America. “White is on top, specifically White Anglo Saxon Protestant (alluding to the possibility of another type of white). American Black is always on the bottom and what’s in the middle depends on time and place.” She includes an example about how in the “ladder of races Jewish is white but also some rungs below white”.

In another blog post “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: In America You Are Black, Baby”(220), Ifemelu addresses the idea of the Non American Blacks denying that they are black
because they are from other countries where the issue of blackness does not arise. This calls attention to the creation of a racial identity “black” that confronts immigrants to America. She also looks at the generalizations and assumptions surrounding black people. Black people are treated as though they have no individual identity. If a crime is committed by a black person all other black people are stopped for fitting the profile. Black people are made to feel that they have to compensate for other black people’s behaviour by being apologetic to the whites, or always being on guard because any offensive behaviour by one black will mean the other blacks get to pay for it. This post is written in a scornful tone, scorning at the ridiculous ideas that whites have about blacks.

Chinua Achebe argued that the role of the African writer included a responsibility to educate his or her readers. In the essay “The Novelist as Teacher” in a collection of essay *Hopes and Impediments* he states “…The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and re-generation that must be done. In fact he should march right in front…” (30) He adds that the African writer is more concerned with the importance of combating “our acceptance of …racial inferiority” (29) by confronting the “disaster brought upon the African psyche in the period of subjection to alien races” (29).

Adichie seems to have heeded the call by Achebe to march right in front and re-educate especially in the area of ownership and authorship of the African story. Adichie belongs to a group of writers described as the third generation of modern Nigerian Literature. Roger Kurtz in “The Intertextual Imagination in Purple Hibiscus” has outlined the generations as follows:
The first generation consists of writers like Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Flora Nwapa and others. The second generation includes names such as Femi Osofisan, Buchi Emecheta and Tanure Ojaide. The third generation comprises of those who were born and educated in 1960 and whose writings began to appear in the mid 1980’s. They include Ben Okri, Helen Oyeyemi, Helen Habila, Seffie Atta, Chimamanda Adichie and others. (24)

Adichie and her peers have found a platform to speak from through their writing. They are able to experiment with new avenues of expressing and formulating the African experience. Through the texts studied in this research Adichie has defined the role of the African writer and then shown who should be telling the African Story. She has exemplified this by her choice of characters and the embedded narratives authored by them.

Adichie underscores the glaring need for contextualized reading of African literature and the telling of authentic African stories. In her address “The Danger of a Single Story” Adichie explains how class and culture based prejudices is often fostered by individuals adherence to hegemonic narratives of societies and histories. Adichie argues that “The single story creates stereotypes and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (7). 

Adichie highlights the fundamental function of the writer, like those of storytellers in traditional African communities. Preceding writers such as Rene Wellek (238-9), Wole Soyinka (21), Chinua Achebe (7-8) and Chukwudi Maduka (11) have on various occasions agreed that the
African writer is the conscience of the society and serves as a historian, preserving its past; critic, analyzing its current state and shepherd, helping to usher it towards its future.

*Half of a Yellow Sun* addresses the question of the authorship and ownership of history. Adichie juxtaposes the characters Ugwu and Richard Churchill. The two characters represent opposite perspectives in life. Ugwu is from a small village and comes to work as a houseboy for Odenigbo in Nsuka. Richard is a British man who comes to study Igbo-Ugwu art. Through the two who are both authors in the novel Adichie points to us who the African story belongs to and who should tell it. Ugwu writes “The Book” which is a historical account from the time period of the British colonizer to the Nigeria-Biafra war. For a long time the colonizer has had an upper hand and influence about the African continent and its history.

Richard is fascinated by Igbo Ugwu art and his novel titles borrow from the Igbo past and the culture: “The Basket of hands” and “In the Time of Roped Pots”. Richard learns Igbo and gets further enmeshed into the Igbo culture. He begins considering himself a Biafran. He says “We are still extracting from some fields we control in Egbema …We move the crude to our refineries at night…”. “You keep saying we” the Redhead said. (372) Eventually Richard realizes “The war story isn’t my story to tell, really”, something that Ugwu had always known: Ugwu nodded. He had never thought that it was” (425).

This exclusion of Richard from the Biafran experience is seen earlier when Richard sense’s it from Madu’s tone: “We are running our cars with a mix of kerosene and oil or we’ve perfected the flying Oghunigwe or we’ve made an armoured car from scrap. His we was edged with
exclusion. The deliberate emphasis, the deepened voice, meant that Richard was not part of we; a visitor could not take the liberties of homeowners” (304).

The subject of Richard’s exclusion is repeated for emphasis when Madu tells Richard” the truth is this is not your war, this is not your cause” (305). When Richard tells Kainene how the book title “The World Was Silent When We Died” came to him “she arched her eyebrows “We”? The world was silent when we died? (374). The word we is italicized a number of times to make the reader sense the exclusivity that surrounds the right to tell the Biafran story.

It is remarkable that the title of the book Ugwu writes originates from the words of a Nigerian. As much as Richard picks it up and hands it over to Ugwu. Colonel Madu tells Richard “The world has to know the truth about what is happening, because they simply cannot remain silent when we die” (305). At this juncture Madu was requesting Richard to write for the Propaganda Directorate as a way of him contributing to the war effort. Adichie makes an important statement that the book title and the book content had to be owned by Biafrans. They had the exclusive right to tell their true story.

An example of the falsehoods that result from a single story are shown in Half of a Yellow Sun where the American journalist views the belief of the woman with one arm; that Biafra would win, a result of the Biafran propaganda machine. Richard likened his thoughts to “President Nixon’s’ fact finders from Washington or Prime Minister Wilson’s commission members from London who arrived with their firm protein tables and their firmer conclusions: that Nigeria was
not bombing civilians, that the starvation was over flogged, that all was well as it should be in the war”(371). While people died of starvation or air raids the fact finders twisted the story and said Biafra’s suffering was exaggerated. In short they lied about the real situation on the ground. Just like Richard desires to write a book after the war telling “a narrative of Biafra’s difficult victory, an indictment of the world” (374); Adichie through the embedded narrative reproaches the world for its silence during the Biafran war that led to the loss of thousands of lives. The sixth excerpt of “The Book” (258) sheds light on this silence.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the characterization and the interactions presented at the writers workshop portrays the situation Adichie denounces in the TED Talk “The Danger of The Single Story”. Isabel, the wife of the workshop organizer claims that the exquisite bone structure Ujunwa has must be from Nigerian royal stock. Edward dismisses most of the writers’ stories in the workshop as un-African or implausible. Adichie points to the fact that the erroneous foreign perceptions about Africa will only be countered when Africans tell their own stories.

This is presented to the reader when Ujunwa reveals that the story she writes is based on a personal experience. When Edward refers to her story as “agenda writing” and “implausible”, convinced that it was not a “real story of real people” (114); Ujunwa responds when she sees the victory in his eyes as he says those words. She stands up and begins laughing; this act of standing up symbolizes Adichie’s call to writers to be bold and courageous, to stand up for the truth, to rise up and tell their truth. The laughter is a mockery of the lies and false perceptions that the west perceives as truth. Ujunwa asks “A real story of real people”? She goes on to reveal
that this was an autobiographical account. Ujunwa the African writer triumphs, as her story turns out to be real.

In *Americanah* we learn very early in the novel about the writer’s role and voice. Sapphic Derrida, one of the most frequent posters writes of Ifemelu “you’ve used your irreverent, hectoring, funny and thought provoking voice to create a space for real conversations about an important subject”(5). This statement carries the description of who an African writer should be; irreverent meaning fearless and bold, thought provoking voice meaning one who stimulates the readers’ interests and creating spaces for real conversation about an important subject.

The genesis of the blog stems from a desire by Ifemelu to share her stories with a larger audience and longing to hear other people’s stories. Ifemelu had a desire to tackle things “unsaid and unfinished” (295). Ifemelu wonders “How many other people had become black in America? How many had felt as though their world was wrapped in gauze” (296). Ifemelu then creates a space where people can address the issues surrounding the race discussion.

The choice of the blog, a medium new and unfamiliar to Ifemelu can be interpreted as a way writers should push boundaries through use of new forms. Like Adichie, Ifemelu experiments by using the blog a medium new to her to voice her concerns; while Adichie embeds the blog in her novel. Adichie seems to say that writers should not shy away from using different mediums to communicate important concerns. Adichie’s creation of Ifemelu as a successful blogger attests to this.
The specific authorship of the blog is spelt out in the title of the blog: “Raceteenth or Curious Observations by a Non-American Black on the Subject of Blackness in America”. This is a pointer on the importance of who the author is. The statement that observations are made by a Non-American Black separates this particular voice from the many other voices that may have an interest in this discussion. It shows that being a Non American black qualifies Ifemelu to talk about blackness.

Like in “Jumping Monkey Hill”, Americanah is also concerned about telling the truth. The remarks “That’s a lie…It’s a lie” (290) by Ifemelu match with the question raised by Ujunwa “A real story of real people? (113), these remarks exhort writers to tell the reader about the importance of the “truth” being told by the African writer. Ifemelu is angered by the silences around the race issue and invites people to “unzip themselves” as this blog post shows:

Open thread: For All the Zipped-Up Negroes

This is for the Zipped-Up Negroes, the upwardly mobile American and Non-American Blacks who don’t talk about Life Experiences That have to Do Exclusively with Being Black. Because they want to keep everyone comfortable. Tell your story here. Unzip yourself. This is a safe space. (307)

Through the characters in the three pieces studied Adichie shows who should write the African history and the concerns that plague Africa. Her opinion resonates throughout her work but it is through the exemplification in the embedded narratives that she makes her opinion clear.
Closely linked to the issue of addressing the authorship of the African story is the attitude of silence. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Ujunwa questions this attitude when the Senegalese says she did not need to say anything to Edward about his sexually suggestive remarks. “But why do we say nothing?” Ujunwa asked. She raised her voice and looked at the others. “Why do we always say nothing?”(112). Ujunwa goes on to give the black South African a tongue lash when he makes excuses for Edward. “Ujunwa shouted at him, “This kind of attitude is why they could kill you and herd you into townships and requires passes from you before you could walk on your own land!”(112). Ujunwa blames the attitude of silence for problems encountered by African states by using the example of apartheid in South Africa.

In the same story I read Edward’s comments about the stories written by the participants as a way of silencing them from telling their authentic stories. For example when he says that “homosexual stories weren’t reflective of Africa...This may indeed be the year 2000, but how African is it for a person to tell her family that she is homosexual?” Earlier on the Senegalese had mentioned to her colleagues that “her story was really her story, about how she had mourned her girlfriend...” (102). The Senegalese case matches that of Ujunwa where true stories are seen as implausible by foreigners because of their conditioned idea of what African life should be.

In *Americanah* Adichie addresses the issue of silence through Ifemelu’s uneasiness about the silences that surrounded the race question. Ifemelu had a desire to tackle things “unsaid and unfinished” (295). Ifemelu wonders “How many other people had become black in America (296)?” The silence of the world while Biafrans died is one of the major themes in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. This is repeated over and over again as the title of the embedded narrative “The
Book: The World Was Silent While we Died” and within various passages in the book. Adichie uses the embedded narratives to raise the question of why Africans choose silence. This helps the reader to reflect on the issue of silence and its consequences.

Ifemelu invites both Blacks and Whites to engage in dialogue and to ask questions. This is seen in the blog “Friendly Tips for the American Non: Black How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness” (325) quoted earlier. This blog calls for objectivity in the race discussion- “American Blacks are not telling you that you are to blame...ask questions...listen”. The Blacks are encouraged to speak about the race issue and the whites are encouraged to listen and ask questions about the concerns by blacks about race.

**Limitations of the Embedded Narrative Technique**

While this study has discussed Adichie’s skill in engaging the embedded narrative technique and evaluating the effectiveness of the use of the embedded narratives. There are a few limitations in the way Adichie uses the embedded narrative strategy. These do not overwhelm the quality of her fiction but are worth pointing out.

In *Americanah* there are places where we encounter interposition which can sometimes be exasperating and disruptive. For example in the scene where Aunty Uju tells Ifemelu about her decision to leave Bartholomew and move to Willow. The omniscient narrator says “Ifemelu liked the name of the town Willow; it sounded to her like freshly squeezed new beginnings” (221). Immediately below this line is a blog post that covers close to two pages, a new chapter then
begins after this. This has the potential of creating the feeling of being left hanging at the point the narration ends in the primary text. The reader without warning encounters a blog.

Adichie weaves full blog posts into the primary narrative. The blog posts were too many and quite lengthy. Fewer blogs would still have communicated and achieved the desired result. The too many blogs added unnecessary bulk to the text which may cause the reader to lose interest in reading them and as a result miss crucial information. The monotonous use of the blogs by Adichie makes them lose their desired impact.

Linda Alcoff in “The Problem of Speaking for Others” argues that “the practice of speaking for others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as one who more correctly understands the truth about another’s situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus achieve glory and praise” (22). Adichie creates a space for people to speak for themselves about their race issues. Though Ifemelu’s blog does not purport to speak for others it easily presents Ifemelu as one who understands the truth about others situations. The privileging of the Non-American black by creating that space for them to voice their concerns creates a situation where we cannot see or hear about whites fighting racism.

Some of the blog post titles in Americanah can be read as promoting exclusionism. The American Heritage Dictionary defines an exclusionist as one who advocates the exclusion of another or others, as from having or exercising a right or privilege. Examples are “Understanding America for the Non-American Blacks…” and “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks”. This specific categorization of who is invited to read and contribute to the blogs excludes other races.
It conflicts with the author’s desire to contribute to a debate whose ultimate purpose is to solve the race issue.

The embedded narratives in *Half of Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” could disrupt the reader in the process of reading the primary narrative. There is a possibility of the reader’s attention being diverted to the embedded narrative because of its nature. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* the embeddings are presented in a bold font, while in “Jumping Monkey Hill” they appear in a smaller font. This draws attention to them and they seem to compete with the primary narrative.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the functions of the embedded narratives in the selected works of Adichie. The chapter also evaluated the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique in communicating the author’s thematic concerns. It has also pointed out the limitations observed in Adichie’s use of this strategy. The observation is that Adichie effectively uses the embedded narrative to communicate on the themes of race, identity, the subtle sexual exploitation of women, war and the question of the authorship, the ownership of the African story and the dangers of an attitude of silence. The functions identified are actional, explicative, thematic, illusion of reality, aesthetic function, advancement of traditional oral storytelling, the development of multiple voices in the texts and the functions to the characters.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

In this research I set out to examine the nature and the function of embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works. The study of the nature of the embedded narratives included looking at the forms of the narratives, the narrative levels in the selected works and the relationships between the embedded narratives and the primary text. I also explored the functions of the embedded narratives in the selected texts. This study also evaluated the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating the author’s thematic concerns.

Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* shifts from conventional embedding and points to an alternative structural reading of her novel. The overlapping in *Half of a Yellow Sun* between the narration of the embedded narrative and the embedding narrative transgress the norms of embedding. The study reveals a limitation of the theory of narratology to the extent that it views metalepsis more of a transgression than of any merit. One of the merits of this transgression in this text is its use to connect the embedded and the embedding. The demerit is that metalepsis may cause confusion about who narrates and what they narrate.

Of the three texts studied *Americanah* employed the most extensive embedding. *Americanah* highlights how the pressure of extensive use of this literary device challenges the hierarchies in the narrative levels. Adichie creates clashes between the narrative levels; presenting a complex situation that does not amount to a structural system that would explain the relationship of the
narrative parts. This is seen where in some instances the extradiegetic narrator cuts across all possible levels of narration.

I tested the hypothesis that the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works take distinctive forms. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” a short story is inserted within the primary short story. In Half of a Yellow Sun a book is nested within the primary novel. In Americanah blog posts are embedded in the novel. I observe that the choice of those forms by the author plays a significant role in the function of the embedded narrative and in contributing to their effectiveness as tools for communicating thematic concerns. The primary texts vouch for the authenticity of the texts they embed and are presented as non-fictional texts within the fictional texts; this places them at a higher ontological level.

Apart from serving the explicative, actional and thematic function, the embedded narratives also help create vocal multiplicity in the texts, serve an aesthetic function, advance the oral storytelling technique and imitate an illusion of reality which lends the work credibility. The embedded narratives have specific functions for the characters that author them and those who either contribute to the embeddings or engage with the narrative. Ugwu’s writing is a reflection of the violence that defined the Biafran society and is an effort to deal with the trauma caused by the violence and destruction. Ifemelu uses the blog as a means of understanding race and protecting herself from the falsehoods that surround the issue of race in America.

Adichie foregrounds the core thematic issues in her works by using the embedded narrative technique. This strategy ensures that the reader attends to the issues raised. These issues are also
addressed in the primary text. The reader therefore looks at them twice thus attaining a better understanding about the concerns in question. Some of the ways Adichie effectively uses the embedded narratives to discuss her thematic concerns include the choice of the author for the narratives and the choice and meaning of the title where there is a title. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the embedded short story is untitled. In my view this is a deliberate choice by the author for the story to represent the many African stories that are classified as implausible.

The major theme developed by the embedded narratives in all the three texts is the question of ownership of the African story. Adichie underscores the glaring need for contextualized reading of African literature and the telling of authentic African stories by Africans themselves. Other themes addressed through the embedded narratives are war and the silence of the world during the Biafran war in Half of a Yellow Sun, race and identity in Americanah and sexual exploitation in “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

As this study was limited only to extensive embedding I suggest that future studies look at the nature and function of the other embeddings in the studied texts. Examples include radio broadcasts, letters, newspaper articles, speeches, poems and songs in Half of a Yellow Sun. In Americanah there are emails and phone texts. It would also be worth studying the other narrative techniques employed by Adichie to fully bring out the wealth of variety in her artistry.

As the foregoing analysis has illustrated the study of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works hopes to contribute to the growing interest in her oeuvre. This research has attempted to provide a narratological inquiry to the pieces studied, the significance is that it shows how the texts make meaning and how that process contributes to the interpretation of the
text. The narrative arrangement is an effectual means to communicating the author’s themes. Adichie questions notions of form and experiments with different literary forms through which she communicates her concerns.


THE ART OF NARRATIVE EMBEDDING IN CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE’S FICTION

JACQUELINE KUBASU OJIAMBO

C50/79598/2012

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

OCTOBER, 2014
DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for examination or the award of a degree at any other university.

Signature .................................. Date...................................................... 23rd October 2014

Jacqueline Kebasu Ojiambo

This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors.

Signature .................................. Date...................................................... 23rd October 2014

Prof. Peter Wasamba

Signature .................................. Date...................................................... 23rd October 2014

Dr. Tom Odhiambo
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to

The late Reverends James and Ketry Kubasu, my inspiration

Were my love

Were (Jnr) my silly heart

Chinua my sweet laughter

And

To God Almighty, my help
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research project would not have come together in any cohesive manner without the consistent and immensely helpful guidance of my supervisors, Prof. Peter Wasamba and Dr. Tom Odhiambo. Thanks are also due to Dr. Jennifer Muchiri for her invaluable support and guidance during the conceptual stages of this project. I also thank the lecturers in the Department of Literature for providing a strong knowledge base in the course of my studies.

To my colleagues Jennifer, Jane, Kefa, Grace, Makokha, Margaret, Mike, Maureen, Munyiri, Obala, Odongo, Owiti, Amos, Angie, Korir, Winnie, Rachel, Bernard and Wafula for your moral support and genuine interest in my work. To Marciana and Doseline, thank you for being very kind “Big Sisters”. To my siblings for constant encouragement to push further. Finally but not least to Were, Were (Jnr) and Chinua for allowing me the space, time and peace required to study.
## CONTENTS

DECLARATION ................................................................................................................................. i

DEDICATION ................................................................................................................................. ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................................................................... iii

CONTENTS ....................................................................................................................................... iv

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................................... vii

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY ............................................................................. 1

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 1

Statement of the Problem ................................................................................................................ 4

Objectives .......................................................................................................................................... 5

Hypothesis .......................................................................................................................................... 5

Justification .......................................................................................................................................... 5

Scope and Limitation ......................................................................................................................... 8

Literature Review ............................................................................................................................. 8

Theoretical Framework .................................................................................................................... 14

Methodology ...................................................................................................................................... 17

Chapter Outline ............................................................................................................................... 19
CHAPTER TWO: THE NATURE OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction.........................................................................................................................21

Nature of Embedding in Adichie’s Selected Works............................................................21

Narrative Levels in Adichie’s Selected Works..................................................................26

Relationship between Embedding Texts and Embedded Texts........................................33

Embedding and Authority.................................................................................................38

Conclusion..........................................................................................................................41

CHAPTER THREE: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction..........................................................................................................................43

Functions of the Embedded Narratives..............................................................................43

The Explicative Function....................................................................................................44

Thematic Function.............................................................................................................52

Actional Function.............................................................................................................53

Aesthetic Function............................................................................................................55

Advancing the Oral Storytelling Tradition.......................................................................59

Creation of Multi-vocality .................................................................................................62
Illusion of Reality............................................................................................................................65

Functions of Embedded Narratives for the Characters.............................................................67

Development of Themes through the Embedded Narratives..................................................71

Limitations of the Embedded Narrative Technique ...............................................................86

Conclusion.....................................................................................................................................88

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION...............................................................................................89

WORKS CITED..............................................................................................................................93
ABSTRACT

Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” feature diverse forms of narrative embedding. Although embedded narratives have attracted considerable attention, narrative analysts have not accounted for new forms of embedding such as blogs. This research examines the nature and function of embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works while evaluating the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating themes. The research draws upon Russian formalism to examine how the form of the work contributes to the overall meaning of the work. It also adopts the theory of narratology which outlines the basic approach to narrative levels. A close and comparative reading of the texts reveals the nature and function of the embedded narratives and the relationship between the primary and secondary narratives. The relationship between narrative levels in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* is complicated both by competing structural models and clashes between narrative levels. Adichie transgresses the norms of narrative embedding thus bringing into focus the assumptions that exist around it. Adichie’s deft use of embedded narratives is seen through the many functions it serves and its efficacy in developing central themes. This research adds to studies done on Adichie’s fiction by attempting a narratological inquiry. It also, hopefully, contributes to future research of structure and other narrative techniques applied in Adichie’s works.
CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction
Writers employ numerous narrative techniques in their work to achieve various outcomes. A narrative is a representation of one or more events by a narrator. This definition is derived from those of Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (2) and H. Porter Abbot, in *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (12). This definition emphasizes that a narrative requires a narrator; a narrative must be communicated by someone or a channel of communication. Narrative techniques are the methods that authors employ to tell their stories. All the techniques employed have important functions in the story. The method and means behind interesting stories are the techniques used.

Sometimes writers employ the technique of inserting one or more stories within the larger story that encompasses them. These stories within stories are referred to as embedded narratives. Some famous examples are Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* and *The Arabian Nights*. In *Canterbury Tales* the main story is about a band of pilgrims travelling to the shrine of Thomas A. Becket in Canterbury. The band passes time by having a story telling contest. The embedded narratives are the stories told by the pilgrims who participate in the storytelling contest. In *The Arabian Nights* the main story is of Scheherazade who is threatened by execution from her husband. Only if she beguiles her husband with a fascinating story will she survive. Every night she tells him a story and within that story new stories are embedded.
Embedded narratives are also common in African oral storytelling. African writers continue to merge the worlds of orality and literacy. An example is Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* where an anonymous Sudanese narrator tells of the journey of Mustafa Saeed, the protagonist of the novel. Salih’s narrative is a polyphonic novel in which the narrator assumes a crucial role as he gradually turns into a full blown character. Another example is Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* which contains nine embedded narratives; these include myths, folktales and anecdotes.

Mieke Bal in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* sees the narrator’s text as primary and the text narrated by the characters within the main primary text as the embedded text. These embedded texts have also been referred to as secondary narratives. Bal explains that she uses the term primary “without value judgement; neither (temporal) priority nor (qualitative) primacy is implied” (57). This implies that the primary text just means the text which comes first, the secondary narrative is the one which comes second and is embedded in the primary narrative. This means either the primary text or secondary text may be the main story depending on the intensity of either narrative. The primary text and secondary text are distinguished by levels in the technical sense such that the narrator’s text is the primary text and the actor’s text is secondary.

Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* distinguishes principal types of relations between embedding and embedded narrative: The first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, conferring on the second narrative an explanatory function. The second type consists of a purely thematic
relationship, therefore implying no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis: a relationship of contrast or of analogy. The third type involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content, a function of distraction, or obstruction. The most illustrious example according to Genette is found in *The Arabian Nights*, where Scheherazade holds off death with renewed narratives, (provided they interest the sultan) (232-233).

Chimamanda Adichie has earned reputation as a master story-teller with a fresh, lyrical and irreverent voice. An acclaimed contemporary African writer; Adichie has written three novels; *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Americanah* (2013), a collection of short stories *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009) and a short story “Transition to Glory” found within the anthology *African Love Stories* (2006) edited by Ama Ata Aidoo. *Half of a Yellow Sun*, which won the 2007 Orange Prize for fiction captures the experiences and impact of the Nigeria-Biafra war through the lives of its characters. “Jumping Monkey Hill”, a short story in the collection *The Thing around Your Neck* looks at the foreign perceptions of Africans in general and the subtle exploitation of women. *Americanah* which won the National Book Critics Circle award for fiction in 2014 is the story of Ifemelu a young immigrant from Nigeria to America and Obinze her boyfriend who goes to London and stays there illegally hoping to regularize his status. The authorities catch up with him and he is deported. The book details their immigrant experiences, their love, separation and eventual reunion.

It is intriguing that Adichie employs embedded narratives widely in her fiction. This research explores the significance of the embedded narrative strategy in African literature.
It is an inquiry in the nature and form of the embedded narratives and how the embedded narratives bear on ideological dimensions of literature while expounding its usefulness. While all users of narrative embedding as literary device have their points of interest, some instances are so extreme that they call for critical attention, like in Adichie’s case. Adichie’s novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* feature highly complex structures of embedding. *Half of a Yellow Sun* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” employ the Mise en Abyme technique, a term coined in 1893 by Andre Gide that refers to a text within a text. This is a text that mirrors the text that holds it. Therefore in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, there is a book within the main book and in “Jumping Monkey Hill” a story within a story. In *Americanah*, one of the characters sets up blogs at various points in her life. Through the omniscient narrator we learn about the comments of visitors to the two blogs.

**Statement of the Problem**

Although the phenomenon of the story within a story has received considerable attention, the orientation has been towards oral narratives such as myths, folktales, fairy tales, animal fables, song tales and such other categories. The tendency of placing these oral narratives within the African novel has been used by African novelists to conjoin the creative forces from their oral tradition to those within the writer’s chosen form of writing.

Embedded narratives have received significant attention from theorists of narrative in recent years. However, narrative analysts have not sought to account for new forms of embedding such as emails, blogs or online chats. Though Adichie’s work has been received
with great interest most of it has been slanted toward the thematic concerns. There is limited narratological inquiry on her work.

The nature and function of embedded narratives vary from one piece of writing to another. This study therefore examines the narrative techniques in Adichie’s work with specific attention to the nature and function of embedded narratives in the novels *Half a Yellow sun, Americanah* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

**Objectives**

This research was guided by the following objectives:

i. To examine the nature of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s work;

ii. To evaluate the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating themes.

**Hypothesis**

This research tested the following hypotheses:

i. Adichie employs new forms of narrative embedding in her fiction.

ii. Embedded narratives are effective tools for communicating themes.

**Justification**

The colonial and immediate post-colonial African novelists were driven by the African experiences under the colonial system. This group of writers assimilated and synthesized
the traditions of orality and literacy. The oral tradition impulse is strong in their writing because the writers are products of both the oral and literate education. One significant aspect of merging the oral and literacy traditions is the use of story within a story technique. The writers introduce various oral narratives within the narrative structure of their work in the development of characters, plots and themes.

I define contemporary as occurring in or belonging to the present time. Contemporary writers therefore in my judgment are those whose works have been written and published from the 1980s to the present time. Adichie, born in 1977 and whose works in this study were published between the years 2006-2013 fits the description of a contemporary writer. Christina Abuk in her review of Yvonne Vera’s *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women’s Writing* defines ‘opening spaces’ as “pushing the limits of conventional expectations and then moving beyond interstitial positions, into arenas for new actions and relations.”

One of the important questions narratologists ask is; how the story is packaged. Stories are not always presented in a linear form. Writers may sometimes use frame narratives which contain within them embedded narratives. Tanure Ojaide in “Examining Canonisation in Modern African Literature” argues that the aesthetic choices African writers make in response to different social realities is important in any discussion of a literary canon. Studies on the growth of African literature have focused more on examinations of the importance of oral traditions, languages and thematic concerns at the expense of narratological observations and concerns. It is through the study of literature in terms of style, form, and narrative strategies that the thematic concerns are adequately addressed.
This research is also informed by the fact that African literature continues to grow and develop. Growth in African literature is marked by experimentation, particularly of form and by the realization that knowledge is not absolute. African writers explore new possibilities and at the same time putting into question any previously accepted means of grounding and evaluating ideas. Technological innovations, for example, contribute to modernist experimentation with new forms. Through this research I attempt to expand the observation by Ojaide that African literary canon is fluid and not cast in stone. Contemporary writers seem to follow Ezra Pound’s famous exhortation to ‘Make it new’. This exhortation encouraged writers to apply new energy to established forms.

The study of the new ways contemporary writers are telling their stories is a useful contribution to the ever-growing body of African literary criticism. Contemporary trends are expanding the African literary canon and thus literary critics need to be open minded and not biased when new forms emerge. Adichie’s choice to embed a blog within her novel is a pointer to how modern innovations affects the way writers tell their story.

The differently styled narratives and structures of embedding in Adichie’s selected works facilitate an exploration of the changing trends in writing. The study will also bring into focus the assumptions that exist around embedded narratives.

This study contributes to the studies already done on Adichie’s work by taking an approach that gives attention to the use of embedding in the selected works. This attention to the use of this narrative technique may transform readings of the text.
**Scope and Limitation**

In this project I focus on Chimamanda Adichie’s novels *Americanah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” from the collection of short stories *The Thing around your Neck*. I am concerned with the nature and function of embedded narratives in these texts. In *Americanah* I examine the blogs set up by Ifemelu. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* I interrogate the book Ugwu writes; “The World Was Silent When We Died.” and in the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” I examine the untitled story written by Ujunwa.

My background readings of Adichie’s published fiction revealed that of her three novels only *Purple Hibiscus* does not contain embedded narratives. In the collection of short stories; *The Thing around your Neck* only “Jumping Monkey Hill” contains an embedded narrative. I have chosen the three texts because of the extended use of embedding in those texts. For example, in *Americanah* there is extensive use of the blog within the text. This study limited itself to these embeddings with an aim of interrogating their purpose and place in the selected works.

**Literature Review**

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a context for this research. I also include relevant discourses on embedding to show where this study fits in the existing body of knowledge. The literature selected has some bearing on my project and was reviewed to serve as building blocks upon which this study is pegged on.

Emmanuel Obiechina refers to the phenomenon of the story- within- the story as the narrative proverb. He explains that the embedded stories are referred to as the narrative
proverbs because they perform organic and structural functions of proverbs in oral speech and in creative literature. Obiechina argues that:

like the use of proverbs proper, the embedding of stories in the novels is based upon two main principles of the African oral tradition- authority and association through which an idea is given validity by being placed side by side with another idea that bears the stamp of communal approval and by its being linked to the storehouse of collective wisdom (201).

In discussing the embedded narratives in *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe he concludes that each embedded story brings “something total to the meaning of the novel, some insight to clarify the action, to sharpen characterization, to elaborate themes and enrich the setting and environment of action” (204). Thus narrative embedding expresses the distinctive quality of African fiction. This background points to the fact that as African literature develops it does not necessarily deviate from the historical context of embedding. Narrative embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition and has continued to be important as a way of bridging the gap between the culture of oral and communal storytelling and the experience of reading a text. In this research we look at how Adichie employs this age old technique in her contemporary style.

Abiola Irele in “Orality, Literacy and African Literature” argues that the development of the interplay between orality and literacy is “not merely in purely linguistic framework as in the phase of early Africanist studies, but also from a literacy and artistic perspective” (24). Narrative
embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition. The first narrative level functions in a similar way to the performance aspect of the storyteller’s role. The embedded narrative is an artistic device that enhances the performance of narrating.

Eileen Julien in “African Literature” says “the stuff of which literature is made of includes: language, aesthetic and literary tradition, culture and history and socio-political reality” (296). She adds that “the circumstances in which African novels, plays, and poetry are produced, many of them the legacy of colonialism, are as important to our understanding of African literature as are the style and images of texts we read” (304). This statement suggests that it is important to look at the style and form of a text in order to get a better understanding of it.

Frances E. White in her review ‘While the World Watched’, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Adichie” views the use of a “clever book within a book” (10) in *Half of a Yellow Sun* as one of the effective strategies that Adichie has used to confront Nigeria’s bloody past. White argues that Ugwu the child narrator and writer of the book within a book “takes up writing as a way of dealing with his bewildering and disturbing experiences: facing both shortcomings and strengths of his master; participating in atrocities as a child soldier; and sustaining serious physical damage during battle” (11).

While appreciating White’s observation, this study looks beyond what the writing of the book does for Ugwu the child narrator. It bears asking what the purpose or function is for the narrative that embeds it, what message the book carries, and of what significance the position of the
embedding takes in the book. This study also engages with the function of narrative embedding for the primary texts and its effect on the embedded text.

Doseline Kiguru (2011) examines the role of the child figure in telling narratives based on Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Kiguru notes that the writing of the book “The World was Silent When we Died” by Ugwu, a child narrator is a strategy Adichie uses creatively to point to the reader that the entire narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is the story of Ugwu. She also adds that the strategy is used to create in the mind of the reader the illusion that the stories in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are not fictional but real. This observation points to the embedded narrative as not only a tool for expressing the author’s thematic concerns but as an artistic device. In looking at the nature of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s work this research highlights the creative strategies employed through the form of the embedded narratives.

Umelo Ojinmah in “No Humanity in War: Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” contends that the embedded narrative “The World Was Silent When We Died” within *Half of a Yellow Sun* is Adichie’s real book, real voice and opinion. Ojinmah argues that it is in the exposition of the embedded narrative that Adichie’s voice and opinion are poignant. This research puts to test Ojinmah’s argument by looking at both the embedding text and the embedded text with an aim of establishing how Adichie merges the two. I map out for each text the structure of embedding as well as its relationship with the narrative discourse, the story and the meaning of the texts.
In *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women’s Writing*, Yvonne Vera refers to the writers’ need to invent and to banish. This involves defiance of the convention of women’s silence. Writing has established a platform which is freer than speech due to comparative distance and autonomy of books. Critics of African literature have looked at the issues shaping contemporary fiction while giving little attention to how these issues are packaged in writing. Though Adichie’s work does not feature in this collection, it is worth noting that she has embraced the need to “invent and banish” through her choice of form. Adichie chooses to deviate from the common linear form of writing to extensive narrative embedding in her fiction.

David Herman in “Genette meets Vygotsky: Narrative Embedding and Distributed Intelligence” argues that “in conjunction with the cognitive activity of their interpreter embedded narratives constitute intelligent systems—systems that both stage and facilitate the process of shared thinking about past events and about one’s own and other minds” (357). Herman views narrative embedding as enhancing the overall power of the knowledge-generating system to which it lends structure. He further explains that there is a very complex process involved in comprehending the shifts between narrative levels and the changes entailed by those shifts in the status of characters doubling as narrators. In Herman’s view, the embedded text is a system for generating knowledge not just a mere vessel. This argument makes a case for a closer look at embedded narratives in search of the meaning and knowledge they hold.
William Nelles in his paper “Stories within Stories: Narrative Levels and Embedded Narratives” argues that all embedded narratives have a dramatic impact, if only that of deferring or interrupting the embedding narrative, and that all embedded narrative have a thematic function, if only one of relative contrast or analogy. I on the other hand, feel that there is more to the embedded narrative than just deferring or interrupting the embedding narrative. Rimmon-Kenan describes three classes of functions performed either individually or in combination by embedded narratives: actional, explicative and thematic. In this study I examine the function of embedded narratives without limiting the possibilities to a given standard; instead I use those as guides.

Mikhail Bakhtin in *Discourse in the Novel* defines heteroglossia in the novel as:

> A special type of double-voiced discourse (which) …serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they- as it were-know about each other (just as two exchanges in a dialogue know of each other and are structured in this mutual knowledge of each other); it is as if they actually hold conversation with each other (324).

This study approaches the Bakhtinian ideal of the heteroglossic novel from the perspective that its vocal multiplicity is a narrative strategy that signals to the reader to attend to the multi-voiced potential of the text and to interpret it. Bakhtin envisions egalitarian polyphony for the novel as a genre. Bakhtin writes: “The novel must represent all the social and ideological voices of its era.
the novel must be a microcosm of heteroglossia…one single unit of social becoming. Every language in the novel is a point of view, a socio-ideological conceptual system of real social groups and their embodied representatives” (411). This study examines how the embedded narratives contribute to the multi-vocality in the selected texts.

From the literature review it is clear that various scholars have researched the area of embedded narratives. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* having been published earlier than *Americanah* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” has received more critical attention. The studies on Adichie’s work however, do not focus much on the embedded narratives save by way of mention. There exists a gap in the area of narratological inquiry in Adichie’s work. This study attempts to fill the gap by examining the use of embedded narratives in the selected works.

**Theoretical Framework**

The main focus in this research is on the nature and function of embedded narratives in Chimamanda Adichie’s work. I rely on two theories to achieve my objectives namely, Narratology and Russian Formalism.

Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* has defined narratology as “the study of how narratives make meaning, and what basic mechanisms and procedures are common to all acts of story-telling” (222). One of the most prominent narratologists Genette focuses on not just the narrative itself but how it is told, that is the process of narrating. To study the nature and function of embedded narratives I analyzed the narrative
structure of Adichie’s fiction. Narratology enabled me to answer vital questions such as: who is telling the story? And how is the story packaged?

Writers often make use of frame narratives sometimes called primary narratives which contain within them the embedded narratives also called secondary narratives. Mieke Bal in *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of Narrative* discusses the possible relationships between primary and embedded texts. In this discussion she notes that “the structure of narrative levels becomes more than a mere story-telling device; it is part of the narrative’s poetics and needs to be understood for the narrative to be fully appreciated” (59). This therefore suggests that to fully understand a text it is important to study the relationship between primary texts and embedded narratives to get the intended meaning.

This study also used formalism as an analytical tool. Formalism refers to a style of inquiry that focuses, almost exclusively, on features of the literary text itself, to the exclusion of biographical, historical or intellectual contexts. One of the central tenets of formalism thought is: that the form of any work of literature is inherently part of its content and that the attempt to separate the two is erroneous. Formalism has the advantage of forcing writers and critics to evaluate a work on its own terms rather to rely on “accepted” notions of a writer’s work.

This study will adopt the Russian formalism strand. Russian formalism refers primarily to the work of the Society for the Study of Poetic Language founded in 1916 in St. Petersburg by Boris Eichenbaum, Victor Shklovsky, and Yury Tynyanov, and secondarily to the Moscow Linguistic
Circle Founded in 1914 by Roman Jakobson. Russian formalists are interested in the analysis of the text but their main concern is with method as the scientific basis for literary theory.

One of the concepts of formalism is about, as Di Yanni Robert puts it, “how a literary work comes to mean what it does” (1580). Formalism’s concern with the formal elements of a text makes it suitable for this research because the embedded narratives take different forms and also the idea of embedding narratives in a work is an aspect of form.

Narratology and formalism have a close relationship brought about by the fact that narratology borrows elements from Russian Formalist critics such as Vladimir Propp. Propp investigates Russian fairy tales to determine there narrative functions. According to his analysis, all folk or fairy tales are based on thirty fixed elements that occur in a given sequence. Narratologists such as Genette have also developed methods of analyzing a story’s structure to uncover its meaning, each building upon the former work of another narratologist (and in some cases Russian Formalists) and adding an element or two.

The point of departure is that narratologists provide us with various systematic, thorough approaches to the mechanics of a narrative; narratology helps the reader to understand how a text makes meaning and not what it means. Formalists on the other hand emphasize the form of a literary work to determine its meaning focusing on literary elements such as plot, character, setting, diction, imagery, structure and point of view. Narratology and Formalism both look at the structure of a narrative. While narratologists study how narratives make meaning. Formalists focus almost exclusively on the form of a work.
Methodology

This study is concerned with the nature and function of the embedded narrative. To achieve my goals, my methodology included close and comparative reading of Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”. I examined Adichie’s work, narrowing down to the texts that have embedded narratives. My key focus was on the nature and function of these narratives. This process helped me to identify the relationship between the primary narrative and the secondary narratives in the texts.

I then interrogated the primary texts using the theory of narratology and the Russian formalist theory. Narratology was relevant in the analysis of the structural framework that underlies the order and manner in which a narrative is presented to the reader. Following Genette’s ideas in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* where he explains the relations between narrative levels; I studied the texts to identify the different narrative levels and the relationship between these levels. Genette suggests that in every narrative the narrator’s status is defined both by its narrative level (extra-or intradiegetic) and by its relationship to the story (hetero-or homodiegetic). Once I identified these relationships I looked at the differences and similarities in the selected texts.

The working presuppositions and the basic conceptual framework of this study were informed by the formalist approach to literary criticism so as to understand the organic unity in the text. I interpreted the texts by exploring ways in which the embedded narratives contribute to the organic unity in the selected works of Adichie.
I also reviewed secondary texts especially critical works dealing with Adichie’s works from different perspectives. Literary critics who have looked at Adichie’s work were useful in shedding light on the subject. Through the close and comparative reading I was able to further the arguments advanced or deviated from them based on my research findings.
Chapter Outline

Chapter one introduces the writer Chimamanda Adichie and the works selected for this research. Within this chapter I make a case for the study of the nature and function of embedded narratives. It also gives a background to narrative embedding as a literary technique. This chapter on the whole gives an introduction to the research, stating the objectives, scope and limitation, methodology and the theoretical framework which guided this study.

Chapter two makes an inquiry on the nature of embedded narratives in the selected texts. I examine the form the embedded narratives take, the position of the narratives in the text and the relationship between the embedded text and the embedding narrative. This chapter also looks at the differently styled narratives and structure of embedding in Adichie’s work bringing into focus the assumptions that exist around embedded narratives.

Chapter three explores the functions performed by the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works without limiting itself to the actional, explicative and thematic functions. It also examines the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating the writer’s thematic concerns. This chapter engages with the function of narrative embedding in terms of the embedding narrative’s effect on the embedded narrative and also the purpose and function of the embedded narratives for the narrative that embeds. It also addresses the function of embedded narratives to the characters.

The conclusion summarizes the research done with a focus on the findings observed in this study.
CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction

This section explores the nature of embedding in Adichie’s selected works. This has been done through an analysis of embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey” separately. This chapter discusses the forms of embedding found in the texts while examining how the embedded narratives bear on ideological dimensions of literature. In this chapter I identify the different narrative levels and the relationship between these levels.

Narrative embedding takes place where one narrative is subordinated to another narrative. Samuel Waldron in “Challenging Narrative Hierarchies: Embedded Narrative Structure in David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* and Mark Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*” suggests that narrative embedding requires a text with at least two narratives the embedded and the embedding. For the purpose of this research the embedding relationship will require the embedded narrative must be visible. The latter narrative must be present and observable in the text

Nature of Embedding in Adichie’s selected works

“Jumping Monkey Hill” is a story set outside Cape Town in South Africa. Ujunwa the protagonist is part of a group of African writers attending a writers’ workshop. Authors from various African countries are gathered at this workshop. Within the story there is reference to the stories written by the other writers in the workshop. Only Ujunwa’s story
is displayed and the reader journeys with Ujunwa as she writes her story. Through the third person omniscient narrator the reader gets to know Ujunwa’s thoughts.

Adichie makes use of the *Mise en abyme technique* in the packaging of “Jumping Monkey Hill”. *Mise en abyme* is the French term referring to the practice in heraldry of placing the image of a small shield on a larger shield. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Ujunwa’s story is semi-autobiographical. The story Ujunwa writes is in the third person limited point of view. Ujunwa’s story is untitled. It is indented within the primary narrative and presented in smaller font to distinguish it from the primary text. The story is complete and can be read independent from the primary narrative.

The protagonist Chioma in Ujunwa’s story faces two situations where men in authority take advantage of her position through sexual exploitation. In the first instance, “the man says he will hire her and then walks across and stands behind her and reaches over her shoulders to squeeze her breasts. She hisses, stupid man! You cannot respect yourself! and leaves” (100). In the second instance, Chioma walks away after observing Yinka sitting on a customer’s lap and realizing that this would also be her fate. The alhaji runs a finger over Yinka’s arm. When the alhaji invites them in to give them perfume Chioma walks away.

The choice of the short story form within the short story is valid because of the advantages of the short story form. An example is the ease with which an author maintains consistency of purpose since there are fewer characters and settings thus better dramatic and thematic unities.
Later when Ujunwa reads the story to the group, Edward the workshop leader says that “the whole thing is implausible” (113). At this point Adichie reveals to the reader and the other characters in the primary text that this story is the real life story of Ujunwa:

A real story of real people?” she said, with her eyes on Edward’s face. “The only thing I didn’t add in the story is that after I left my co-worker and walked out of the alhaji’s house, I got into the jeep and insisted that the driver takes me home because I knew it was the last time I would be riding it. (114)

*Half of a Yellow Sun* recounts the ghastly historical events of the Nigeria-Biafra war. The central characters in the novel are Ugwu, the twin sisters; Olanna and Kainene, Odenigbo and Richard. To a large extent, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is Ugwu’s story, but, the chapters are written in turn from the point of view of Ugwu, Olanna and Richard. The action in the novel moves between the early and the late nineteen sixties.

Interspersed throughout the book are brief passages taken from a book entitled; “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The authorship of this book is ambiguous; Adichie leads the reader to believe that the book is written by Richard, “the title of the book came to Richard: “‘The World Was Silent When We Died’. He would write it after the war, a narrative of Biafra’s difficult victory…” (375) but we learn towards the end of the book that it was Ugwu who was writing the book; “Ugwu was writing as she
spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of…” (210).

_Americanah_, Adichie’s most recent novel traverses three nations and addresses a myriad of issues; identity, nationality, race, love, loneliness and aspiration. The book opens in Princeton where Ifemelu lives, as she heads to Trenton, the closest place she can get her hair braided. Her hair being braided at the salon is symbolic of Adichie braiding and weaving her story. Through flashbacks we get to know the story of Ifemelu and Obinze that begins twenty years earlier in Nigeria.

Ifemelu and her boyfriend Obinze are caught up in a state that is surrounded by dysfunction and corruption. The two respond by leaving the country in search of brighter prospects. Obinze heads to England due to rejection from post 9/11 stringent immigration policies in America. He travels on a tourist visa but extends his stay illegally. Eventually he is discovered and deported to Nigeria. Ifemelu goes to the United States and cuts all communication with Obinze. She struggles to make it and finally succeeds. Ifemelu launches a blog about race in America. By the time we meet her at the salon she has made up her mind to return to Nigeria.

_Americanah_ has a seven part structure that holds fifty five chapters. The story takes the third person omniscient perspective. The chapter narration oscillates between Obinze and Ifemelu’s point of view. Adichie establishes that _Americanah_ is primarily Ifemelu’s story
by writing chapter one from Ifemelu’s point of view. Chapter two is from Obinze’s point of view, this establishes that his story is also of importance.

The frame of the story is rendered by the braid salon. From the salon the details of the story are laid out as flashback within that frame. Interestingly, Ifemelu leaves the salon at the end of chapter forty one. The following chapters deal with Ifemelu’s transition on the verge of returning to Nigeria. Chapters forty four to fifty five are set in Nigeria and deal with the issues in Ifemelu and Obinze’s relationship and provide a closure to the novel.

There are blog posts spread throughout the novel. While in America Ifemelu sets up a blog called “Raceteenth or Curious Observations by a Non-American Black on the subject of Blackness in America” (296). Ifemelu later changes its name to “Raceteenth or Various Observations in America About American Blacks (Those formerly known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black” (315). When Ifemelu returns to Nigeria she sets up another blog called “The Small Redemptions of Lagos”.

Adichie’s use of the blogosphere in Americanah is in keeping with the narrative time. The advancement of technology has significantly changed the mode of communication; people have turned to the use of Twitter, Facebook and blogs to express opinions on significant issues. Though we are not given specific dates in the novel, the allusion to 9/11 tragedy attack and the election of President Barack Obama to office helps us to place the setting as contemporary. The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines blogosphere as “an online journal where an individual, group,
or corporation presents a record of activities, thoughts or beliefs…many blogs provide a forum to allow visitors to leave comments and interact with the publisher” (n.p).

The choice of a blog as the form that carries the embedded text is very significant. Blogs are perpetual and can reach a wide audience. Each blog post has its own title and content. Visitors to the blog read the posts and share them so that other people can see and read them. Visitors can also make comments and participate in the discussion. Blogs are also easily accessible through computers and mobile phones. One of the characters in the novel, Paula reads one of Ifemelu’s blog posts in a gathering of friends from her phone (325).

**Narrative Levels in Adichie’s Selected Works**

Martin Gray’s dictionary of literary terms defines the various types of narrators and narrative levels as follows:

An extradiegetic narrator tells a story on the extradiegetic level, a ‘higher’ level that includes everyone and everything that determines how the story is told. His or her narration can include one or more other narrations (told by intradiegetic narrators). An intradiegetic narrator tells the story on the narrative level of the characters; the diegetic level which describes how the characters of a story communicate with each other and which is embedded at the extradiegetic level.

A homodiegetic narrator describes his or her own personal experience as a character in the story. Such a character cannot know more about other characters than what their
actions reveal. A heterodiegetic narrator on the other hand describes the experiences of the characters that appear in the story.

The narrator in Ujunwa’s story is presented to the reader as a heterodiegetic narrator. As we read the story we cannot link the events of the story to Ujunwa. It is only through the primary text or at the extradiegetic level that we learn that the narrator is actually homodiegetic. Ujunwa the character in “Jumping Monkey Hill” is actually Chioma in the untitled story she writes.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the reader is presented with a first narrative level through the third person omniscient narrator and then the second level narrative act Ujunwa writes a short story. At each level, the narrative is truncated before it attains closure.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in “Jumping Monkey Hill”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Narrative Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Omniscient third person narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story about Ujunwa and other participants in a writers workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second level Narrative act</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ujunwa writes a short story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded Narrative</td>
<td>Metadiegetic</td>
<td>Story of Chioma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, at the extradiegetic level, the third person omniscient narrator presents the events around the Nigeria-Biafra war. This constitutes the intradiegetic level in which Ugwu writes a book. This book within the primary text constitutes the metadiegetic level of narratives. This structure is similar to that of the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill”. Adichie also applies the *Mise en Abyme* technique, since the embedded narrative mirrors the embedding narrative in terms of form.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” is written from the omniscient third person point of view. The brief passages appear as summaries that tell the reader what is contained in the chapters of that book:

1. **The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died**

   For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash. She sat on the floor. Olanna tells him this story and he notes the details. She tells him how the bloodstains on the woman’s wrapper blended into the fabric to form a misty manure... (82). ¹

The omniscient narrator of the novel and the writer of “The Book” constantly overlap. In this first part it is obvious that the writer has access to the information in the novel. At this point in the story we do not know who is writing the book. The only person mentioned to have an interest in writing a book about Nigeria is Richard, a British journalist. The reader easily assumes the writer is Richard.

¹ All the excerpts from “The Book” are numbered as such I have numbered them in my quotes for ease of reference.
Genette in *Narrative Discourse* defines metalepsis as “any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a Metadiegetic universe etc) or the inverse (234-235). Metalepsis therefore is a paradoxical transgression of the boundaries between narrative levels. Dorrit Cohn in “Metalepsis and Mise en Abyme” defines interior metalepsis as “all metalepsis that occurs between two levels of the same story; that is to say, between a primary and secondary story” (106).

Interior metalepsis occurs in *Half of a Yellow Sun* when at the extradiegetic level the reader finds out that the ‘he’ referred to in the first part of “The World Was Silent when We Died” is Ugwu. This is found in part four of the novel which covers the late Sixties. “Then she described the head itself, the open eyes, the greying skin. Ugwu was writing as she spoke and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important…” (210).

The transgression here occurs between the primary narrative and the secondary narrative. It appears that the narrator of the primary narrative is the same narrator in “The Book: The World Was Silent When we Died”. The book’s passages are written from the third person point of view similar to primary text:

2. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died
   
   He discusses the British soldier merchant Taubman Goldie, how he coerced, cajoled and killed…(115).

3. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died
He writes about independence. The second world war changed the world order: Empire was crumbling…(155).

5. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died
He writes about starvation, starvation was a Nigerian weapon of war. (237)

When towards the end of the novel we realize it is Ugwu writing the book we discover that Adichie collapses the idea of narrative levels and the hierarchy of the same. There are no longer boundaries. The levels become intertwined. Adichie creates an illusion of a real book but in the real sense the passages are summaries of “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The summaries of “The Book” are presented to the reader by the same extradiegetic narrator.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>levels</th>
<th>Narrative content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradicgetic</td>
<td>Third person omniscient narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story about Nigeria-Biafra war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second level narrative</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ugwu writes a book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded narrative</td>
<td>Metadiegetic</td>
<td>The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Genette suggests that “metalepsis designates the transgression of a line of demarcation that authors usually do not touch, namely the shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells and the world of which one tells” (236). Adichie looks away from
conventional embedding and points to alternative structural reading of her novel. The overlapping in *Half of a Yellow Sun* suggests links between the narrative levels. A close observation of the narrative structure in this particular text reveals a limitation of the theory of narratology to the extent that it views metalepsis more of a transgression than of any merit. One of the merits seen in this text is its use to connect the embedded and the embedding. The demerit is that metalepsis may cause confusion about who the narrators are to the readers of the novel.

It is important to note that there are other forms of embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The novel contains speeches, radio broadcasts, songs, poems, Richard’s articles, letters and such other categories. This research focuses on the major embedded narrative. The term ‘major’ for the purposes of this research refers to any narrative that takes a significant portion of the text, where significant is any narrative longer than three to four paragraphs. While this distinction may not be perfect, it is nevertheless a useful one. The intent is not to brush aside the text’s shorter narratives but to provide a clearer comprehensible picture of the predominant narrative structure.

The narrative structure in *Americanah* is multi-layered. At the extradiegetic level is the third person omniscient narrator narrating from Ifemelu’s and Obinze’s perspective at different times. The next level is the intradiegetic level where Ifemelu writes a blog and posts blogs on different topics. The reader observes the narration of ‘tales’ by the intradiegetic narrator both about the narrator (homodiegetic) and about others (heterodiegetic). The next level is the Metadiegetic, which comprises the blog posts by Ifemelu. Beyond this is the meta-metadiegetic which arises from blog comments by blog visitors on different topics.
This type of embedding presents a complex situation because the narrative levels follow no clear pattern. The result is that it does not amount to a structural system that would explain the relationship of the narrative parts. In some instances the extradiegetic narrator presents the blog contents from the meta-metadiegetic level. An example is: “Years later she would blog about this: ‘On the Subject of Non-American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know.’ A Congolese woman wrote a long comment in response: She had moved to Virginia from Kinshasa and months into her first semester of college begun to feel dizzy … (158).” In this example the extradiegetic narrator cuts across all the possible levels of narration in the novel as follows; the intradiegetic- Ifemelu writing the blog, The Metadiegetic- the blog post; “On the Subject of Non-American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know ” (158) The meta-metadiegetic, the Congolese woman writing her experience of panic attacks.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in *Americanah*²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>levels</th>
<th>Narrative content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Story told from the third person omniscient point of View</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story revolves around the lives of Obinze and Ifemelu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Level Narrative</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ifemelu sets up a blog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² This table presentation is *Americanah*’s basic narrative level structure. The complex nature of the embedding caused by the overlapping of narrative levels could not be tabulated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embedded Narrative</th>
<th>Metadiegetic</th>
<th>Blog – Raceteenth or Various observations about American Blacks (Those Formerly known as Negroes) by a Non-American black Blog – The Small Redemptions of Lagos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third Level Narrative</td>
<td>Meta-</td>
<td>Comments and stories posted by blog visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>metadiegetic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Relationship between embedding texts and embedded texts in Adichie’s selected works**

Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* differentiates the main types of relationships that can connect the metadiegetic narrative to the primary narrative in which it is inserted. The first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, conferring on the second narrative an explanatory function. The second type consists of a purely thematic relationship, therefore implying no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis: a relationship of contrast or of analogy. The third type involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content a function of distraction, for example and/or obstruction (232-233).

Mieke Bal observes that when the embedded text presents a complete story with an elaborate fabula, we gradually forget the fabula of the primary narrative: This apparently loose relationship between primary and embedded text is relevant to the development of the primary fabula (57). Another possible relationship between the two texts presents itself when the two fabulas are
related to each other. This structure has two possible meanings. Either the embedded story explains the primary story, or it resembles the primary story. In the first case the relationship is made explicit by the actor narrating the embedded story; in the second the explanation is usually left to the reader, or merely hinted at, in the fabula (58).

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the narrator relates the writing process of one of the characters. The omniscient third person narrator says, “She sat there for a long time, moving the mouse from side to side, trying to decide whether to name her character something common, like Chioma or something exotic like Ibani” (100). From this narration we learn that Ujunwa is writing a story about a female protagonist. Just beneath this excerpt is a display of the story Ujunwa is writing.

The two texts are related to each other. The embedded story explains the primary story. Adichie uses the embedded story to develop pertinent issues that the primary text raises. This relationship is made explicit by the character Ujunwa narrating the embedded story through her writing. Though the short story written by Ujunwa is complete the primary text takes a larger part of the story “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” is interspersed throughout the novel. The distinction between the primary narrative and this narrative is that the excerpts are short passages, printed in a different typeface, they are all titled “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The primary text takes a larger part of the novel since the embeddings are summaries and not whole chapters.
The reader finds the first part of embedded book in part one of the novel which covers the early sixties. This portion summarizes the prologue of the book within the novel. It is worth noting that the presentation of the book is abrupt, no mention of what it is about or who the author is has been given this far. The embedded narratives are short passages that are presented as chapter summaries that are numbered.

The embeddings have no relation with the chapter content of the chapters that hold them. Though the arrangement of the embedded narratives within the text appears haphazard, a closer study reveals an orderly pattern. Each segment of “The Book” appears at the end of either one or two series of three chapters focalised by each of the three main focalisers. In part one and three the embeddings appear after one series and in part two and four after every two series.

In total, the embeddings are eight and the last is found on the last page of the novel:

8. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

Ugwu writes his dedication last. For my master, my good man (433).

The ending of the novel at the same time with the ending of the embedded narrative is significant because it places them on the same level. This implies that both narratives are of equal import.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the embedded narrative and the embedding narrative are related to each other. The embedded narrative explains the primary story. Bal explains in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* that “this relationship is made explicit by the
actor narrating the embedded story” (58). By stating clearly in the last chapter of the embedded narrative that Ugwu wrote, Adichie wants to ensure there is no doubt about the authorship of the book. This also reveals the connection between the two texts. Ugwu the child narrator in the primary text rises to write about his experience and observations about the war in the embedded text.

Genette’s *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* refers to this relationship as one of “direct causality” (232). He further explains that these kinds of embedded narratives seek to answer the question “what events led to the present situation?” The information contained in “The Book: The World was Silent When We Died” gives background details to events in the extradiegetic narrative.

In *Americanah* the narrator furnishes us with background information on the blogger (Ifemelu) and the blog. The reader is introduced to the blog in the first chapter of the book. This is an indication to the reader that the blog is an important part of the novel and its story. Unlike *Half of a Yellow Sun* where the embedded narrative just appears without warning; the blog in *Americanah* has an external introduction. From the outset of the novel the reader knows there is a blog and gets a feel of what the blog is about when the narrator mentions some posts in the blog and visitor comments on the second and third page of the novel.

The blog and primary text have a close relationship. There is spatio-temporal continuity between the metadiegesis and diegesis. This relationship is not of direct causality like the one observed in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The second narrative takes on an explanatory function. Some of the
fabulas in *Americanah* also resemble one another and the blog is intertwined with the primary narrative. Contained in the blogs are incidents of interest that Ifemelu experiences or observes in her day to day life. There is a repetition within the blog of events that the reader has already seen in the primary text.

An example is when Ifemelu works as a babysitter for a white family that lived in a grand stone house with white pillars; she encounters a carpet cleaner who is hostile to her because she is black and a black should not own such a stately house: “She would begin the blog post “Sometimes in America, Race is Class” with the story of his dramatic change and end it with: *It didn’t matter to him how much money I had. As far as he was concerned I did not fit as the owner of that stately house because of the way I looked. In America’s public discourse ... (166).”*

Another example is the blog on the expensive lifestyles of some young Nigerian women posted in “The Small Redemptions of Lagos” (422). The blog post is about Ranyinudo, Ifemelu’s friend. Before the post, on an earlier page is a description of Ranyinudo that matches the blog.

“*Ifemelu... wondered if she would be like Ranyinudo, working for an advertising company, living in a one bedroom flat whose rent her salary could not pay...dating a married chief executive who bought her business class tickets to London “* (389). The blog reads in part;

“*There are many young women in Lagos with Unknown Sources of Wealth; they live lives they cannot afford. They have only ever travelled business class to Europe but have jobs that can’t even afford them a regular ticket. One of them is my friend a beautiful, brilliant woman who works in advertising”* (422).
Bal defines resemblance between two fabulas as follows: “we speak of resemblance when two fabulas can be paraphrased in such a way that the summaries have one or more striking elements in common” (60). In the case of the two blog posts cited above in one the resemblance with the text is that both texts address the issue of race in America using the same incident. In the second the blog and text are a social critique on the lives of certain women in Nigeria. When confronted by Ranyinudo for airing her story in public, Ifemelu says “Your story is so common” (422). Ifemelu uses Ranyinudo’s life story to talk about women “who define their lives by men they can never truly have and are crippled by a culture of dependence” (422).

**Embedding and Authority**

All the embedding narratives in Adichie’s work vouch for the authenticity of the narrative they embed. The embedding texts do not just present the embedded text; they provide a context for the embedded narrative, credit it to a specific person and establish its credentials.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” and *Americanah* it is very clear from the outset who the authors of the embedded texts are. Ifemelu sets up the two blogs in Americanah. Ujunwa writes the untitled story in “Jumping Monkey Hill”. *Half of a Yellow Sun* takes a different approach: the author of the book within the novel is not revealed at the outset. The reader has to contend with the ambiguity of whether it is Richard or Ugwu who writes the book. It is eventually made clear towards the end of the novel that Ugwu is the author of the book. The ambiguity of the authorship of the embedded text is employed by Adichie to create suspense and at the same time make a statement about who should tell the African story.
The embedding narratives attest to the credibility of the narratives that they embed. In *Americanah* the narrator presents Ifemelu’s blog as a successful blog with a growing readership. The omniscient narrator says this about the blog:

> She had written the final post only days ago. Trailed by two hundred and seventy four comments so far. All those readers growing month by month, linking, cross posting, knowing so much more than she did; they had always frightened and exhilarated her (5)

In another instance, Paula one of Ifemelu and Blaine’s friends tells her students to read the blog (325). Paula equates the blog to any other authoritative text that the students are required to read. This puts forth a case about the importance of the blog. The various blog posts and comments from blog visitors create an interesting patchwork of conversations giving an impression of a series of supporting sources.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the embedding narrative backs up the information in “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” by creating an illusion that the information in the embedded narrative is true. In the first chapter of the embedded book the reader learns the source of the story in the prologue of that book is Olanna (81). To authenticate this story about the baby in calabash the extradiegetic narrator narrates this episode in chapter eleven. The narrator gives the reader details of the train journey and uses similar words; from the embedded narrative we read; “For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash. She sat on the floor of a train...” (81). From the primary text we read that; “Olanna sat on the floor of the train with her knees drawn up” (149). The narrator further endorses that prologue by narrating how the actual
process of writing that prologue takes place in chapter thirty four; “Then she described the head itself, the open eyes, the graying skin. Ugwu was writing as she spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose…” (410). Captured in that narration is an affirmation of the author of the book as earnest and keen to tell the story and a pointer to the importance of the story shared in the embedded narrative.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the reader learns that Ujunwa is a fine writer. The third person omniscient narrator says: “It was the British Council that had made the call for entries and selected the best” (96). This sets the readers expectation high; we anticipate that the story she writes will be good. After she reads her story some of the comments from the other participants were that; the story was “strong…believable…captured Lagos well…had a realistic portrayal of what women were going through in Nigeria” (113). This approval places the embedded story in good standing to counter Edward’s negative opinion about it.

An important piece of information that the embedding narrative reveals is that the story is actually Ujunwa’s real life experience. Since autobiography is more believable than fiction; Adichie effectively creates the illusion that the embedded narrative is a true story. The embedded narrative is therefore placed at a level higher than the one embedding it by being presented as a true story while the one that holds it is fictional.

The authors of the embedded narratives in the works studied write from a point of experience. Ugwu writes about his experiences during the war. Ifemelu blogs about her immigrant experiences in America. Ujunwa writes her own story. This validates their suitability to write
these stories. The experience gives them the knowledge and power to write the embedded narratives and the reader easily believes them.

Adichie’s choice to represent the embedded narratives as non-fictional text within the context of the embedding narrative elevates them in the ontological level. Ontological levels point out the subordination of worlds or realities. Waldron describes a subordinate world as one which is “fictional; it is subordinated to the real world because it has no independent existence beyond what is described or imagined in the real world” (17). In the works selected the primary narratives take a subordinate level.

Conclusion
This chapter has examined the nature of the embedded narratives in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”. It has discussed the various forms that shape the embedded narratives. I have attempted to present a working narratological model for the texts; discussing the narrative levels and their relationships. I have also observed that in some cases like *Americanah* the extensive embedding creates a clash between the narrative levels. In this chapter I also looked at the relationships between the embedding narrative and embedded narratives and concluded that the relationship is one where the embedding narrative justifies the embedded narrative. This discussion leads us to the next chapter that looks at the function of the embedded texts and how it contributes to developing Adichie’s thematic concerns.
CHAPTER 3

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction

This chapter looks at the functions of the embedded narratives in the texts selected. It also evaluates the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique in communicating the author’s thematic concerns. It highlights the limitations of the embedded narrative technique in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

Functions of the Embedded Narratives

Authors choose to employ the embedded narrative technique in their work for various reasons. Some common uses are; for aesthetic purpose as a means of adding diversity to the narrative act, dramatic impact, sharpening characterization, developing thematic concerns and increasing the complexity of the narrative. This study focuses on the roles played by the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works.

Narratologists such as Genette and Bal have discussed possible functions of embedded narratives. Shlomith Rimmon Kenan builds on the earlier work of Genette and Bal in *Narrative Fiction Contemporary Poetics*. She argues that there are three types of embedded narrative function: actional, where the telling itself progresses the plot; explicative, which explain the diegesis; and thematic, which function as *Mise en abyme*, stories that reflect in some way the
narrative around them (93). This study begins the examination of the functions of the embedded narrative from the functions identified by Kenan and then expands to other functions revealed in the short stories “Jumping Monkey Hill” and the novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah.*

**The Explicative Function**

Embedded narratives may serve as an answer to questions that arise in the primary narrative. This function helps the reader to understand how the events in the primary narrative came to be. “All these narratives, explicitly or not, answer a question of the type “what events have led to the present situation?” (Genette 232).

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the excerpts of “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” focus on saying, this is how things were and this is why things turned out this way. The prologue introduces the reader to the effects of the senseless killing during the war by recounting the story of the woman with the calabash. Ugwu contextualizes the senseless killings within the wider narratives of war and violence in the world by mentioning “the German women who fled Hamburg with the charred bodies of their children in stuffed suitcases and the Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies” (82).

The second excerpt explains the colonial aspect of how Nigeria was formed. How the British preferred the North to the South. The flourishing of the Christianity and education brought by the missionaries, the merging of the North and the South in 1914 and the picking of the name Nigeria by the governor-general’s wife (115).
The third excerpt talks about independence and highlights the state of Nigeria during independence “At independence in 1960, Nigeria was a collection of a fragments held in a fragile clasp” (155). This statement is important in explaining the state of the country at independence. This signals the reader to the volatile nature of the state and it therefore does not come as a surprise that the country broke into war. This excerpt also reveals the tension between the North and the South: “The North was wary; it feared domination of the more educated South and had always wanted a country separate from the infidel South …Nothing was done about the clamour of the minority groups and the regions were already competing so fiercely that some wanted separate foreign embassies (155).”

The fourth excerpt talks about the economy of Nigeria which was nonexistent until independence. This excerpt points to the poor governance and complex problems facing the country. It focuses on the 1966 massacres and mentions the ostensible reason for the massacre as revenge for the “Igbo Coup”. The attitude of the Igbo is shown as resilient and what mattered to them was the unity forged among the Igbo and the creation of the fervent Biafrans out of former Nigerians.

The fifth excerpt discusses the starvation that was prevalent in the Biafra war. How starvation was used by Nigeria as a weapon of war and how it drew attention to Biafra. He also talks of how people used that starvation for their own gains. For example, photographers use of the photos of the hunger stricken children to grow their careers. Parents also used the mention of starvation to get their children to eat.
The sixth excerpt discusses the reactions of the international community to the Biafran Republic. It mentions the silence and the indifference from some. “In the United States, Biafra was “Under Britain’s sphere of interest”’. In Canada the prime minister quipped, “Where is Biafra?”(257). Within this portion Ugwu explains the reason for the silence of the world toward Biafra. This discussion is very crucial because it underscores the notion “The World Was Silent When We Died” which is also the title of the book Ugwu writes.

The seventh excerpt contains the epilogue which is a poem Ugwu wrote, modelled after a poem by Okeoma one of the characters. The poem is titled “Were you Silent When We Died?” This title is also related to the title of the embedded book. This linkage and repetition point to the importance of questioning the silence or attitude of indifference among nations when a nation faces a crisis especially one that leads to massive loss of human life. This is an important socio-political question for Africa since the continent continues to face crises that cause loss of lives. A current example is the South Sudan conflict where hundreds of people continue to be killed because of their ethnicity and political alignment.

The eighth and final excerpt of the embedded book constitutes one line; “Ugwu writes his dedication last: For Master, my good man” (433). This line sums up Ugwu’s appreciation to Odenigbo for is mentorship. Through this final line the issue of the ambiguity of the authorship of the book is finally put to rest. There is no doubt about whose story this is and who writes it. The embedding in Half of a Yellow Sun serves an explicative function where the embedded narrative explains the events in the embedding narrative. It gives the reader a deeper understanding of what the scenario was during the Biafran War. This is important because some
of the readers may have no idea what the Biafran war was about, The Book functions as a device to anchor the reader. Maria Plaias in “The danger of a single story in Chimamanda N. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” states that “the line of reasoning in “The Book” provides the basis for analysing and interpreting the characters political views in the main narrative and affirms and reinforces the major ideas of these characters” (54).

The embedding narrative presents to us the action of the story while the embedded narrative presents to us the cause of the action. An example is the issue of starvation as a tool of war. Through description Adichie paints a picture of the inhumanity of starvation; she shows girls fighting for food (270), the desperation Olanna experiences when she goes to the gate of the relief centre to collect food for five consecutive days and finds the gate locked. She details the inward rush of the crowds into the relief centre when it finally opens (271), the theft of Olanna’s corned beef by five soldiers (272). How children roasted rats to eat (370) and how every leaf became a vegetable (371). Through these scenes and many others in the book we see the effect of starvation on the Biafran people. It is only from the fifth excerpt of the embedded book that we understand that starvation was a weapon of war:

> Starvation broke Biafra and brought Biafra fame and made Biafra last as long as it did. Starvation made the people of the world take notice and sparked protests and demonstrations in London and Moscow and Czechoslovakia…Starvation made the international Red Cross call Biafra its gravest emergency since the Second World War (237).
The blog Ifemelu puts up in *Americanah* explains the countless different approaches to race, gender, ethnicity and beauty both in Nigeria and in the United States of America. From the title of the Ifemelu’s blog: “Raceteenth or Various Curious Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non American Black” it is clear that Adichie wants to tackle race from an African perspective. To avoid the subjectivity that may come from an American Black because of the history of slavery and earlier racist practises which they were subjected too; Adichie looks at it from an outsider’s perspective (through Ifemelu). Through the blogs Adichie avoids being didactic about the issue of race.

Similar to the *Half of a Yellow Sun* approach the primary narrative presents to the reader the action of the story while the blog explains the “why” and “how” of the situation in the primary text. The blog allows the public to comment on the issues at hand. The blogs in the novel play a complementary role while facilitating explanation of the primary text. An example is the case of Abe who does not see Ifemelu as female because of the racial divide:

…Abe in her ethics class, Abe was white, Abe who liked her well enough, who thought her smart and funny, even attractive but who did not see her as female. She was curious about Abe, interested in Abe… Abe would hook her up with his black friend… She was invisible to Abe (192).

Later in the novel Ifemelu is involved romantically with Curt, a wealthy white man. During the duration of this relationship she experiences racial prejudice firsthand. When Curt introduced Ifemelu as his girlfriend she saw on the faces of the white women the expression of the question
“why her” (292). Other instances are when they walked into the restaurant and the host asked Curt “Table for one?” and when the owner of the bed and breakfast in Montreal refused to acknowledge her and looked only at Curt (294). Ifemelu felt slighted by this treatment but she could not tell Curt because he would say she was overreacting. Finally when Ifemelu starts her blog her first post entails the prejudices she experienced when seen with a white man and the racially skewed magazines. She ends the blog with words she remembered a long time after that post and recited at the dinner table of a French and American couple. The blog reads:

The simplest solution to the problem of race in America? Romantic love. Not friendship. Not the kind of safe, shallow love where the objective is that both people remain comfortable. But real deep romantic love, the kind that twists you and wrings you out and makes you breathe through the nostrils of your beloved. And because that deep romantic love is so rare, because American society is set up to make it even rarer between American Black and American White, the problem of race in America will never be solved. (296)

This post explains her brutal honesty to a comment by a Haitian poet who had dated a white man for three years. The poet said that race was never an issue for them. Ifemelu reacts by saying “That’s a lie” (290) she repeats “it’s a lie” (290). Through this narration and the blog post Adichie expresses her anger at the idea of sweeping of the race issue under the carpet by saying “race is not an issue” or race does not matter (291).
The blog posts are also used to explain the meaning of concepts around the race issue that cannot be explained in the text. An example is the blog post titled “Understanding America for the Non-American Black: A few Explanations of What Things Really Mean” (350). This blog captures the evasive nature of Americans when handling conversations that address racial issues. They are reported to refer to race using abstract terms such as “simplistic” or “complex”. Among other terms the blogger discusses how diversity means different things to blacks and to whites. “To the whites diverse means nine per cent black people and if it gets to ten per cent they can’t stand it. To the blacks diverse neighbourhood means forty per cent black” (350).

Another post “What Academics Mean by White Privileges, or Yes it Sucks To Be Poor and White but Try Being Poor and Non-White”. This post is one of the lengthier posts, spanning close to two pages. It discusses, explaining at length the imbalances created by racism. An example is given about what would happen if a black person was found in possession of drugs and if a white person was found in a similar situation. The post reads “the white guy is more likely to be sent to treatment and the black guy is more likely to be sent to jail” (346).

Just like Half of a Yellow Sun’s embedded narrative the “Raceteenth” blog in Americanah helps the reader to trace the histories around the race issue, this explains to the reader how the current situation arose and why the race issue remains unresolved. In the post “Friendly Tips for the American Non-Black: How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness.” (325) Ifemelu outlines the ways in which the whites offer alternative explanations about racial issues and how they want to wish away the past. In this post she records history to anchor the reader on the race issue:
Dear Non-American Black, If an American Black person is telling you about an experience about being black, please do not eagerly bring up examples from your own life. ...Don’t be quick to find alternative explanations for what happened. Don’t say “Oh, it’s not really race, it’s class. Oh, it’s not race it’s gender... A hundred years ago the white ethnics hated being hated, but it was sort of tolerable because at least black people were below them on the ladder. ... being American means you take the whole Shebang, America’s assets and America’s debts, and Jim Crow is a big ass debt. ... Don’t say “Oh Racism is over, slavery was so long ago.” We are talking about the problem from the 1960s not 1860s ...325-327.

The mention of the historic events; the slavery, Jim Crow, blacks stepping off the curb because a white person was passing, white women standing outside schools shouting “Ape” because they did not want their children to mix with black children among other incidences mentioned in the post, gives the reader background information on why the racial wound still festers. At the end of this blog post Ifemelu does not stop at listing the do’s and don’ts of the appropriate way whites should respond to blacks discussing race. She invites the two races to a possibility of a friendship where there is mutual understanding and respect:

American Blacks are not telling you that you are to blame. They are just telling you what is. If you don’t understand, ask questions. If you are uncomfortable asking questions, say you are uncomfortable about asking questions and then ask anyway. It’s easy to tell when a question is coming from a good place...sometimes
people just want to feel heard. Here’s to possibilities of friendship connection and understanding. 327

Thematic Function

Rimon-Kenan defines the thematic function of the embedded narrative as one that establishes a relationship of analogy, that is, similarity and contrast” between the narrative levels (92). Genette in *Narrative Discourse* explains that this “purely thematic relationship implies no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis; a relationship of contrast or of analogy. Based on these two definitions of the embedded narratives studied, only the story nested in “Jumping Monkey Hill” serves this function. In *Americanah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* there exists a form of continuity in space and time in the events related in the embedded narratives and embedding narratives.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the untitled story Ujunwa writes has nothing to do with the primary narrative in terms of time and space. Adichie use this story to exemplify the mistaken perceptions of Africans and issues that affect them by foreigners. In the primary narrative Isabel a British assumes that only royal blood could explain the good looks of African people, Edward believes that homosexual weren’t reflective of Africa and women are never victims of sexual exploitation in crude ways. Edward has a warped idea of what the “real Africa” is and insists that his perception of Africa is correct. The story Ujunwa writes and reads unbeknownst to her audience is a true story of her experiences and so when Edward comments that; “The whole thing is implausible,”…This is agenda writing, it isn’t a story of real people.(113)” She responds: “A real story of real people? …The only thing I didn’t add in the story is that after I
left my co-worker and walked out of the alhaji’s house I got into the Jeep and insisted that the driver take me home because I knew it was the last time I would be riding it (113)."

The revelation that the embedded story is a true story serves to show that Edward’s (foreigners) perceptions about Africa are sometimes so wrong. It gives an analogy of similarity by showing that the comments Edward had been making about the unrealistic nature of the other participants African stories was wrong.

**Actional Function**

The actional function occurs when the very telling of the embedded narrative progresses the plot. This function borrows from Genette’s third type of function expounded in *Narrative Discourse* where such an embedded narrative: “Involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content- a function of distraction, for example and/ or of obstruction (233)”.

The embeddings in the selected texts do not fit this definition completely because they are not completely independent of the diegesis and have no function of obstruction or distraction. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the attendees of the African writers’ workshop are expected to produce one story for possible publication. It therefore follows that Ujunwa the protagonist of the story writes a story which she is required to read to the other attendees.

The short story written by Ujunwa serves as a plot device employed by Adichie to advance the plot in this story. Once Ujunwa reads the story the reactions of the other participants and those of Edward form the rising action. One of the key conflicts of the story is the fixed perceptions of Africa by foreigners. The embedded narrative also makes possible the denouement of the story.
The final outcome of the events is the story is directly linked to the story Chioma writes because it is at this point that she reveals that she is the protagonist in the story that she writes. This revelation then proves Edward wrong in referring to her story as implausible.

In *Americanah* there are other characters from the primary text who are involved with the blogs either directly or indirectly. Ranyinudo for example is upset that Ifemelu had written about her in one of the blog posts. Ifemelu had posted a blog about “the expensive lifestyles of some young women in Lagos”. Ranyinudo calls Ifemelu and says “It is obviously me! Look at this! Ranyinudo paused and then began to read aloud” (422). This post was then taken down by Ifemelu.

Paula like Ranyinudo also reads a blog post to her friends. She also requires her students to read Ifemelu’s blog. It is noted that Obinze read the whole archive of Ifemelu’s blog posts, his reaction to blogs is also accounted for. Some of the experiences Ifemelu has and the observations about life and the other characters form a significant part of the blog.

Blaine contributed to the blog indirectly by influencing Ifemelu through his comments. He reminded Ifemelu what he thought was her role and what the purpose of the blog should have been “Remember people are not reading you as entertainment; they’re reading you as cultural commentary. That’s real responsibility. There are kids writing college essays about your blog” (312). To the extent that the other characters make a contribution to this blog gives it an actional function.
The actional function applies to *Half of a Yellow Sun* on a very small degree because as much as the reader knows that Ugwu is writing a book; the narratives he writes do not contribute to the progression of the plot. The embedded narrative in this novel serves an explicative function but could easily stand on its own. This is emphasized by the haphazard positioning of the embeddings and the lack of introduction to them by the primary text. Compared to *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”; there is very little interaction of the other characters with this text.

**Aesthetic Function**

Aesthetics in literature refers to the investigation of the nature and perception of beauty in a piece of literary work. Peter Lamarque in “Aesthetics and Literature: A problematic Relation?” argues that “Aesthetic characterisations have implication for how the work appears, what impact it has, what is salient in it and what merits aesthetic attention” (6). The use of embedded narratives is one of the aesthetic choices Adichie makes to creatively present her work.

The embedded narratives in Adichie’s work positively affect the presentation of the works to the reader. The external appearance reveals breaks, with an indented bolded typeface in *Americanah*. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the excerpts of “The Book” are numbered and are in bold letter title. The font of “The Book” is different from that of the primary text. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the font used to present the embedded short story is similar to that of the primary text but in smaller size and indented.

In the works selected the embedded narratives provide obstruction in the continuity of the whole. This obstruction affords the narration with more ups and downs. The continuity of the primary
narration is momentarily suspended and a heightened suspense is created. In her longer forms the embedded narratives break the monotony of reading the primary narrative by offering a shift in the reader’s thought process.

In a number of instances the embedded narratives in *Half of a Yellow Sun* help us to break from the heavy matter of the war. In chapter twelve the reader is presented with the narration of the horrendous killings at the airport which are witnessed by Richard. He witnesses Nnaemeka’s “chest blow open” (153) and the soldiers line up Igbo people and shoot them. At the end of the chapter Richard lowers his head to the sink and begins to cry. Immediately after this scene the third excerpt of “The Book” is inserted just before the next chapter.

This excerpt shifts the reader’s attention from the dreadful events of the airport killings to the narration of the independence of Nigeria. This excerpt also explains the state of the country at independence and suggests that “nothing had been done about the clamour of minority groups” (155). Apart from giving background information relating to the Biafran war, it offers a relief from the horrific details of the killings.

The same relief is offered in chapter eighteen which details the air raids that killed people and razed houses. The reader is moved by the effect of the raids on both the victims and survivors. The excerpt provides an obstruction by talking about the state of the economy of Nigeria. It also focuses on the 1966 massacres and the effect on the Biafrans.

In chapter thirty one of *Americanah* the tension raised by a heated discussion on race and relationships at a dinner party is cooled off by the insertion of a blog that discusses hair as a race metaphor: “Imagine if Michelle Obama got tired of all the heat and decided to go natural and
appeared on TV with lots of woolly hair, or tight spirally curls...She would totally rock but poor Obama would certainly lose the independent vote, even the undecided Democrat vote (297)

The tone of the blog is that of discussing race with a light touch and is peppered with humour. The reader is expected to get relief from the humour contained in the blog. Through the description of Michelle Obama’s hair as woolly and the effect of that on his election results, the heavy matter of race is discussed albeit in a humorous way.

The embedded narratives help to break the monotony of the primary narratives. In Americanah which spans four hundred and seventy seven pages; the blogs give the reader a much needed break from the monotony. The blogs give the readers fresh perspectives offered by Ifemelu and her blog followers. Unlike Half of a Yellow Sun where the embeddings are always located at the end of chapter, the blogs in Americanah appear both within the chapter and sometimes at the end of the chapter. The embedding in “Jumping Monkey Hill” appears at different points in the short story.

The embedded narratives help to create suspense in the novels and short story. Since the reader has to wait for the reading of the embedded narrative to pass, the experience of suspense is lengthened. Any questions raised in the reader’s mind have to be held in suspense till the embedded narrative is read for a possible resolution. In Half of a Yellow Sun the abrupt presentation of the first excerpt of “The Book” in itself creates suspense. The reader has no idea who the author of “The Book” is and there is no introduction to the book. The reader wonders
what the book is about, who the author is and how long it will be. Adichie creates an urge within
the readers to continue engaging with the novel.

In *Americanah* an instance of suspense is seen when a blog follows this statement- “When
months later, Ifemelu had the fight with Blaine, she wondered if Shan had fuelled this anger, an
anger she never fully understood” (337). While the reader is still wondering how and why the
break up will take place, Adichie inserts the blog: Is Obama Anything but Black? The blog is
totally unrelated to the preceding passages and thus suspense is created.

In the short story the embedded story written by Ujunwa serves as a break between different
parts of the story. The embedded story appears immediately after breakfast following that
excerpt it is dinner time then comes bed time; the next excerpt appears after breakfast the next
day. This pattern continues dividing the primary story into various time frames. The embedded
narrative also creates suspense in both the primary narrative and embedded narrative. Since the
two stories obstruct each other, the reader is held in suspense as he or she awaits the next part.

The embedded narratives also slow down the tempo of the narrative. The reader is forced to slow
down in order to fully comprehend the importance of a new embedding. This ensures that the
reader understands its meaning and relates it to the structure of the story or novels’ total
meaning. One of the concepts of Formalism is defamiliarization which Victor Shklovsky argues
makes objects; “unfamiliar to makes forms difficult, to increase difficulty and length of
perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic in itself and must be prolonged (16).
Borrowing from this concept this study views the use of embedded narratives as one way of
lengthening perception. The embeddings force the reader to slow down and effect a more strenuous but rewarding engagement with the text.

The embedded narratives also serve to help effectively introduce new plot lines; when Ifemelu returns to Nigeria she transitions into a home that is different from what it was thirteen years back. *Americanah* captures an aspect of the returnee narrative through a post in the blog: “The small Redemptions of Lagos”. The piece about the Nigerpolitan Club describes the arrogance of Nigerian returnees who gather on a weekly basis to moan the disparities between Lagos and the cities they come from. Ifemelu uses this post to ridicule the air of pretentiousness that surrounds them and encourages the returnees to accept the way of life back home. This post underscores the definition of an “Americanah” presented earlier in the novel, “They roared with laughter at that word “Americanah”...and at the thought of Bisi...who had come from a short trip to America with odd affectations, pretending she no longer understood Yoruba, adding a slurred r to every word she spoke” (65).

Adichie uses the embedded narratives to enhance the reader’s understanding of the primary narratives while providing her readers an experience of combinational delight unique to the reading of stories within stories.

**Advancing the Oral Storytelling Tradition**

Obiechina observes in “Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel” that “the oral tradition impulse is strong in the modern African novel, which embodies this experience especially because the writers themselves are products of both oral traditions and literate education” (199). Roger Kurtz
describes the third generation of writers; a categorization in which Adichie belongs as “labouring under an obvious but understandable anxiety of influence as the giants of Nigerian literature who preceded them cast long shadows”(25). Heather Hewett observes in “Coming of Age: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and The Voice of the Third Generation.” that “Adichie like her peers is directly engaged with the Nigerian literary canon and is furthermore making a case for her inclusion in it” (78).

Embedded narratives were common in oral storytelling in independent traditions in parts of Africa. They are also used as a bridge between oral and written narrative. Herman argues that embedded narratives describe the historical consciousness of the present. There is a link with the past and a relaying of knowledge between two or more minds. *Half of a Yellow Sun* exemplifies this scenario. The embedded narrative found in “The Book” has a relationship of mediation. Adichie uses this embedding to narrate Nigeria’s history linking past events to the prevailing circumstances in her fiction.

Adichie is conscious of her position and role as an African writer and demonstrates this by borrowing from the rich reserves of traditional oral storytelling techniques. Narrative embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition. The first narrative level functions in a similar way to a storyteller’s role. The embedded narrative is an artistic device that enhances the performance of narrating. Abiola Irele argues that the interplay between orality and literacy is:

... not merely in a purely linguistic framework, as in the early phase of Africanist Studies, but also from a literary and artistic perspective. At the same time the
dominance of orality in the cultural environment of African expression seemed to offer possibilities for validating the endeavour to state the relevance of orality not only to a general understanding of the processes involved in human communication but also, and in particular, to formulate an all-encompassing idea of imaginative expression, one that would point toward a universal concept of literature. (24)

This statement points to the benefits of creating a situation where oral culture is assimilated and reorganized in written fiction. First it enhances artistry in a piece of work. Secondly it aids in stimulating the process of understanding a text. Thirdly as Obiechina notes “as a means of giving maximum authenticity to the writing...writers look to their indigenous poetics to create works that draw upon their living oral traditions to enrich forms, techniques and styles through literate education” (199).

“Jumping Monkey Hill” has in its first narrative level an oral story telling situation. The writers congregate at Jumping Monkey Hill to write and share their stories. This resembles the traditional fireside telling of stories in parts of Africa. The reading of the stories aloud by the characters’ enacts the performance aspect of narrating. In Americanah some of the characters like Paula and Ranyinudo are shown to read the blog posts aloud thus enacting a performance. Olanna in Half of a Yellow Sun narrates her train experience to Ugwu. He then records this narration in his prologue.
Creation of Multi-vocality

Bakhtin argues that the strength of a novel stems from the co-existence of and the conflict between the different types of speech: the speech of characters, the speech of the narrators and the speech of the author. This study approaches the Bakhtinian idea from the perspective that the vocal multiplicity is a narrative strategy that forces the reader to attend to the multi voiced potential of the text and interpret it. The embedded narratives create the infusion of a distinct quality of heterologlossia in the narrative.

The embedded narratives permit the author to create a “voice” for his narration (for example if he or she wants to use any special language effects) a voice which can be of a more closely involved narrator. This voice enables the reader to understand the effects of the action since they are immediate and clear. This second narrator or third narrator as the case may require can be made as naïve or as sophisticated as best serves the author’s purposes. This narrator may be faintly or distinctly separated from the author himself.

Aghogho Akpome in “Focalisation and Polyvocality in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun” asserts that “the generic diversity of “The Book’s” different segments – it incorporates verse, various prose forms, and journalist reportage- may be read as one way in which Adichie interrogates notions of narrative form and explores the different literary forms through which postcolonial rehistoricisation may be represented” (32). Following Akpome’s argument I add that those genres also represent the different voices or languages that give various meanings, various expressions and converse with each other.
Plais in “The Danger of a Single Story in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* argues that the arrangement of the embedded narratives in the sequence in which they are arranged is “a way to spread and reinforce the perspective” (54) she continues to argue that “unlike the focalised perspectives the omniscient extradiegetic narrator may offer a de-personalised point of view to counterbalance or reinforce the main characters perspectives” (54). This gives the reader another opinion, through another voice.

Umelo Ojinmah in “No Humanity in War: Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” contends that the embedded narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is where Adichie’s real voice and opinion emerges. (10). Jane Bryce in “Half and Half Children: Third generation Women Writers and the New Nigerian Novel” argues that the embedding of the “The World Was Silent When We Died” is “a device that allows Adichie to gracefully relinquish her position as a narrative authority in favour of a spokesman for the voiceless, which she does not claim to be” (62). Both of these critics point to the double voiced nature of the discourse in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Through Adichie’s double voiced discourse her intentions are expressed albeit in a refracted way. The embedded narrative serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions, the express intention of the character speaking through his or her writing and the refracted intention of the author. The effect is that when the author’s words are introduced into the characters speech, they assume a new meaning and interpretation. The writing of ‘The Book’ by Ugwu presents a voice which appeals to the reader to interpret his voice as the voice of the voiceless. This is necessitated by his position as a child narrator and as a houseboy one of the lowest cadres of employment. Richard Churchill who comes up with the
title “The World Was Silent When We Died” has an academic background, is an expatriate fascinated by the Igbo culture and history. His advantages over Ugwu not withstanding he realizes the war story is not his story to tell. If he told the story the interpretation would be different; it would not carry the same weight as a story told by a Biafran, conscripted into the army and with firsthand experience of the suffering the war caused.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the story that Ujunwa writes turns out to be autobiographical; it is written using auto-fiction techniques. The story is revealed as Ujunwa’s personal story at the end of the primary narrative to resolve the conflict in the primary narrative. The voices in this short story have a conversation about the idea of what constitutes real African experiences. Adichie chooses Ujunwa to write her own life story, which Edward refers to as implausible. This choice presents a voice that proves to the reader and the other voices in the story that foreign perceptions about Africa can be flawed.

In Americanah there are various voices and languages presented both in the primary narrative and the embedded narrative. The voices of Nigerian (village), Nigerian (town), accents of Nigerians who have just arrived in America and try to imitate the Americans, Americans and British mispronouncing African names to a Nigerian who’s lived in Britain for a while and has a British wife, to mention a few. The voice of the blogger and the respondents to the blog post add to the multiple voices in the text and the reader thus engages with the complex nature that is the human life.
In an interview with Brooke Obie of Ebony magazine, Adichie responds to the issue of using the blog as a “literary cheat” and editorializing through the blog by saying that she realized that if she editorialized in regular dialogue in the primary narrative it would not work. “I think that what I wanted to say (about race) and how I wanted to say it was in the kind of voice that would not have worked in dialogue or any other way (than through Ifemelu’s posts)” (n.p). Adichie through those confirms the Bakhtinian idea that the author orchestrates all other voices and directs the interactions of those voices. The author organizes the diversity of voices to achieve a desired end.

**Illusion of Reality**

I look at the subject of illusion of reality from the standpoint that illusion is essential to art and that art is an important resource for truth. The inclusion of an embedded narrative which can be oral or written is rationalized or motivated in a realistic way to preserve or imitate the illusion of reality. This illusion of reality consequently lends to both the embedded and embedding narrative credibility. Traditionally several devices are used by writers to achieve this goal. Examples include; gathering of characters who tell each other stories, dreams or hallucinations experienced by a character, the discovery of written manuscripts, diaries, letters and such other categories.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Adichie use the autobiographical genre as a textual disguise to stress the idea that the events in the embedded story are pure fact. This in effect counters the false perception about Africa by Edward in the primary narrative. As much as the primary narrative is
fictive the author creates a way for the reader to enter the characters world and therefore perceive this reality.

The use of the blog in *Americanah* creates the semblance of reality by Adichie’s accuracy in her simulation of how blogs work. This technique transports the reader to the blogosphere and the reader becomes part of the audience of the blog. Blogs provide centralized locations at which readers find web-based journals known as blogs and bloggers are able to find each other. Ifemelu’s blog has many followers, she edits her posts, comments and reactions of the blog are recorded in the text. She pulls down posts when she wants to and eventually she exits from that particular blog zone. She then begins another blog when she returns to Nigeria. All the events in the novel make for a believable story.

Another way Adichie achieves the illusion of reality in her fiction is by empowering the characters that author the embedded narratives. The characters involved all author from a point of experience. The experiences they have give them the authority to write the embedded narratives. The reader then believes the embedded narratives because he or she has shared the experiences with the character in the embedding narrative.

Adichie also accurately merges the information in the embedded narrative with that in the embedding narrative where required. An example in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is where Olanna sees the child’s head in the calabash on the train. Olanna then narrates this event to Kainene and Ugwu on separate occasions. Ugwu then includes this story in the prologue of “The Book”. The narration in the primary text corroborates the information in the embedded narrative.
Alongside other mediums employed in the novels to create an illusion of reality, the embedded narratives contribute effectively to this literary technique. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* we encounter letters, radio broadcasts, poems, songs newspaper articles and excerpts from a published book. In *Americanah* some of the other devices employed include emails between Ifemelu and Obinze and text messages from mobile phones.

*Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” address factual issues: war, race and the perceptions of foreigners about Africa. Since the issues discussed are real issues the author underscores their importance by employing a technique that enhances the perception by the reader that the issues are real.

**Functions of Embedded Narratives for the Characters**

Irene de Jong in “Narratological Theory on Narrators, Narratees, and Narrative” states that embedded narrative may have a function to the characters. She says “In the case of an embedded narrative told by a character it may also be relevant to distinguish between the function it has for secondary narratees, the characters who are listening and for the primary narratees”(10). This points to the usefulness of the embeddings for the characters; the characters may have been propelled or motivated by something to author the embedded narratives.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* Adiche attempts to capture the effects of the postcolonial and civil war trauma. The characters in the novel live through traumatic experiences which they struggle with. The characters in the novel experiences both personal and collective trauma. Focusing on Ugwu the author of the embedded narrative, I note that his trauma is of a different kind because he
plays the role of the perpetrator. When he is conscripted he rapes a girl at the prodding of his fellow soldiers. This action haunts him and traumatizes him. Frances White in her review of the book writes that “Ugwu takes up writing as a way of dealing with his bewildering and disturbing experiences” (n.p). Doseline Kiguru (2011) examines the role of the child figure in telling narratives based on Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun. She notes that the book Ugwu writes is a reflection of the violence that defined the Biafra society and is an effort to deal with the trauma caused by the violence and destruction (68).

Maria Plaias in “The Danger of a Single Story in Chimamanda N. Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun” argues that “...Ugwu is atoned and healed through the process of writing and that the healing process entails a continuous engagement with the memory of the war” (64). As the scars of the war reminded Ugwu of his role as a perpetrator he tried to unburden the trauma of those episodes. “He would never be able to depict the bleakness of bombing hungry people. But he tried, and the more he wrote, the less he dreamed” (398).

The writing process is therapeutic not only to Ugwu but to Olanna and Richard as well. Adichie shows how narration may have a therapeutic effect not only to Ugwu but to her as part of the second generation Biafrans. Adichie is bruised by the war, having lost her grandfathers in it. On reasons why she wrote the book she says “my father has tears in his eyes when he speaks of losing his father and my mother still cannot speak at length about losing her father in a refugee camp”.(Adichie, “The Story Behind the Book”). Olanna narrates the train episode to Ugwu and comes to a realization that her story is important when she notes Ugwu’s keenness:
Ugwu was writing as she spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of, and so she told him all she remembered about the train full of people who had cried and shouted and urinated on themselves. (410)

Richard witnessed a customs officer get shot at the airport, just because he was an Igbo. The soldiers went on to kill dozens more of Igbo people at the airport. These scenes flash through Richards mind over and over again to the point that he wishes “he would lose his mind or that his memory would suppress itself” (165). Richard desires to express his trauma through writing but he cannot get himself to do it. “The echo of unreality weighed each word down; he clearly remembered what had happened at that airport but to write about it, he would have to re-imagine it, and he was not sure if he could”(168).

Through these characters Adichie makes a point about the importance of narration and writing for the assimilation of individual and communal past. Adichie seems to feel that narration has the ability to bring on a therapeutic effect on the speaker or writer.

The blog set up by Ifemelu serves an important function in her life. As she pens down her thoughts and feelings on race, we see a metamorphosis in her. From the young lady who was unsure of herself when she arrived in America to a confident lady poised to return to Nigeria. Ifemelu uses the blog as means to understanding race and its complexities but also protecting herself from being swayed into accepting the falsehoods surrounding the race issue in America. The blog offered a catharsis to Ifemelu purging the pressures of immigrant life especially the
racism. The blog gave Ifemelu opportunity to evaluate her life, finally she senses the emptiness, the following excerpt explains:

Readers frightened and exhilarated her…made Ifemelu, nervous eager to be fresh and to impress, so that she began, over time to feel like a vulture hacking into the carcasses of people’s stories for something she could use. Sometimes making fragile links to race. Sometimes not believing herself. The more she wrote, the less sure she became. Each post scraped off yet one more scale of self until she felt naked and false (5).

Prior to the books opening scene, Ifemelu had written her final post and closed the blog. Ifemelu feared she had lost touch with part of herself and makes a decision to return home. Ifemelu feels that her personality is shaped by the blog and that she is losing her core to the blog. This revelation helps her to move to the next phase of her life.

The blog attracts comments from people affected by the issues Ifemelu blogs about. The blog gives them opportunity to vent out or to find solace from the knowledge that their experiences are not uncommon. When Ifemelu blogs about her experience with depression, a Congolese woman posts a long comment in response about a similar experience she had (158). Through the blogs Ifemelu opens up a space for people to talk about issues that disturb them but have
nowhere to air them. A comment on the blog “The Small Redemptions of Lagos” said “Thank God somebody is finally talking about this” (421). We therefore note that the embedded narratives serve different functions for different characters including those who author them.

**Development of Themes through Embedded Narratives**

Adichie’s fictional works address a myriad of themes among them love, violence, immigration, race, identity, sexual exploitation of women, sexuality, war and its effects. This research focuses on the themes expounded by the embedded narratives with an aim of evaluating the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique. Adichie uses the embedded narrative as a foregrounding strategy.

The term foregrounding has its origin with Czech theorist Jan Mukarovsky and other formalist critics who emphasize that stylistic features are characteristics of literary texts. The NTC’s dictionary of literary terms defines foregrounding as “calling attention to something—a rhythm, a character, an idea, a viewpoint by placing it in the foreground against a background” (87). Leech and Short in *Style in Fiction* have argued that “in order to make sure that the point is put across; the novelist tends to say the same thing in a number of different ways and at different levels of structure” (207). They add that “incident and mode of description combine to embody one of the major themes of the novel”. Adichie uses the embedded narratives to call attention to her major thematic concerns, the embedded narrative being in the foreground against the background of the embedding narrative.
The silence of the world is a major philosophical concern of Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Adichie questions how societies remain indifferent to others in times of war or genocide. The choice of the title of the embedded narrative, “The World Was Silent When We Died” develops a sense of curiosity within the reader to find out; who was silent? Why were they silent? This title is presented in bold text in all the eight excerpts within the book. It is highlighted in this manner to gnaw at the reader’s conscience. The reader cannot miss it and therefore is forced to think about it.

In the first excerpt the mention of the German women who fled Hamburg with charred bodies of their children stuffed in suitcases, the Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies alongside that of the woman Olanna met in a train with a dead baby’s head in a calabash (82), reminds the reader that there have been other massacres across the globe. This introduces the reader to the idea of death in Biafran war and though Ugwu is careful not to draw parallels of the Biafran war to the German or Rwandan killings, it helps us to visualize and appreciate the magnitude of the Biafran war. This then validates the questioning of the apathy expressed by the world.

It is noteworthy that the poem “Were You Silent When We Died” in excerpt seven of “The Book” (375) appears side by side with the discussion between Richard and the two American journalists about the American policy and the silence of America despite their knowledge that thousands of Biafrans were dying. On this same page the reader learns how the title “The World Was Silent We Died” comes to Richard. Richard is angry at the American journalists for their apathy towards Biafra. “He felt incredibly alone in their presence” (374) they were returning
back to America to the comfort of their homes after collecting stories and photographs from Biafra. This represents how the world left Biafra to deal with its problems.

Adichie uses the embedded narrative to emphasize concerns about the effect of the war. She does this by linking the content of the embedded narrative to the content in the embedding narrative through repetition. The poem in excerpt seven of “The Book” paints a picture of the magnitude of the starvation:

Imagine children with arms like toothpicks

With football for bellies and skin stretched thin

It was Kwashiorkor – difficult word

A word that was not quite ugly enough, a sin. (375)

This second stanza is replayed in the narration in the embedding narrative. “The nun cradled the smallest, a shrivelled doll with stick legs and a pregnant belly” (374). Through the use of rich metaphors and similes, she evokes the sympathy of the reader. The “arms like toothpicks” and “a shrivelled doll with stick legs” refer to the same situation and so does “with football for bellies” and “a pregnant belly”:

Naked children, as if the man

Would not take photos and then leave, alone. (375)
These last two lines of the same poem re-present a scene on an earlier page where the children clamoured around the American photographer begging for more sweets “Once he said, “That’s a lovely smile!” and after he left them the children went back to roasting rats” (370). The laughter referred to in the poem symbolizes the hope the children had; that some form of salvation would come from the American man and by extension the world. This hope is dashed when the photographer leaves and they return to roasting rats.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the story Ujunwa writes expounds the theme on sexual exploitation of women. Chioma the protagonist in the embedded narrative is sexually exploited by a male interviewer who after saying he will hire her “walks across and stands behind her and reaches over to squeeze her breasts” (100). Ujunwa experiences some subtle form of exploitation from Edward, the workshop organizer. When she offers Edward a seat he responds by saying “I’d rather like you to lie down for me” (106). Edward also tells the Senegalese lady that he had dreamt of her naked navel. The repetition of the theme in both diegetic levels is used by Adichie for emphasis and calls the attention of the reader to that theme. This ensures that the reader stops and attends to that theme.

The major theme developed by the blog in Americanah is race. The question of race has been discussed over many decades. Yet it remains a relevant discussion even now. Americanah published in 2013 and whose setting captures the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, correctly assesses that racism still exists. The novel starts on a train journey to Trenton where Ifemelu goes to braid her hair. On the train she remembers an incident on a plane when she had to explain what she meant by “lifestyle blog” to a man who sat next to her. This man then asks
“Ever write about adoption?” Nobody wants black babies in this country and I don’t mean biracial, I mean black. Even black families don’t want them” (4). Ifemelu blogs about this man and this post receives the highest comments for a month. The positioning of this conversation in the very first chapter is to make the reader understand that this book is about race and the blog is a space for discussing race.

The rejection of black babies plays out in Dike’s life when later in the story he attempts to commit suicide. Dike experiences racism at his tender age; because he is black he is the first suspect when the school computers are hacked. The pastor at his church says hello to all the other kids but to Dike she says “What’s up bro?” (349), this makes him feel different and he says, “I feel like I have vegetables instead of ears, like large broccoli sticking out of my head” (349). Dike feels unwanted to the extent that he nearly takes his life.

The concept of race first occurs to Ifemelu when she arrives in the United States “I come from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America” (290). The covert and overt racisms she witnesses and experiences are what make her black. Ifemelu is angered at the silence, the things “unsaid and unfinished” (296) around the race issue. Ifemelu begins longing for other listeners and she longed to hear the stories of others. “How many other people had become black in America?” (296).

At the encouragement of her friend Wambui she sets up a blog. The blog is informed by her daily encounters with racism. These encounters form the titles of her posts and make up the
content of her discussion. The blog separates the race issue from the other issues in the novel. The blog is a technique used by the writer to foreground the race issues.

The blog effectively develops the theme of race in *Americanah* because of its unique nature. The nature of the blog embedded in *Americanah* borrows heavily from the real medium that the blog is. Ruth Aylett and Sandy Louchart in “Towards A Narrative Theory of Virtual Reality” argue that a story is not told or shown in the same way according to the medium in which it is displayed, nor is its content or intensity the same” (1). The blog in the novel does not address the issue of race in the same way the embedding narrative does. The blog by its nature allows for multiple comments on the issues posted, it also allows the blogger to edit or withdraw posts accordingly. Blogs also serve a wider reach because they can be re-posted onto many other sites.

The blog in *Americanah* supports the contention by Cornel West that the race question is urgent. “For me the race question is an urgent question of power and morality; for others, it is an everyday matter of life and death” (Morrison, 61). What better way to address an urgent issue than by putting it on a medium that delivers blog posts in real time? Through the use of the blog Adichie shows the need to view the race issue as one that requires urgent attention. Adichie chooses the blog over other forms because of the advantage it offers in terms of the immediacy in communicating and ability to reach a wide audience.

The existence of racism brings up the question of identity. The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy defines one’s personal identity as “what makes one the person one is” (n.p). Identity reflects on who we are and how others perceive us. Identity is a language and culture rooted
process that includes our position in the world and others thoughts about who we are as well as who they are.

Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* discusses the complexity of the concept of “identity”. Gilroy argues that historians should reconsider how they document the past “I want to develop the suggestion that cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single complex unit of analysis in their discussion of the modern world…and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective”(15). This suggests that black is black and there are no levels of blackness. It is assumptions such as these that Adichie problematizes as she explores the various categories of identities in *Americanah*.

There are several diasporas in different chronotypes as a result of creolization being a continuous process. Globalization has made it more complicated such that within the diasporic community there are various categories of identities. In the blog post “Understanding America for the Non-American Black: American Tribalism” (184). The different kinds of black are spelt out. Ifemelu talks about the ladder of racial hierarchy in America. “White is on top, specifically White Anglo Saxon Protestant (alluding to the possibility of another type of white). American Black is always on the bottom and what’s in the middle depends on time and place.” She includes an example about how in the “ladder of races Jewish is white but also some rungs below white”.

In another blog post “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: In America You Are Black, Baby”(220), Ifemelu addresses the idea of the Non American Blacks denying that they are black
because they are from other countries where the issue of blackness does not arise. This calls attention to the creation of a racial identity “black” that confronts immigrants to America. She also looks at the generalizations and assumptions surrounding black people. Black people are treated as though they have no individual identity. If a crime is committed by a black person all other black people are stopped for fitting the profile. Black people are made to feel that they have to compensate for other black people’s behaviour by being apologetic to the whites, or always being on guard because any offensive behaviour by one black will mean the other blacks get to pay for it. This post is written in a scornful tone, scorning at the ridiculous ideas that whites have about blacks.

Chinua Achebe argued that the role of the African writer included a responsibility to educate his or her readers. In the essay “The Novelist as Teacher” in a collection of essay *Hopes and Impediments* he states “…The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and re-generation that must be done. In fact he should march right in front…” (30) He adds that the African writer is more concerned with the importance of combating “our acceptance of …racial inferiority” (29) by confronting the “disaster brought upon the African psyche in the period of subjection to alien races” (29).

Adichie seems to have heeded the call by Achebe to march right in front and re-educate especially in the area of ownership and authorship of the African story. Adichie belongs to a group of writers described as the third generation of modern Nigerian Literature. Roger Kurtz in “The Intertextual Imagination in Purple Hibiscus” has outlined the generations as follows:
The first generation consists of writers like Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Flora Nwapo and others. The second generation includes names such as Femi Osofisan, Buchi Emecheta and Tanure Ojaide. The third generation comprises of those who were born and educated in 1960 and whose writings began to appear in the mid 1980’s. They include Ben Okri, Helen Oyeyemi, Helen Habila, Seffie Atta, Chimamanda Adichie and others. (24)

Adichie and her peers have found a platform to speak from through their writing. They are able to experiment with new avenues of expressing and formulating the African experience. Through the texts studied in this research Adichie has defined the role of the African writer and then shown who should be telling the African Story. She has exemplified this by her choice of characters and the embedded narratives authored by them.

Adichie underscores the glaring need for contextualized reading of African literature and the telling of authentic African stories. In her address “The Danger of a Single Story” Adichie explains how class and culture based prejudices is often fostered by individuals adherence to hegemonic narratives of societies and histories. Adichie argues that “The single story creates stereotypes and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (7).

Adichie highlights the fundamental function of the writer, like those of storytellers in traditional African communities. Preceding writers such as Rene Wellek (238-9), Wole Soyinka (21), Chinua Achebe (7-8) and Chukwudi Maduka (11) have on various occasions agreed that the
African writer is the conscience of the society and serves as a historian, preserving its past; critic, analyzing its current state and shepherd, helping to usher it towards its future.

*Half of a Yellow Sun* addresses the question of the authorship and ownership of history. Adichie juxtaposes the characters Ugwu and Richard Churchill. The two characters represent opposite perspectives in life. Ugwu is from a small village and comes to work as a houseboy for Odenigbo in Nsuka. Richard is a British man who comes to study Igbo-Ugwu art. Through the two who are both authors in the novel Adichie points to us who the African story belongs to and who should tell it. Ugwu writes “The Book” which is a historical account from the time period of the British colonizer to the Nigeria-Biafra war. For a long time the colonizer has had an upper hand and influence about the African continent and its history.

Richard is fascinated by Igbo Ugwu art and his novel titles borrow from the Igbo past and the culture: “The Basket of hands” and “In the Time of Roped Pots”. Richard learns Igbo and gets further enmeshed into the Igbo culture. He begins considering himself a Biafran. He says “We are still extracting from some fields we control in Egbema …We move the crude to our refineries at night…”. “You keep saying we” the Redhead said. (372) Eventually Richard realizes “The war story isn’t my story to tell, really”, something that Ugwu had always known: Ugwu nodded. He had never thought that it was” (425).

This exclusion of Richard from the Biafran experience is seen earlier when Richard sense’s it from Madu’s tone: “We are running our cars with a mix of kerosene and oil or we’ve perfected the flying Ogbunigwe or we’ve made an armoured car from scrap. His *we* was edged with
exclusion. The deliberate emphasis, the deepened voice, meant that Richard was not part of we; a visitor could not take the liberties of homeowners” (304).

The subject of Richard’s exclusion is repeated for emphasis when Madu tells Richard “the truth is this is not your war, this is not your cause” (305). When Richard tells Kainene how the book title “The World Was Silent When We Died” came to him “she arched her eyebrows “We”? The world was silent when we died? (374). The word we is italicized a number of times to make the reader sense the exclusivity that surrounds the right to tell the Biafran story.

It is remarkable that the title of the book Ugwu writes originates from the words of a Nigerian. As much as Richard picks it up and hands it over to Ugwu. Colonel Madu tells Richard “The world has to know the truth about what is happening, because they simply cannot remain silent when we die” (305). At this juncture Madu was requesting Richard to write for the Propaganda Directorate as a way of him contributing to the war effort. Adichie makes an important statement that the book title and the book content had to be owned by Biafrans. They had the exclusive right to tell their true story.

An example of the falsehoods that result from a single story are shown in Half of a Yellow Sun where the American journalist views the belief of the woman with one arm; that Biafra would win, a result of the Biafran propaganda machine. Richard likened his thoughts to “President Nixon’s’ fact finders from Washington or Prime Minister Wilson’s commission members from London who arrived with their firm protein tables and their firmer conclusions: that Nigeria was
not bombing civilians, that the starvation was over flogged, that all was well as it should be in
the war” (371). While people died of starvation or air raids the fact finders twisted the story and
said Biafra’s suffering was exaggerated. In short they lied about the real situation on the ground.
Just like Richard desires to write a book after the war telling “a narrative of Biafra’s difficult
victory, an indictment of the world” (374); Adichie through the embedded narrative reproaches
the world for its silence during the Biafran war that led to the loss of thousands of lives. The
sixth excerpt of “The Book” (258) sheds light on this silence.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the characterization and the interactions presented at the writers
workshop portrays the situation Adichie denounces in the TED Talk “The Danger of The Single
Story”. Isabel, the wife of the workshop organizer claims that the exquisite bone structure
Ujunwa has must be from Nigerian royal stock. Edward dismisses most of the writers’ stories in
the workshop as un-African or implausible. Adichie points to the fact that the erroneous foreign
perceptions about Africa will only be countered when Africans tell their own stories.

This is presented to the reader when Ujunwa reveals that the story she writes is based on a
personal experience. When Edward refers to her story as “agenda writing” and “implausible”,
convinced that it was not a “real story of real people” (114); Ujunwa responds when she sees the
victory in his eyes as he says those words. She stands up and begins laughing; this act of
standing up symbolizes Adichie’s call to writers to be bold and courageous, to stand up for the
truth, to rise up and tell their truth. The laughter is a mockery of the lies and false perceptions
that the west perceives as truth. Ujunwa asks “A real story of real people”? She goes on to reveal
that this was an autobiographical account. Ujunwa the African writer triumphs, as her story turns out to be real.

In *Americanah* we learn very early in the novel about the writer’s role and voice. Sapphic Derrida, one of the most frequent posters writes of Ifemelu “you’ve used your irreverent, hectoring, funny and thought provoking voice to create a space for real conversations about an important subject”(5). This statement carries the description of who an African writer should be; irreverent meaning fearless and bold, thought provoking voice meaning one who stimulates the readers’ interests and creating spaces for real conversation about an important subject.

The genesis of the blog stems from a desire by Ifemelu to share her stories with a larger audience and longing to hear other people’s stories. Ifemelu had a desire to tackle things “unsaid and unfinished” (295). Ifemelu wonders “How many other people had become black in America? How many had felt as though their world was wrapped in gauze” (296). Ifemelu then creates a space where people can address the issues surrounding the race discussion.

The choice of the blog, a medium new and unfamiliar to Ifemelu can be interpreted as a way writers should push boundaries through use of new forms. Like Adichie, Ifemelu experiments by using the blog a medium new to her to voice her concerns; while Adichie embeds the blog in her novel. Adichie seems to say that writers should not shy away from using different mediums to communicate important concerns. Adichie’s creation of Ifemelu as a successful blogger attests to this.
The specific authorship of the blog is spelt out in the title of the blog: “Raceteenth or Curious Observations by a Non-American Black on the Subject of Blackness in America”. This is a pointer on the importance of who the author is. The statement that observations are made by a Non-American Black separates this particular voice from the many other voices that may have an interest in this discussion. It shows that being a Non American black qualifies Ifemelu to talk about blackness.

Like in “Jumping Monkey Hill”, Americanah is also concerned about telling the truth. The remarks “That’s a lie…It’s a lie” (290) by Ifemelu match with the question raised by Ujunwa “A real story of real people? (113), these remarks exhort writers to tell the reader about the importance of the “truth” being told by the African writer. Ifemelu is angered by the silences around the race issue and invites people to “unzip themselves” as this blog post shows:

Open thread: For All the Zipped-Up Negroes

This is for the Zipped-Up Negroes, the upwardly mobile American and Non-American Blacks who don’t talk about Life Experiences That have to Do Exclusively with Being Black. Because they want to keep everyone comfortable. Tell your story here. Unzip yourself. This is a safe space. (307)

Through the characters in the three pieces studied Adichie shows who should write the African history and the concerns that plague Africa. Her opinion resonates throughout her work but it is through the exemplification in the embedded narratives that she makes her opinion clear.
Closely linked to the issue of addressing the authorship of the African story is the attitude of silence. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Ujunwa questions this attitude when the Senegalese says she did not need to say anything to Edward about his sexually suggestive remarks. “But why do we say nothing?“ Ujunwa asked. She raised her voice and looked at the others. “Why do we always say nothing?“ (112). Ujunwa goes on to give the black South African a tongue lash when he makes excuses for Edward. “Ujunwa shouted at him, “This kind of attitude is why they could kill you and herd you into townships and requires passes from you before you could walk on your own land!” (112). Ujunwa blames the attitude of silence for problems encountered by African states by using the example of apartheid in South Africa.

In the same story I read Edward’s comments about the stories written by the participants as a way of silencing them from telling their authentic stories. For example when he says that “homosexual stories weren’t reflective of Africa...This may indeed be the year 2000, but how African is it for a person to tell her family that she is homosexual?” Earlier on the Senegalese had mentioned to her colleagues that “her story was really her story, about how she had mourned her girlfriend...” (102). The Senegalese case matches that of Ujunwa where true stories are seen as implausible by foreigners because of their conditioned idea of what African life should be.

In Americanah Adichie addresses the issue of silence through Ifemelu’s uneasiness about the silences that surrounded the race question. Ifemelu had a desire to tackle things “unsaid and unfinished” (295). Ifemelu wonders “How many other people had become black in America (296)?” The silence of the world while Biafrans died is one of the major themes in Half of a Yellow Sun. This is repeated over and over again as the title of the embedded narrative “The
Book: *The World Was Silent While we Died*” and within various passages in the book. Adichie uses the embedded narratives to raise the question of why Africans choose silence. This helps the reader to reflect on the issue of silence and its consequences.

Ifemelu invites both Blacks and Whites to engage in dialogue and to ask questions. This is seen in the blog “Friendly Tips for the American Non: Black How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness” (325) quoted earlier. This blog calls for objectivity in the race discussion- “American Blacks are not telling you that you are to blame...ask questions...listen”. The Blacks are encouraged to speak about the race issue and the whites are encouraged to listen and ask questions about the concerns by blacks about race.

**Limitations of the Embedded Narrative Technique**

While this study has discussed Adichie’s skill in engaging the embedded narrative technique and evaluating the effectiveness of the use of the embedded narratives. There are a few limitations in the way Adichie uses the embedded narrative strategy. These do not overwhelm the quality of her fiction but are worth pointing out.

In *Americanah* there are places where we encounter interposition which can sometimes be exasperating and disruptive. For example in the scene where Aunty Uju tells Ifemelu about her decision to leave Bartholomew and move to Willow. The omniscient narrator says “Ifemelu liked the name of the town Willow; it sounded to her like freshly squeezed new beginnings” (221). Immediately below this line is a blog post that covers close to two pages, a new chapter then
begins after this. This has the potential of creating the feeling of being left hanging at the point the narration ends in the primary text. The reader without warning encounters a blog.

Adichie weaves full blog posts into the primary narrative. The blog posts were too many and quite lengthy. Fewer blogs would still have communicated and achieved the desired result. The too many blogs added unnecessary bulk to the text which may cause the reader to lose interest in reading them and as a result miss crucial information. The monotonous use of the blogs by Adichie makes them lose their desired impact.

Linda Alcoff in “The Problem of Speaking for Others” argues that “the practice of speaking for others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as one who more correctly understands the truth about another’s situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus achieve glory and praise” (22). Adichie creates a space for people to speak for themselves about their race issues. Though Ifemelu’s blog does not purport to speak for others it easily presents Ifemelu as one who understands the truth about others situations. The privileging of the Non-American black by creating that space for them to voice their concerns creates a situation where we cannot see or hear about whites fighting racism.

Some of the blog post titles in Americanah can be read as promoting exclusionism. The American Heritage Dictionary defines an exclusionist as one who advocates the exclusion of another or others, as from having or exercising a right or privilege. Examples are “Understanding America for the Non-American Blacks…” and “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks”. This specific categorization of who is invited to read and contribute to the blogs excludes other races.
It conflicts with the author’s desire to contribute to a debate whose ultimate purpose is to solve the race issue.

The embedded narratives in *Half of Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” could disrupt the reader in the process of reading the primary narrative. There is a possibility of the reader’s attention being diverted to the embedded narrative because of its nature. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* the embeddings are presented in a bold font, while in “Jumping Monkey Hill” they appear in a smaller font. This draws attention to them and they seem to compete with the primary narrative.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the functions of the embedded narratives in the selected works of Adichie. The chapter also evaluated the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique in communicating the author’s thematic concerns. It has also pointed out the limitations observed in Adichie’s use of this strategy. The observation is that Adichie effectively uses the embedded narrative to communicate on the themes of race, identity, the subtle sexual exploitation of women, war and the question of the authorship, the ownership of the African story and the dangers of an attitude of silence. The functions identified are actional, explicative, thematic, illusion of reality, aesthetic function, advancement of traditional oral storytelling, the development of multiple voices in the texts and the functions to the characters.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

In this research I set out to examine the nature and the function of embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works. The study of the nature of the embedded narratives included looking at the forms of the narratives, the narrative levels in the selected works and the relationships between the embedded narratives and the primary text. I also explored the functions of the embedded narratives in the selected texts. This study also evaluated the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating the author’s thematic concerns.

Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* shifts from conventional embedding and points to an alternative structural reading of her novel. The overlapping in *Half of a Yellow Sun* between the narration of the embedded narrative and the embedding narrative transgress the norms of embedding. The study reveals a limitation of the theory of narratology to the extent that it views metalepsis more of a transgression than of any merit. One of the merits of this transgression in this text is its use to connect the embedded and the embedding. The demerit is that metalepsis may cause confusion about who narrates and what they narrate.

Of the three texts studied *Americanah* employed the most extensive embedding. *Americanah* highlights how the pressure of extensive use of this literary device challenges the hierarchies in the narrative levels. Adichie creates clashes between the narrative levels; presenting a complex situation that does not amount to a structural system that would explain the relationship of the
narrative parts. This is seen where in some instances the extradiegetic narrator cuts across all possible levels of narration.

I tested the hypothesis that the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works take distinctive forms. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” a short story is inserted within the primary short story. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* a book is nested within the primary novel. In *Americanah* blog posts are embedded in the novel. I observe that the choice of those forms by the author plays a significant role in the function of the embedded narrative and in contributing to their effectiveness as tools for communicating thematic concerns. The primary texts vouch for the authenticity of the texts they embed and are presented as non-fictional texts within the fictional texts; this places them at a higher ontological level.

Apart from serving the explicative, actional and thematic function, the embedded narratives also help create vocal multiplicity in the texts, serve an aesthetic function, advance the oral storytelling technique and imitate an illusion of reality which lends the work credibility. The embedded narratives have specific functions for the characters that author them and those who either contribute to the embeddings or engage with the narrative. Ugwu’s writing is a reflection of the violence that defined the Biafran society and is an effort to deal with the trauma caused by the violence and destruction. Ifemelu uses the blog as a means of understanding race and protecting herself from the falsehoods that surround the issue of race in America.

Adichie foregrounds the core thematic issues in her works by using the embedded narrative technique. This strategy ensures that the reader attends to the issues raised. These issues are also
addressed in the primary text. The reader therefore looks at them twice thus attaining a better understanding about the concerns in question. Some of the ways Adichie effectively uses the embedded narratives to discuss her thematic concerns include the choice of the author for the narratives and the choice and meaning of the title where there is a title. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the embedded short story is untitled. In my view this is a deliberate choice by the author for the story to represent the many African stories that are classified as implausible.

The major theme developed by the embedded narratives in all the three texts is the question of ownership of the African story. Adichie underscores the glaring need for contextualized reading of African literature and the telling of authentic African stories by Africans themselves. Other themes addressed through the embedded narratives are war and the silence of the world during the Biafran war in Half of a Yellow Sun, race and identity in Americanah and sexual exploitation in “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

As this study was limited only to extensive embedding I suggest that future studies look at the nature and function of the other embeddings in the studied texts. Examples include radio broadcasts, letters, newspaper articles, speeches, poems and songs in Half of a Yellow Sun. In Americanah there are emails and phone texts. It would also be worth studying the other narrative techniques employed by Adichie to fully bring out the wealth of variety in her artistry.

As the foregoing analysis has illustrated the study of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works hopes to contribute to the growing interest in her oeuvre. This research has attempted to provide a narratological inquiry to the pieces studied, the significance is that it shows how the texts make meaning and how that process contributes to the interpretation of the
text. The narrative arrangement is an effectual means to communicating the author’s themes. Adichie questions notions of form and experiments with different literary forms through which she communicates her concerns.
WORKS CITED


THE ART OF NARRATIVE EMBEDDING IN CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE’S FICTION

JACQUELINE KUBASU OJIAMBO

C50/79598/2012

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

OCTOBER, 2014
DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for examination or the award
of a degree at any other university.

Signature ........................................ Date ........................................ 23rd October 2014

Jacqueline Kubasu Ojiambbo

This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as
University supervisors.

Signature ........................................ Date ........................................ 23/10/2014

Prof. Peter Wasamba

Signature ........................................ Date ........................................ 23/10/2014

Dr. Tom Odhiambo
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to

The late Reverends James and Ketry Kubasu, my inspiration

Were my love

Were (Jnr) my silly heart

Chinua my sweet laughter

And

To God Almighty, my help
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research project would not have come together in any cohesive manner without the consistent and immensely helpful guidance of my supervisors, Prof. Peter Wasamba and Dr. Tom Odhiambo. Thanks are also due to Dr. Jennifer Muchiri for her invaluable support and guidance during the conceptual stages of this project. I also thank the lecturers in the Department of Literature for providing a strong knowledge base in the course of my studies.

To my colleagues Jennifer, Jane, Kefa, Grace, Makokha, Margaret, Mike, Maureen, Munyiri, Obala, Odongo, Owiti, Amos, Angie, Korir, Winnie, Rachel, Bernard and Wafula for your moral support and genuine interest in my work. To Marciana and Doseline, thank you for being very kind “Big Sisters”. To my siblings for constant encouragement to push further. Finally but not least to Were, Were (Jnr) and Chinua for allowing me the space, time and peace required to study.
CONTENTS

DECLARATION..........................................................................................................................i

DEDICATION..........................................................................................................................ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.........................................................................................................iii

CONTENTS............................................................................................................................iv

ABSTRACT..............................................................................................................................vii

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY.................................................................1

Introduction............................................................................................................................1

Statement of the Problem.......................................................................................................4

Objectives..............................................................................................................................5

Hypothesis..............................................................................................................................5

Justification............................................................................................................................5

Scope and Limitation.............................................................................................................8

Literature Review..................................................................................................................8

Theoretical Framework..........................................................................................................14

Methodology........................................................................................................................17

Chapter Outline....................................................................................................................19
CHAPTER TWO: THE NATURE OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIÉ’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction.................................................................................................................21
Nature of Embedding in Adichie’s Selected Works......................................................21
Narrative Levels in Adichie’s Selected Works............................................................26
Relationship between Embedding Texts and Embedded Texts......................................33
Embedding and Authority............................................................................................38
Conclusion..................................................................................................................41

CHAPTER THREE: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIÉ’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction..................................................................................................................43
Functions of the Embedded Narratives.........................................................................43
The Explicative Function..............................................................................................44
Thematic Function........................................................................................................52
Actional Function........................................................................................................53
Aesthetic Function........................................................................................................55
Advancing the Oral Storytelling Tradition....................................................................59
Creation of Multi-vocality ............................................................................................62
Illusion of Reality...........................................................................................................65

Functions of Embedded Narratives for the Characters................................................67

Development of Themes through the Embedded Narratives............................................71

Limitations of the Embedded Narrative Technique .......................................................86

Conclusion..................................................................................................................88

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION...............................................................................89

WORKS CITED.............................................................................................................93
ABSTRACT

Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” feature diverse forms of narrative embedding. Although embedded narratives have attracted considerable attention, narrative analysts have not accounted for new forms of embedding such as blogs. This research examines the nature and function of embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works while evaluating the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating themes. The research draws upon Russian formalism to examine how the form of the work contributes to the overall meaning of the work. It also adopts the theory of narratology which outlines the basic approach to narrative levels. A close and comparative reading of the texts reveals the nature and function of the embedded narratives and the relationship between the primary and secondary narratives. The relationship between narrative levels in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* is complicated both by competing structural models and clashes between narrative levels. Adichie transgresses the norms of narrative embedding thus bringing into focus the assumptions that exist around it. Adichie’s deft use of embedded narratives is seen through the many functions it serves and its efficacy in developing central themes. This research adds to studies done on Adichie’s fiction by attempting a narratological inquiry. It also, hopefully, contributes to future research of structure and other narrative techniques applied in Adichie’s works.
CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction
Writers employ numerous narrative techniques in their work to achieve various outcomes. A narrative is a representation of one or more events by a narrator. This definition is derived from those of Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (2) and H. Porter Abbot, in *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (12). This definition emphasizes that a narrative requires a narrator; a narrative must be communicated by someone or a channel of communication. Narrative techniques are the methods that authors employ to tell their stories. All the techniques employed have important functions in the story. The method and means behind interesting stories are the techniques used.

Sometimes writers employ the technique of inserting one or more stories within the larger story that encompasses them. These stories within stories are referred to as embedded narratives. Some famous examples are Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* and *The Arabian Nights*. In *Canterbury Tales* the main story is about a band of pilgrims travelling to the shrine of Thomas A. Becket in Canterbury. The band passes time by having a story telling contest. The embedded narratives are the stories told by the pilgrims who participate in the storytelling contest. In *The Arabian Nights* the main story is of Scheherazade who is threatened by execution from her husband. Only if she beguiles her husband with a fascinating story will she survive. Every night she tells him a story and within that story new stories are embedded.
Embedded narratives are also common in African oral storytelling. African writers continue to merge the worlds of orality and literacy. An example is Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* where an anonymous Sudanese narrator tells of the journey of Mustafa Saeed, the protagonist of the novel. Salih’s narrative is a polyphonic novel in which the narrator assumes a crucial role as he gradually turns into a full blown character. Another example is Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* which contains nine embedded narratives; these include myths, folktales and anecdotes.

Mieke Bal in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* sees the narrator’s text as primary and the text narrated by the characters within the main primary text as the embedded text. These embedded texts have also been referred to as secondary narratives. Bal explains that she uses the term primary “without value judgement; neither (temporal) priority nor (qualitative) primacy is implied” (57). This implies that the primary text just means the text which comes first, the secondary narrative is the one which comes second and is embedded in the primary narrative. This means either the primary text or secondary text may be the main story depending on the intensity of either narrative. The primary text and secondary text are distinguished by levels in the technical sense such that the narrator’s text is the primary text and the actor’s text is secondary.

Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* distinguishes principal types of relations between embedding and embedded narrative: The first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, conferring on the second narrative an explanatory function. The second type consists of a purely thematic
relationship, therefore implying no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis: a relationship of contrast or of analogy. The third type involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content, a function of distraction, or obstruction. The most illustrious example according to Genette is found in The Arabian Nights, where Scheherazade holds off death with renewed narratives, (provided they interest the sultan) (232-233).

Chimamanda Adichie has earned reputation as a master story-teller with a fresh, lyrical and irreverent voice. An acclaimed contemporary African writer; Adichie has written three novels; Purple Hibiscus (2004), Half of a Yellow Sun (2006) and Americanah (2013), a collection of short stories The Thing around Your Neck (2009) and a short story “Transition to Glory” found within the anthology African Love Stories (2006) edited by Ama Ata Aidoo. Half of a Yellow Sun, which won the 2007 Orange Prize for fiction captures the experiences and impact of the Nigeria-Biafra war through the lives of its characters. “Jumping Monkey Hill”, a short story in the collection The Thing around Your Neck looks at the foreign perceptions of Africans in general and the subtle exploitation of women. Americanah which won the National Book Critics Circle award for fiction in 2014 is the story of Ifemelu a young immigrant from Nigeria to America and Obinze her boyfriend who goes to London and stays there illegally hoping to regularize his status. The authorities catch up with him and he is deported. The book details their immigrant experiences, their love, separation and eventual reunion.

It is intriguing that Adichie employs embedded narratives widely in her fiction. This research explores the significance of the embedded narrative strategy in African literature.
It is an inquiry in the nature and form of the embedded narratives and how the embedded narratives bear on ideological dimensions of literature while expounding its usefulness. While all users of narrative embedding as literary device have their points of interest, some instances are so extreme that they call for critical attention, like in Adichie’s case. Adichie’s novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* feature highly complex structures of embedding. *Half of a Yellow Sun* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” employ the Mise en Abyme technique, a term coined in 1893 by Andre Gide that refers to a text within a text. This is a text that mirrors the text that holds it. Therefore in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, there is a book within the main book and in “Jumping Monkey Hill” a story within a story. In *Americanah*, one of the characters sets up blogs at various points in her life. Through the omniscient narrator we learn about the comments of visitors to the two blogs.

**Statement of the Problem**

Although the phenomenon of the story within a story has received considerable attention, the orientation has been towards oral narratives such as myths, folktales, fairy tales, animal fables, song tales and such other categories. The tendency of placing these oral narratives within the African novel has been used by African novelists to conjoin the creative forces from their oral tradition to those within the writer’s chosen form of writing.

Embedded narratives have received significant attention from theorists of narrative in recent years. However, narrative analysts have not sought to account for new forms of embedding such as emails, blogs or online chats. Though Adichie’s work has been received
with great interest most of it has been slanted toward the thematic concerns. There is limited narratological inquiry on her work.

The nature and function of embedded narratives vary from one piece of writing to another. This study therefore examines the narrative techniques in Adichie’s work with specific attention to the nature and function of embedded narratives in the novels *Half a Yellow sun, Americanah* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

**Objectives**

This research was guided by the following objectives:

i. To examine the nature of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s work;

ii. To evaluate the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating themes.

**Hypothesis**

This research tested the following hypotheses:

i. Adichie employs new forms of narrative embedding in her fiction.

ii. Embedded narratives are effective tools for communicating themes.

**Justification**

The colonial and immediate post-colonial African novelists were driven by the African experiences under the colonial system. This group of writers assimilated and synthesized
the traditions of orality and literacy. The oral tradition impulse is strong in their writing because the writers are products of both the oral and literate education. One significant aspect of merging the oral and literacy traditions is the use of story within a story technique. The writers introduce various oral narratives within the narrative structure of their work in the development of characters, plots and themes.

I define contemporary as occurring in or belonging to the present time. Contemporary writers therefore in my judgment are those whose works have been written and published from the 1980s to the present time. Adichie, born in 1977 and whose works in this study were published between the years 2006-2013 fits the description of a contemporary writer. Christina Abuk in her review of Yvonne Vera’s *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women’s Writing* defines ‘opening spaces’ as “pushing the limits of conventional expectations and then moving beyond interstitial positions, into arenas for new actions and relations.”

One of the important questions narratologists ask is; how the story is packaged. Stories are not always presented in a linear form. Writers may sometimes use frame narratives which contain within them embedded narratives. Tanure Ojaide in “Examining Canonisation in Modern African Literature” argues that the aesthetic choices African writers make in response to different social realities is important in any discussion of a literary canon. Studies on the growth of African literature have focused more on examinations of the importance of oral traditions, languages and thematic concerns at the expense of narratological observations and concerns. It is through the study of literature in terms of style, form, and narrative strategies that the thematic concerns are adequately addressed.
This research is also informed by the fact that African literature continues to grow and develop. Growth in African literature is marked by experimentation, particularly of form and by the realization that knowledge is not absolute. African writers explore new possibilities and at the same time putting into question any previously accepted means of grounding and evaluating ideas. Technological innovations, for example, contribute to modernist experimentation with new forms. Through this research I attempt to expand the observation by Ojaide that African literary canon is fluid and not cast in stone. Contemporary writers seem to follow Ezra Pound’s famous exhortation to ‘Make it new’. This exhortation encouraged writers to apply new energy to established forms.

The study of the new ways contemporary writers are telling their stories is a useful contribution to the ever-growing body of African literary criticism. Contemporary trends are expanding the African literary canon and thus literary critics need to be open minded and not biased when new forms emerge. Adichie’s choice to embed a blog within her novel is a pointer to how modern innovations affects the way writers tell their story. The differently styled narratives and structures of embedding in Adichie’s selected works facilitate an exploration of the changing trends in writing. The study will also bring into focus the assumptions that exist around embedded narratives.

This study contributes to the studies already done on Adichie’s work by taking an approach that gives attention to the use of embedding in the selected works. This attention to the use of this narrative technique may transform readings of the text.
Scope and Limitation
In this project I focus on Chimamanda Adichie’s novels *Americanah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” from the collection of short stories *The Thing around your Neck*. I am concerned with the nature and function of embedded narratives in these texts. In *Americanah* I examine the blogs set up by Ifemelu. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* I interrogate the book Ugwu writes; “The World Was Silent When We Died.” and in the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” I examine the untitled story written by Ujunwa.

My background readings of Adichie’s published fiction revealed that of her three novels only *Purple Hibiscus* does not contain embedded narratives. In the collection of short stories; *The Thing around your Neck* only “Jumping Monkey Hill” contains an embedded narrative. I have chosen the three texts because of the extended use of embedding in those texts. For example, in *Americanah* there is extensive use of the blog within the text. This study limited itself to these embeddings with an aim of interrogating their purpose and place in the selected works.

Literature Review
The purpose of this literature review is to provide a context for this research. I also include relevant discourses on embedding to show where this study fits in the existing body of knowledge. The literature selected has some bearing on my project and was reviewed to serve as building blocks upon which this study is pegged on.

Emmanuel Obiechina refers to the phenomenon of the story-within-the story as the narrative proverb. He explains that the embedded stories are referred to as the narrative
proverbs because they perform organic and structural functions of proverbs in oral speech and in creative literature. Obiechina argues that:

like the use of proverbs proper, the embedding of stories in the novels is based upon two main principles of the African oral tradition—authority and association through which an idea is given validity by being placed side by side with another idea that bears the stamp of communal approval and by its being linked to the storehouse of collective wisdom (201).

In discussing the embedded narratives in *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe he concludes that each embedded story brings “something total to the meaning of the novel, some insight to clarify the action, to sharpen characterization, to elaborate themes and enrich the setting and environment of action” (204). Thus narrative embedding expresses the distinctive quality of African fiction. This background points to the fact that as African literature develops it does not necessarily deviate from the historical context of embedding. Narrative embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition and has continued to be important as a way of bridging the gap between the culture of oral and communal storytelling and the experience of reading a text. In this research we look at how Adichie employs this age old technique in her contemporary style.

Abiola Irele in “Orality, Literacy and African Literature” argues that the development of the interplay between orality and literacy is “not merely in purely linguistic framework as in the phase of early Africanist studies, but also from a literacy and artistic perspective” (24). Narrative
embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition. The first narrative level functions in a similar way to the performance aspect of the storyteller’s role. The embedded narrative is an artistic device that enhances the performance of narrating.

Eileen Julien in “African Literature” says “the stuff of which literature is made of includes: language, aesthetic and literary tradition, culture and history and socio-political reality” (296). She adds that “the circumstances in which African novels, plays, and poetry are produced, many of them the legacy of colonialism, are as important to our understanding of African literature as are the style and images of texts we read” (304). This statement suggests that it is important to look at the style and form of a text in order to get a better understanding of it.

Frances E. White in her review ‘While the World Watched’, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Adichie” views the use of a “clever book within a book” (10) in *Half of a Yellow Sun* as one of the effective strategies that Adichie has used to confront Nigeria’s bloody past. White argues that Ugwu the child narrator and writer of the book within a book “takes up writing as a way of dealing with his bewildering and disturbing experiences: facing both shortcomings and strengths of his master; participating in atrocities as a child soldier; and sustaining serious physical damage during battle” (11).

While appreciating White’s observation, this study looks beyond what the writing of the book does for Ugwu the child narrator. It bears asking what the purpose or function is for the narrative that embeds it, what message the book carries, and of what significance the position of the
embedding takes in the book. This study also engages with the function of narrative embedding for the primary texts and its effect on the embedded text.

Doseline Kiguru (2011) examines the role of the child figure in telling narratives based on Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun. Kiguru notes that the writing of the book “The World was Silent When we Died” by Ugwu, a child narrator is a strategy Adichie uses creatively to point to the reader that the entire narrative in Half of a Yellow Sun is the story of Ugwu. She also adds that the strategy is used to create in the mind of the reader the illusion that the stories in Half of a Yellow Sun are not fictional but real. This observation points to the embedded narrative as not only a tool for expressing the author’s thematic concerns but as an artistic device. In looking at the nature of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s work this research highlights the creative strategies employed through the form of the embedded narratives.

Umelo Ojinmah in “No Humanity in War: Chimamanda Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun” contends that the embedded narrative “The World Was Silent When We Died” within Half of a Yellow Sun is Adichie’s real book, real voice and opinion. Ojinmah argues that it is in the exposition of the embedded narrative that Adichie’s voice and opinion are poignant. This research puts to test Ojinmah’s argument by looking at both the embedding text and the embedded text with an aim of establishing how Adichie merges the two. I map out for each text the structure of embedding as well as its relationship with the narrative discourse, the story and the meaning of the texts.
In *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women’s Writing* Yvonne Vera refers to the writers’ need to invent and to banish. This involves defiance of the convention of women’s silence. Writing has established a platform which is freer than speech due to comparative distance and autonomy of books. Critics of African literature have looked at the issues shaping contemporary fiction while giving little attention to how these issues are packaged in writing. Though Adichie’s work does not feature in this collection, it is worth noting that she has embraced the need to “invent and banish” through her choice of form. Adichie chooses to deviate from the common linear form of writing to extensive narrative embedding in her fiction.

David Herman in “Genette meets Vygotsky: Narrative Embedding and Distributed Intelligence” argues that “in conjunction with the cognitive activity of their interpreter embedded narratives constitute intelligent systems—systems that both stage and facilitate the process of shared thinking about past events and about one’s own and other minds” (357). Herman views narrative embedding as enhancing the overall power of the knowledge-generating system to which it lends structure. He further explains that there is a very complex process involved in comprehending the shifts between narrative levels and the changes entailed by those shifts in the status of characters doubling as narrators. In Herman’s view, the embedded text is a system for generating knowledge not just a mere vessel. This argument makes a case for a closer look at embedded narratives in search of the meaning and knowledge they hold.
William Nelles in his paper “Stories within Stories: Narrative Levels and Embedded Narratives” argues that all embedded narratives have a dramatic impact, if only that of deferring or interrupting the embedding narrative, and that all embedded narrative have a thematic function, if only one of relative contrast or analogy. I on the other hand, feel that there is more to the embedded narrative than just deferring or interrupting the embedding narrative. Rimmon-Kenan describes three classes of functions performed either individually or in combination by embedded narratives: actional, explicative and thematic. In this study I examine the function of embedded narratives without limiting the possibilities to a given standard; instead I use those as guides.

Mikhail Bakhtin in *Discourse in the Novel* defines heteroglossia in the novel as:

A special type of double-voiced discourse (which) …serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they- as it were- know about each other (just as two exchanges in a dialogue know of each other and are structured in this mutual knowledge of each other); it is as if they actually hold conversation with each other (324).

This study approaches the Bakhtinian ideal of the heteroglossic novel from the perspective that its vocal multiplicity is a narrative strategy that signals to the reader to attend to the multi-voiced potential of the text and to interpret it. Bakhtin envisions egalitarian polyphony for the novel as a genre. Bakhtin writes: “The novel must represent all the social and ideological voices of its era
the novel must be a microcosm of heteroglossia…one single unit of social becoming. Every language in the novel is a point of view, a socio-ideological conceptual system of real social groups and their embodied representatives” (411). This study examines how the embedded narratives contribute to the multi-vocality in the selected texts.

From the literature review it is clear that various scholars have researched the area of embedded narratives. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* having been published earlier than *Americanah* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” has received more critical attention. The studies on Adichie’s work however, do not focus much on the embedded narratives save by way of mention. There exists a gap in the area of narratological inquiry in Adichie’s work. This study attempts to fill the gap by examining the use of embedded narratives in the selected works.

**Theoretical Framework**

The main focus in this research is on the nature and function of embedded narratives in Chimamanda Adichie’s work. I rely on two theories to achieve my objectives namely, Narratology and Russian Formalism.

Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* has defined narratology as “the study of how narratives make meaning, and what basic mechanisms and procedures are common to all acts of story-telling” (222). One of the most prominent narratologists Genette focuses on not just the narrative itself but how it is told, that is the process of narrating. To study the nature and function of embedded narratives I analyzed the narrative
structure of Adichie’s fiction. Narratology enabled me to answer vital questions such as: who is telling the story? And how is the story packaged?

Writers often make use of frame narratives sometimes called primary narratives which contain within them the embedded narratives also called secondary narratives. Mieke Bal in *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of Narrative* discusses the possible relationships between primary and embedded texts. In this discussion she notes that “the structure of narrative levels becomes more than a mere story-telling device; it is part of the narrative’s poetics and needs to be understood for the narrative to be fully appreciated” (59). This therefore suggests that to fully understand a text it is important to study the relationship between primary texts and embedded narratives to get the intended meaning.

This study also used formalism as an analytical tool. Formalism refers to a style of inquiry that focuses, almost exclusively, on features of the literary text itself, to the exclusion of biographical, historical or intellectual contexts. One of the central tenets of formalism thought is: that the form of any work of literature is inherently part of its content and that the attempt to separate the two is erroneous. Formalism has the advantage of forcing writers and critics to evaluate a work on its own terms rather to rely on “accepted” notions of a writer’s work.

This study will adopt the Russian formalism strand. Russian formalism refers primarily to the work of the Society for the Study of Poetic Language founded in 1916 in St. Petersburg by Boris Eichenbaum, Victor Shklovsky, and Yury Tynyanov, and secondarily to the Moscow Linguistic
Circle Founded in 1914 by Roman Jakobson. Russian formalists are interested in the analysis of the text but their main concern is with method as the scientific basis for literary theory.

One of the concepts of formalism is about, as Di Yanni Robert puts it, “how a literary work comes to mean what it does” (1580). Formalism’s concern with the formal elements of a text makes it suitable for this research because the embedded narratives take different forms and also the idea of embedding narratives in a work is an aspect of form.

Narratology and formalism have a close relationship brought about by the fact that narratology borrows elements from Russian Formalist critics such as Vladimir Propp. Propp investigates Russian fairy tales to determine there narrative functions. According to his analysis, all folk or fairy tales are based on thirty fixed elements that occur in a given sequence. Narratologists such as Genette have also developed methods of analyzing a story’s structure to uncover its meaning, each building upon the former work of another narratologist (and in some cases Russian Formalists) and adding an element or two.

The point of departure is that narratologists provide us with various systematic, thorough approaches to the mechanics of a narrative; narratology helps the reader to understand how a text makes meaning and not what it means. Formalists on the other hand emphasize the form of a literary work to determine its meaning focusing on literary elements such as plot, character, setting, diction, imagery, structure and point of view. Narratology and Formalism both look at the structure of a narrative. While narratologists study how narratives make meaning. Formalists focus almost exclusively on the form of a work.
Methodology

This study is concerned with the nature and function of the embedded narrative. To achieve my goals, my methodology included close and comparative reading of Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”. I examined Adichie’s work, narrowing down to the texts that have embedded narratives. My key focus was on the nature and function of these narratives. This process helped me to identify the relationship between the primary narrative and the secondary narratives in the texts.

I then interrogated the primary texts using the theory of narratology and the Russian formalist theory. Narratology was relevant in the analysis of the structural framework that underlies the order and manner in which a narrative is presented to the reader. Following Genette’s ideas in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* where he explains the relations between narrative levels; I studied the texts to identify the different narrative levels and the relationship between these levels. Genette suggests that in every narrative the narrator’s status is defined both by its narrative level (extra-or intradiegetic) and by its relationship to the story (hetero-or homodiegetic). Once I identified these relationships I looked at the differences and similarities in the selected texts.

The working presuppositions and the basic conceptual framework of this study were informed by the formalist approach to literary criticism so as to understand the organic unity in the text. I interpreted the texts by exploring ways in which the embedded narratives contribute to the organic unity in the selected works of Adichie.
I also reviewed secondary texts especially critical works dealing with Adichie’s works from different perspectives. Literary critics who have looked at Adichie’s work were useful in shedding light on the subject. Through the close and comparative reading I was able to further the arguments advanced or deviated from them based on my research findings.
Chapter Outline

Chapter one introduces the writer Chimamanda Adichie and the works selected for this research. Within this chapter I make a case for the study of the nature and function of embedded narratives. It also gives a background to narrative embedding as a literary technique. This chapter on the whole gives an introduction to the research, stating the objectives, scope and limitation, methodology and the theoretical framework which guided this study.

Chapter two makes an inquiry on the nature of embedded narratives in the selected texts. I examine the form the embedded narratives take, the position of the narratives in the text and the relationship between the embedded text and the embedding narrative. This chapter also looks at the differently styled narratives and structure of embedding in Adichie’s work bringing into focus the assumptions that exist around embedded narratives.

Chapter three explores the functions performed by the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works without limiting itself to the actional, explicative and thematic functions. It also examines the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating the writer’s thematic concerns. This chapter engages with the function of narrative embedding in terms of the embedding narrative’s effect on the embedded narrative and also the purpose and function of the embedded narratives for the narrative that embeds. It also addresses the function of embedded narratives to the characters.

The conclusion summarizes the research done with a focus on the findings observed in this study.
CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction
This section explores the nature of embedding in Adichie’s selected works. This has been done through an analysis of embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey” separately. This chapter discusses the forms of embedding found in the texts while examining how the embedded narratives bear on ideological dimensions of literature. In this chapter I identify the different narrative levels and the relationship between these levels.

Narrative embedding takes place where one narrative is subordinated to another narrative. Samuel Waldron in “Challenging Narrative Hierarchies: Embedded Narrative Structure in David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* and Mark Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*” suggests that narrative embedding requires a text with at least two narratives the embedded and the embedding. For the purpose of this research the embedding relationship will require the embedded narrative must be visible. The latter narrative must be present and observable in the text.

Nature of Embedding in Adichie’s selected works
“Jumping Monkey Hill” is a story set outside Cape Town in South Africa. Ujunwa the protagonist is part of a group of African writers attending a writers’ workshop. Authors from various African countries are gathered at this workshop. Within the story there is reference to the stories written by the other writers in the workshop. Only Ujunwa’s story
is displayed and the reader journeys with Ujunwa as she writes her story. Through the third person omniscient narrator the reader gets to know Ujunwa’s thoughts.

Adichie makes use of the *Mise en abyme technique* in the packaging of “Jumping Monkey Hill”. *Mise en abyme* is the French term referring to the practice in heraldry of placing the image of a small shield on a larger shield. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Ujunwa’s story is semi-autobiographical. The story Ujunwa writes is in the third person limited point of view. Ujunwa’s story is untitled. It is indented within the primary narrative and presented in smaller font to distinguish it from the primary text. The story is complete and can be read independent from the primary narrative.

The protagonist Chioma in Ujunwa’s story faces two situations where men in authority take advantage of her position through sexual exploitation. In the first instance, “the man says he will hire her and then walks across and stands behind her and reaches over her shoulders to squeeze her breasts. She hisses, stupid man! You cannot respect yourself! and leaves” (100). In the second instance, Chioma walks away after observing Yinka sitting on a customer’s lap and realizing that this would also be her fate. The alhaji runs a finger over Yinka’s arm. When the alhaji invites them in to give them perfume Chioma walks away. The choice of the short story form within the short story is valid because of the advantages of the short story form. An example is the ease with which an author maintains consistency of purpose since there are fewer characters and settings thus better dramatic and thematic unities.
Later when Ujunwa reads the story to the group, Edward the workshop leader says that “the whole thing is implausible” (113). At this point Adichie reveals to the reader and the other characters in the primary text that this story is the real life story of Ujunwa:

A real story of real people?” she said, with her eyes on Edward’s face. “The only thing I didn’t add in the story is that after I left my co-worker and walked out of the alhaji’s house, I got into the jeep and insisted that the driver takes me home because I knew it was the last time I would be riding it. (114)

*Half of a Yellow Sun* recounts the ghastly historical events of the Nigeria-Biafra war. The central characters in the novel are Ugwu, the twin sisters; Olanna and Kainene, Odenigbo and Richard. To a large extent, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is Ugwu’s story, but, the chapters are written in turn from the point of view of Ugwu, Olanna and Richard. The action in the novel moves between the early and the late nineteen sixties.

Interspersed throughout the book are brief passages taken from a book entitled; “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The authorship of this book is ambiguous; Adichie leads the reader to believe that the book is written by Richard, “the title of the book came to Richard: “ ‘The World Was Silent When We Died’. He would write it after the war, a narrative of Biafra’s difficult victory…” (375) but we learn towards the end of the book that it was Ugwu who was writing the book; “Ugwu was writing as she
spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of…” (210).

*Americanah*, Adichie’s most recent novel traverses three nations and addresses a myriad of issues; identity, nationality, race, love, loneliness and aspiration. The book opens in Princeton where Ifemelu lives, as she heads to Trenton, the closest place she can get her hair braided. Her hair being braided at the salon is symbolic of Adichie braiding and weaving her story. Through flashbacks we get to know the story of Ifemelu and Obinze that begins twenty years earlier in Nigeria.

Ifemelu and her boyfriend Obinze are caught up in a state that is surrounded by dysfunction and corruption. The two respond by leaving the country in search of brighter prospects. Obinze heads to England due to rejection from post 9/11 stringent immigration policies in America. He travels on a tourist visa but extends his stay illegally. Eventually he is discovered and deported to Nigeria. Ifemelu goes to the United States and cuts all communication with Obinze. She struggles to make it and finally succeeds. Ifemelu launches a blog about race in America. By the time we meet her at the salon she has made up her mind to return to Nigeria.

*Americanah* has a seven part structure that holds fifty five chapters. The story takes the third person omniscient perspective. The chapter narration oscillates between Obinze and Ifemelu’s point of view. Adichie establishes that *Americanah* is primarily Ifemelu’s story
by writing chapter one from Ifemelu’s point of view. Chapter two is from Obinze’s point of view, this establishes that his story is also of importance.

The frame of the story is rendered by the braid salon. From the salon the details of the story are laid out as flashback within that frame. Interestingly, Ifemelu leaves the salon at the end of chapter forty one. The following chapters deal with Ifemelu’s transition on the verge of returning to Nigeria. Chapters forty four to fifty five are set in Nigeria and deal with the issues in Ifemelu and Obinze’s relationship and provide a closure to the novel.

There are blog posts spread throughout the novel. While in America Ifemelu sets up a blog called “Raceteenth or Curious Observations by a Non-American Black on the subject of Blackness in America” (296). Ifemelu later changes its name to “Raceteenth or Various Observations in America About American Blacks (Those formerly known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black” (315). When Ifemelu returns to Nigeria she sets up another blog called “The Small Redemptions of Lagos”.

Adichie’s use of the blogosphere in Americanah is in keeping with the narrative time. The advancement of technology has significantly changed the mode of communication; people have turned to the use of Twitter, Facebook and blogs to express opinions on significant issues. Though we are not given specific dates in the novel, the allusion to 9/11 tragedy attack and the election of President Barack Obama to office helps us to place the setting as contemporary. The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines blogosphere as “an online journal where an individual, group,
or corporation presents a record of activities, thoughts or beliefs…many blogs provide a forum to allow visitors to leave comments and interact with the publisher” (n.p).

The choice of a blog as the form that carries the embedded text is very significant. Blogs are perpetual and can reach a wide audience. Each blog post has its own title and content. Visitors to the blog read the posts and share them so that other people can see and read them. Visitors can also make comments and participate in the discussion. Blogs are also easily accessible through computers and mobile phones. One of the characters in the novel, Paula reads one of Ifemelu’s blog posts in a gathering of friends from her phone (325).

Narrative Levels in Adichie’s Selected Works

Martin Gray’s dictionary of literary terms defines the various types of narrators and narrative levels as follows:

An extradiegetic narrator tells a story on the extradiegetic level, a ‘higher’ level that includes everyone and everything that determines how the story is told. His or her narration can include one or more other narrations (told by intradiegetic narrators). An intradiegetic narrator tells the story on the narrative level of the characters; the diegetic level which describes how the characters of a story communicate with each other and which is embedded at the extradiegetic level.

A homodiegetic narrator describes his or her own personal experience as a character in the story. Such a character cannot know more about other characters than what their
actions reveal. A heterodiegetic narrator on the other hand describes the experiences of the characters that appear in the story.

The narrator in Ujunwa’s story is presented to the reader as a heterodiegetic narrator. As we read the story we cannot link the events of the story to Ujunwa. It is only through the primary text or at the extradiegetic level that we learn that the narrator is actually homodiegetic. Ujunwa the character in “Jumping Monkey Hill” is actually Chioma in the untitled story she writes.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the reader is presented with a first narrative level through the third person omniscient narrator and then the second level narrative act Ujunwa writes a short story. At each level, the narrative is truncated before it attains closure.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in “Jumping Monkey Hill”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Narrative Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Omniscient third person narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story about Ujunwa and other participants in a writers workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second level</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ujunwa writes a short story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative act</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded Narrative</td>
<td>Metadiegetic</td>
<td>Story of Chioma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, at the extradiegetic level, the third person omniscient narrator presents the events around the Nigeria-Biafra war. This constitutes the intradiegetic level in which Ugwu writes a book. This book within the primary text constitutes the metadiegetic level of narratives. This structure is similar to that of the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill”. Adichie also applies the *Mise en Abyme* technique, since the embedded narrative mirrors the embedding narrative in terms of form.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” is written from the omniscient third person point of view. The brief passages appear as summaries that tell the reader what is contained in the chapters of that book:

1. **The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died**

   For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash. She sat on the floor. Olanna tells him this story and he notes the details. She tells him how the bloodstains on the woman’s wrapper blended into the fabric to form a misty manure…(82). 

The omniscient narrator of the novel and the writer of “The Book” constantly overlap. In this first part it is obvious that the writer has access to the information in the novel. At this point in the story we do not know who is writing the book. The only person mentioned to have an interest in writing a book about Nigeria is Richard, a British journalist. The reader easily assumes the writer is Richard.

---

All the excerpts from “The Book” are numbered as such I have numbered them in my quotes for ease of reference.
Genette in *Narrative Discourse* defines metalepsis as “any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a Metadiegetic universe etc) or the inverse (234-235). Metalepsis therefore is a paradoxical transgression of the boundaries between narrative levels. Dorrit Cohn in “Metalepsis and Mise en Abyme” defines interior metalepsis as “all metalepsis that occurs between two levels of the same story; that is to say, between a primary and secondary story” (106).

Interior metalepsis occurs in *Half of a Yellow Sun* when at the extradiegetic level the reader finds out that the ‘he’ referred to in the first part of “The World Was Silent when We Died” is Ugwu. This is found in part four of the novel which covers the late Sixties. “Then she described the head itself, the open eyes, the greying skin. Ugwu was writing as she spoke and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important…” (210).

The transgression here occurs between the primary narrative and the secondary narrative. It appears that the narrator of the primary narrative is the same narrator in “The Book: The World Was Silent When we Died”. The book’s passages are written from the third person point of view similar to primary text:

2. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died
   He discusses the British soldier merchant Taubman Goldie, how he coerced, cajoled and killed…(115).

3. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died
He writes about independence. The second world war changed the world order: Empire was crumbling…(155).

5. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

He writes about starvation, starvation was a Nigerian weapon of war. (237)

When towards the end of the novel we realize it is Ugwu writing the book we discover that Adichie collapses the idea of narrative levels and the hierarchy of the same. There are no longer boundaries. The levels become intertwined. Adichie creates an illusion of a real book but in the real sense the passages are summaries of “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The summaries of “The Book” are presented to the reader by the same extradiegetic narrator.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in Half of a Yellow Sun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>levels</th>
<th>Narrative content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Third person omniscient narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story about Nigeria-Biafra war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second level narrative</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ugwu writes a book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded narrative</td>
<td>Metadiegetic</td>
<td>The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Genette suggests that “metalepsis designates the transgression of a line of demarcation that authors usually do not touch, namely the shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells and the world of which one tells” (236). Adichie looks away from
conventional embedding and points to alternative structural reading of her novel. The overlapping in *Half of a Yellow Sun* suggests links between the narrative levels. A close observation of the narrative structure in this particular text reveals a limitation of the theory of narratology to the extent that it views metalepsis more of a transgression than of any merit. One of the merits seen in this text is its use to connect the embedded and the embedding. The demerit is that metalepsis may cause confusion about who the narrators are to the readers of the novel.

It is important to note that there are other forms of embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The novel contains speeches, radio broadcasts, songs, poems, Richard’s articles, letters and such other categories. This research focuses on the major embedded narrative. The term ‘major’ for the purposes of this research refers to any narrative that takes a significant portion of the text, where significant is any narrative longer than three to four paragraphs. While this distinction may not be perfect, it is nevertheless a useful one. The intent is not to brush aside the text’s shorter narratives but to provide a clearer comprehensible picture of the predominant narrative structure.

The narrative structure in *Americanah* is multi-layered. At the extradiegetic level is the third person omniscient narrator narrating from Ifemelu’s and Obinze’s perspective at different times. The next level is the intradiegetic level where Ifemelu writes a blog and posts blogs on different topics. The reader observes the narration of ‘tales’ by the intradiegetic narrator both about the narrator (homonodiegetic) and about others (heterodiegetic). The next level is the Metadiegetic, which comprises the blog posts by Ifemelu. Beyond this is the meta-metadiegetic which arises from blog comments by blog visitors on different topics.
This type of embedding presents a complex situation because the narrative levels follow no clear pattern. The result is that it does not amount to a structural system that would explain the relationship of the narrative parts. In some instances the extradiegetic narrator presents the blog contents from the meta-metadiegetic level. An example is: “Years later she would blog about this: ‘On the Subject of Non-American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know.’ A Congolese woman wrote a long comment in response: She had moved to Virginia from Kinshasa and months into her first semester of college begun to feel dizzy … (158).” In this example the extradiegetic narrator cuts across all the possible levels of narration in the novel as follows; the intradiegetic- Ifemelu writing the blog, The Metadiegetic- the blog post; “On the Subject of Non-American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know” (158) The meta-metadiegetic, the Congolese woman writing her experience of panic attacks.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in *Americanah*²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>levels</th>
<th>Narrative content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Story told from the third person omniscient point of View</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story revolves around the lives of Obinze and Ifemelu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Level Narrative</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ifemelu sets up a blog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² This table presentation is *Americanah’s* basic narrative level structure. The complex nature of the embedding caused by the overlapping of narrative levels could not be tabulated.
Relationship between embedding texts and embedded texts in Adichie’s selected works

Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* differentiates the main types of relationships that can connect the metadiegetic narrative to the primary narrative in which it is inserted. The first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, conferring on the second narrative an explanatory function. The second type consists of a purely thematic relationship, therefore implying no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis: a relationship of contrast or of analogy. The third type involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content a function of distraction, for example and/or obstruction (232-233).

Mieke Bal observes that when the embedded text presents a complete story with an elaborate fabula, we gradually forget the fabula of the primary narrative: This apparently loose relationship between primary and embedded text is relevant to the development of the primary fabula (57). Another possible relationship between the two texts presents itself when the two fabulas are
related to each other. This structure has two possible meanings. Either the embedded story explains the primary story, or it resembles the primary story. In the first case the relationship is made explicit by the actor narrating the embedded story; in the second the explanation is usually left to the reader, or merely hinted at, in the fabula (58).

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the narrator relates the writing process of one of the characters. The omniscient third person narrator says, “She sat there for a long time, moving the mouse from side to side, trying to decide whether to name her character something common, like Chioma or something exotic like Ibani” (100). From this narration we learn that Ujunwa is writing a story about a female protagonist. Just beneath this excerpt is a display of the story Ujunwa is writing.

The two texts are related to each other. The embedded story explains the primary story. Adichie uses the embedded story to develop pertinent issues that the primary text raises. This relationship is made explicit by the character Ujunwa narrating the embedded story through her writing. Though the short story written by Ujunwa is complete the primary text takes a larger part of the story “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

In Half of a Yellow Sun “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” is interspersed throughout the novel. The distinction between the primary narrative and this narrative is that the excerpts are short passages, printed in a different typeface, they are all titled “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The primary text takes a larger part of the novel since the embeddings are summaries and not whole chapters.
The reader finds the first part of embedded book in part one of the novel which covers the early sixties. This portion summarizes the prologue of the book within the novel. It is worth noting that the presentation of the book is abrupt, no mention of what it is about or who the author is has been given this far. The embedded narratives are short passages that are presented as chapter summaries that are numbered.

The embeddings have no relation with the chapter content of the chapters that hold them. Though the arrangement of the embedded narratives within the text appears haphazard, a closer study reveals an orderly pattern. Each segment of “The Book” appears at the end of either one or two series of three chapters focalised by each of the three main focalisers. In part one and three the embeddings appear after one series and in part two and four after every two series.

In total, the embeddings are eight and the last is found on the last page of the novel:

8. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

Ugwu writes his dedication last. For my master, my good man (433).

The ending of the novel at the same time with the ending of the embedded narrative is significant because it places them on the same level. This implies that both narratives are of equal import.

In Half of a Yellow Sun the embedded narrative and the embedding narrative are related to each other. The embedded narrative explains the primary story. Bal explains in Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative that “this relationship is made explicit by the
actor narrating the embedded story” (58). By stating clearly in the last chapter of the embedded narrative that Ugwu wrote, Adichie wants to ensure there is no doubt about the authorship of the book. This also reveals the connection between the two texts. Ugwu the child narrator in the primary text rises to write about his experience and observations about the war in the embedded text.

Genette’s *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* refers to this relationship as one of “direct causality” (232). He further explains that these kinds of embedded narratives seek to answer the question “what events led to the present situation?” The information contained in “The Book: The World was Silent When We Died” gives background details to events in the extradiegetic narrative.

In *Americanah* the narrator furnishes us with background information on the blogger (Ifemelu) and the blog. The reader is introduced to the blog in the first chapter of the book. This is an indication to the reader that the blog is an important part of the novel and its story. Unlike *Half of a Yellow Sun* where the embedded narrative just appears without warning; the blog in *Americanah* has an external introduction. From the outset of the novel the reader knows there is a blog and gets a feel of what the blog is about when the narrator mentions some posts in the blog and visitor comments on the second and third page of the novel.

The blog and primary text have a close relationship. There is spatio-temporal continuity between the metadiegesis and diegesis. This relationship is not of direct causality like the one observed in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The second narrative takes on an explanatory function. Some of the
fabulas in *Americanah* also resemble one another and the blog is intertwined with the primary narrative. Contained in the blogs are incidents of interest that Ifemelu experiences or observes in her day to day life. There is a repetition within the blog of events that the reader has already seen in the primary text.

An example is when Ifemelu works as a babysitter for a white family that lived in a grand stone house with white pillars; she encounters a carpet cleaner who is hostile to her because she is black and a black should not own such a stately house: “She would begin the blog post “Sometimes in America, Race is Class” with the story of his dramatic change and end it with: *It didn’t matter to him how much money I had. As far as he was concerned I did not fit as the owner of that stately house because of the way I looked. In America’s public discourse ...* (166).”

Another example is the blog on the expensive lifestyles of some young Nigerian women posted in “The Small Redemptions of Lagos” (422). The blog post is about Ranyinudo, Ifemelu’s friend. Before the post, on an earlier page is a description of Ranyinudo that matches the blog. “Ifemelu... wondered if she would be like Ranyinudo, working for an advertising company, living in a one bedroom flat whose rent her salary could not pay...dating a married chief executive who bought her business class tickets to London ” (389). The blog reads in part;

“*There are many young women in Lagos with Unknown Sources of Wealth; they live lives they cannot afford. They have only ever travelled business class to Europe but have jobs that can’t even afford them a regular ticket. One of them is my friend a beautiful, brilliant woman who works in advertising*” (422).
Bal defines resemblance between two fabulas as follows: “we speak of resemblance when two fabulas can be paraphrased in such a way that the summaries have one or more striking elements in common” (60). In the case of the two blog posts cited above in one the resemblance with the text is that both texts address the issue of race in America using the same incident. In the second the blog and text are a social critique on the lives of certain women in Nigeria. When confronted by Ranyinudo for airing her story in public, Ifemelu says “Your story is so common” (422). Ifemelu uses Ranyinudo’s life story to talk about women “who define their lives by men they can never truly have and are crippled by a culture of dependence” (422).

**Embedding and Authority**

All the embedding narratives in Adichie’s work vouch for the authenticity of the narrative they embed. The embedding texts do not just present the embedded text; they provide a context for the embedded narrative, credit it to a specific person and establish its credentials.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” and *Americanah* it is very clear from the outset who the authors of the embedded texts are. Ifemelu sets up the two blogs in *Americanah*. Ujunwa writes the untitled story in “Jumping Monkey Hill”. *Half of a Yellow Sun* takes a different approach: the author of the book within the novel is not revealed at the outset. The reader has to contend with the ambiguity of whether it is Richard or Ugwu who writes the book. It is eventually made clear towards the end of the novel that Ugwu is the author of the book. The ambiguity of the authorship of the embedded text is employed by Adichie to create suspense and at the same time make a statement about who should tell the African story.
The embedding narratives attest to the credibility of the narratives that they embed. In *Americanah* the narrator presents Ifemelu’s blog as a successful blog with a growing readership. The omniscient narrator says this about the blog:

> She had written the final post only days ago. Trailed by two hundred and seventy-four comments so far. All those readers growing month by month, linking, cross-posting, knowing so much more than she did; they had always frightened and exhilarated her (5)

In another instance, Paula one of Ifemelu and Blaine’s friends tells her students to read the blog (325). Paula equates the blog to any other authoritative text that the students are required to read. This puts forth a case about the importance of the blog. The various blog posts and comments from blog visitors create an interesting patchwork of conversations giving an impression of a series of supporting sources.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the embedding narrative backs up the information in “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” by creating an illusion that the information in the embedded narrative is true. In the first chapter of the embedded book the reader learns the source of the story in the prologue of that book is Olanna (81). To authenticate this story about the baby in calabash the extradiegetic narrator narrates this episode in chapter eleven. The narrator gives the reader details of the train journey and uses similar words; from the embedded narrative we read; “For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash. She sat on the floor of a train...” (81). From the primary text we read that; “Olanna sat on the floor of the train with her knees drawn up” (149). The narrator further endorses that prologue by narrating how the actual
process of writing that prologue takes place in chapter thirty four; “Then she described the head itself, the open eyes, the graying skin. Ugwu was writing as she spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose…” (410). Captured in that narration is an affirmation of the author of the book as earnest and keen to tell the story and a pointer to the importance of the story shared in the embedded narrative.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the reader learns that Ujunwa is a fine writer. The third person omniscient narrator says: “It was the British Council that had made the call for entries and selected the best” (96). This sets the readers expectation high; we anticipate that the story she writes will be good. After she reads her story some of the comments from the other participants were that; the story was “strong…believable…captured Lagos well…had a realistic portrayal of what women were going through in Nigeria” (113). This approval places the embedded story in good standing to counter Edward’s negative opinion about it.

An important piece of information that the embedding narrative reveals is that the story is actually Ujunwa’s real life experience. Since autobiography is more believable than fiction; Adichie effectively creates the illusion that the embedded narrative is a true story. The embedded narrative is therefore placed at a level higher than the one embedding it by being presented as a true story while the one that holds it is fictional.

The authors of the embedded narratives in the works studied write from a point of experience. Ugwu writes about his experiences during the war. Ifemelu blogs about her immigrant experiences in America. Ujunwa writes her own story. This validates their suitability to write
these stories. The experience gives them the knowledge and power to write the embedded narratives and the reader easily believes them.

Adichie’s choice to represent the embedded narratives as non-fictional text within the context of the embedding narrative elevates them in the ontological level. Ontological levels point out the subordination of worlds or realities. Waldron describes a subordinate world as one which is “fictional; it is subordinated to the real world because it has no independent existence beyond what is described or imagined in the real world” (17). In the works selected the primary narratives take a subordinate level.

Conclusion
This chapter has examined the nature of the embedded narratives in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”. It has discussed the various forms that shape the embedded narratives. I have attempted to present a working narratological model for the texts; discussing the narrative levels and their relationships. I have also observed that in some cases like *Americanah* the extensive embedding creates a clash between the narrative levels. In this chapter I also looked at the relationships between the embedding narrative and embedded narratives and concluded that the relationship is one where the embedding narrative justifies the embedded narrative. This discussion leads us to the next chapter that looks at the function of the embedded texts and how it contributes to developing Adichie’s thematic concerns.
CHAPTER 3

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction

This chapter looks at the functions of the embedded narratives in the texts selected. It also evaluates the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique in communicating the author’s thematic concerns. It highlights the limitations of the embedded narrative technique in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

Functions of the Embedded Narratives

Authors choose to employ the embedded narrative technique in their work for various reasons. Some common uses are; for aesthetic purpose as a means of adding diversity to the narrative act, dramatic impact, sharpening characterization, developing thematic concerns and increasing the complexity of the narrative. This study focuses on the roles played by the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works.

Narratologists such as Genette and Bal have discussed possible functions of embedded narratives. Shlomith Rimmon Kenan builds on the earlier work of Genette and Bal in *Narrative Fiction Contemporary Poetics*. She argues that there are three types of embedded narrative function: actional, where the telling itself progresses the plot; explicative, which explain the diegesis; and thematic, which function as *Mise en abyme*, stories that reflect in some way the
narrative around them (93). This study begins the examination of the functions of the embedded narrative from the functions identified by Kenan and then expands to other functions revealed in the short stories “Jumping Monkey Hill” and the novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*.

**The Explicative Function**

Embedded narratives may serve as an answer to questions that arise in the primary narrative. This function helps the reader to understand how the events in the primary narrative came to be. “All these narratives, explicitly or not, answer a question of the type “what events have led to the present situation?” (Genette 232).

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the excerpts of “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” focus on saying, this is how things were and this is why things turned out this way. The prologue introduces the reader to the effects of the senseless killing during the war by recounting the story of the woman with the calabash. Ugwu contextualizes the senseless killings within the wider narratives of war and violence in the world by mentioning “the German women who fled Hamburg with the charred bodies of their children in stuffed suitcases and the Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies” (82).

The second excerpt explains the colonial aspect of how Nigeria was formed. How the British preferred the North to the South. The flourishing of the Christianity and education brought by the missionaries, the merging of the North and the South in 1914 and the picking of the name Nigeria by the governor-general’s wife (115).
The third excerpt talks about independence and highlights the state of Nigeria during independence “At independence in 1960, Nigeria was a collection of a fragments held in a fragile clasp” (155). This statement is important in explaining the state of the country at independence. This signals the reader to the volatile nature of the state and it therefore does not come as a surprise that the country broke into war. This excerpt also reveals the tension between the North and the South: “The North was wary; it feared domination of the more educated South and had always wanted a country separate from the infidel South …Nothing was done about the clamour of the minority groups and the regions were already competing so fiercely that some wanted separate foreign embassies (155).”

The fourth excerpt talks about the economy of Nigeria which was nonexistent until independence. This excerpt points to the poor governance and complex problems facing the country. It focuses on the 1966 massacres and mentions the ostensible reason for the massacre as revenge for the “Igbo Coup”. The attitude of the Igbo is shown as resilient and what mattered to them was the unity forged among the Igbo and the creation of the fervent Biafrans out of former Nigerians.

The fifth excerpt discusses the starvation that was prevalent in the Biafra war. How starvation was used by Nigeria as a weapon of war and how it drew attention to Biafra. He also talks of how people used that starvation for their own gains. For example, photographers use of the photos of the hunger stricken children to grow their careers. Parents also used the mention of starvation to get their children to eat.
The sixth excerpt discusses the reactions of the international community to the Biafran Republic. It mentions the silence and the indifference from some. “In the United States, Biafra was “Under Britain’s sphere of interest”. In Canada the prime minister quipped, “Where is Biafra?”(257). Within this portion Ugwu explains the reason for the silence of the world toward Biafra. This discussion is very crucial because it underscores the notion “The World Was Silent When We Died” which is also the title of the book Ugwu writes.

The seventh excerpt contains the epilogue which is a poem Ugwu wrote, modelled after a poem by Okeoma one of the characters. The poem is titled “Were you Silent When We Died?” This title is also related to the title of the embedded book. This linkage and repetition point to the importance of questioning the silence or attitude of indifference among nations when a nation faces a crisis especially one that leads to massive loss of human life. This is an important socio-political question for Africa since the continent continues to face crises that cause loss of lives. A current example is the South Sudan conflict where hundreds of people continue to be killed because of their ethnicity and political alignment.

The eighth and final excerpt of the embedded book constitutes one line; “Ugwu writes his dedication last: For Master, my good man” (433). This line sums up Ugwu’s appreciation to Odenigbo for is mentorship. Through this final line the issue of the ambiguity of the authorship of the book is finally put to rest. There is no doubt about whose story this is and who writes it. The embedding in Half of a Yellow Sun serves an explicative function where the embedded narrative explains the events in the embedding narrative. It gives the reader a deeper understanding of what the scenario was during the Biafran War. This is important because some
of the readers may have no idea what the Biafran war was about, The Book functions as a device to anchor the reader. Maria Plaias in “The danger of a single story in Chimamanda N. Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun” states that “the line of reasoning in “The Book” provides the basis for analysing and interpreting the characters political views in the main narrative and affirms and reinforces the major ideas of these characters” (54).

The embedding narrative presents to us the action of the story while the embedded narrative presents to us the cause of the action. An example is the issue of starvation as a tool of war. Through description Adichie paints a picture of the inhumanity of starvation; she shows girls fighting for food (270), the desperation Olanna experiences when she goes to the gate of the relief centre to collect food for five consecutive days and finds the gate locked. She details the inward rush of the crowds into the relief centre when it finally opens (271), the theft of Olanna’s corned beef by five soldiers (272). How children roasted rats to eat (370) and how every leaf became a vegetable (371). Through these scenes and many others in the book we see the effect of starvation on the Biafran people. It is only from the fifth excerpt of the embedded book that we understand that starvation was a weapon of war:

Starvation broke Biafra and brought Biafra fame and made Biafra last as long as it did. Starvation made the people of the world take notice and sparked protests and demonstrations in London and Moscow and Czechoslovakia… Starvation made the international Red Cross call Biafra its gravest emergency since the Second World War (237).
The blog Ifemelu puts up in Americanah explains the countless different approaches to race, gender, ethnicity and beauty both in Nigeria and in the United States of America. From the title of the Ifemelu’s blog: “Raceteenth or Various Curious Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non American Black” it is clear that Adichie wants to tackle race from an African perspective. To avoid the subjectivity that may come from an American Black because of the history of slavery and earlier racist practices which they were subjected too; Adichie looks at it from an outsider’s perspective (through Ifemelu). Through the blogs Adichie avoids being didactic about the issue of race.

Similar to the Half of a Yellow Sun approach the primary narrative presents to the reader the action of the story while the blog explains the “why” and “how” of the situation in the primary text. The blog allows the public to comment on the issues at hand. The blogs in the novel play a complementary role while facilitating explanation of the primary text. An example is the case of Abe who does not see Ifemelu as female because of the racial divide:

...Abe in her ethics class, Abe was white, Abe who liked her well enough, who thought her smart and funny, even attractive but who did not see her as female. She was curious about Abe, interested in Abe... Abe would hook her up with his black friend... She was invisible to Abe (192).

Later in the novel Ifemelu is involved romantically with Curt, a wealthy white man. During the duration of this relationship she experiences racial prejudice firsthand. When Curt introduced Ifemelu as his girlfriend she saw on the faces of the white women the expression of the question
“why her” (292). Other instances are when they walked into the restaurant and the host asked Curt “Table for one?” and when the owner of the bed and breakfast in Montreal refused to acknowledge her and looked only at Curt (294). Ifemelu felt slighted by this treatment but she could not tell Curt because he would say she was overreacting. Finally when Ifemelu starts her blog her first post entails the prejudices she experienced when seen with a white man and the racially skewed magazines. She ends the blog with words she remembered a long time after that post and recited at the dinner table of a French and American couple. The blog reads:

The simplest solution to the problem of race in America? Romantic love. Not friendship. Not the kind of safe, shallow love where the objective is that both people remain comfortable. But real deep romantic love, the kind that twists you and wrings you out and makes you breathe through the nostrils of your beloved. And because that deep romantic love is so rare, because American society is set up to make it even rarer between American Black and American White, the problem of race in America will never be solved. (296)

This post explains her brutal honesty to a comment by a Haitian poet who had dated a white man for three years. The poet said that race was never an issue for them. Ifemelu reacts by saying “That’s a lie” (290) she repeats “it’s a lie” (290). Through this narration and the blog post Adichie expresses her anger at the idea of sweeping of the race issue under the carpet by saying “race is not an issue” or race does not matter (291).
The blog posts are also used to explain the meaning of concepts around the race issue that cannot be explained in the text. An example is the blog post titled “Understanding America for the Non-American Black: A few Explanations of What Things Really Mean” (350). This blog captures the evasive nature of Americans when handling conversations that address racial issues. They are reported to refer to race using abstract terms such as “simplistic” or “complex”. Among other terms the blogger discusses how diversity means different things to blacks and to whites. “To the whites diverse means nine per cent black people and if it gets to ten per cent they can’t stand it. To the blacks diverse neighbourhood means forty per cent black” (350).

Another post “What Academics Mean by White Privileges, or Yes it Sucks To Be Poor and White but Try Being Poor and Non-White”. This post is one of the lengthier posts, spanning close to two pages. It discusses, explaining at length the imbalances created by racism. An example is given about what would happen if a black person was found in possession of drugs and if a white person was found in a similar situation. The post reads “the white guy is more likely to be sent to treatment and the black guy is more likely to be sent to jail” (346).

Just like *Half of a Yellow Sun’s* embedded narrative the “Raceteenth” blog in *Americanah* helps the reader to trace the histories around the race issue, this explains to the reader how the current situation arose and why the race issue remains unresolved. In the post “Friendly Tips for the American Non-Black: How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness.” (325) Ifemelu outlines the ways in which the whites offer alternative explanations about racial issues and how they want to wish away the past. In this post she records history to anchor the reader on the race issue:
Dear Non-American Black, If an American Black person is telling you about an experience about being black, please do not eagerly bring up examples from your own life. ...Don’t be quick to find alternative explanations for what happened. Don’t say “Oh, it’s not really race, it’s class. Oh, it’s not race it’s gender... A hundred years ago the white ethnics hated being hated, but it was sort of tolerable because at least black people were below them on the ladder. ... being American means you take the whole Shebang, America’s assets and America’s debts, and Jim Crow is a big ass debt. ... Don’t say “Oh Racism is over, slavery was so long ago.” We are talking about the problem from the 1960s not 1860s ...325-327.

The mention of the historic events; the slavery, Jim Crow, blacks stepping off the curb because a white person was passing, white women standing outside schools shouting “Ape” because they did not want their children to mix with black children among other incidences mentioned in the post, gives the reader background information on why the racial wound still festers. At the end of this blog post Ifemelu does not stop at listing the do’s and don’ts of the appropriate way whites should respond to blacks discussing race. She invites the two races to a possibility of a friendship where there is mutual understanding and respect:

American Blacks are not telling you that you are to blame. They are just telling you what is. If you don’t understand, ask questions. If you are uncomfortable asking questions, say you are uncomfortable about asking questions and then ask anyway. It’s easy to tell when a question is coming from a good place...sometimes
people just want to feel heard. Here’s to possibilities of friendship connection and understanding. 327

**Thematic Function**

Rimon-Kenan defines the thematic function of the embedded narrative as one that establishes a relationship of analogy, that is, similarity and contrast” between the narrative levels (92). Genette in *Narrative Discourse* explains that this “purely thematic relationship implies no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis; a relationship of contrast or of analogy.

Based on these two definitions of the embedded narratives studied, only the story nested in “Jumping Monkey Hill” serves this function. In *Americanah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* there exists a form of continuity in space and time in the events related in the embedded narratives and embedding narratives.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the untitled story Ujunwa writes has nothing to do with the primary narrative in terms of time and space. Adichie use this story to exemplify the mistaken perceptions of Africans and issues that affect them by foreigners. In the primary narrative Isabel a British assumes that only royal blood could explain the good looks of African people, Edward believes that homosexual weren’t reflective of Africa and women are never victims of sexual exploitation in crude ways. Edward has a warped idea of what the “real Africa” is and insists that his perception of Africa is correct. The story Ujunwa writes and reads unbeknownst to her audience is a true story of her experiences and so when Edward comments that; “The whole thing is implausible,”…This is agenda writing, it isn’t a story of real people.(113)” She responds: “A real story of real people? …The only thing I didn’t add in the story is that after I
left my co-worker and walked out of the alhaji’s house I got into the Jeep and insisted that the driver take me home because I knew it was the last time I would be riding it (113)”. The revelation that the embedded story is a true story serves to show that Edward’s (foreigners) perceptions about Africa are sometimes so wrong. It gives an analogy of similarity by showing that the comments Edward had been making about the unrealistic nature of the other participants African stories was wrong.

**Actional Function**

The actional function occurs when the very telling of the embedded narrative progresses the plot. This function borrows from Genette’s third type of function expounded in *Narrative Discourse* where such an embedded narrative:“Involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content- a function of distraction, for example and/ or of obstruction (233)”. The embeddings in the selected texts do not fit this definition completely because they are not completely independent of the diegesis and have no function of obstruction or distraction. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the attendees of the African writers’ workshop are expected to produce one story for possible publication. It therefore follows that Ujunwa the protagonist of the story writes a story which she is required to read to the other attendees.

The short story written by Ujunwa serves as a plot device employed by Adichie to advance the plot in this story. Once Ujunwa reads the story the reactions of the other participants and those of Edward form the rising action. One of the key conflicts of the story is the fixed perceptions of Africa by foreigners. The embedded narrative also makes possible the denouement of the story.
The final outcome of the events is the story is directly linked to the story Chioma writes because it is at this point that she reveals that she is the protagonist in the story that she writes. This revelation then proves Edward wrong in referring to her story as implausible.

In *Americanah* there are other characters from the primary text who are involved with the blogs either directly or indirectly. Ranyinudo for example is upset that Ifemelu had written about her in one of the blog posts. Ifemelu had posted a blog about “the expensive lifestyles of some young women in Lagos”. Ranyinudo calls Ifemelu and says “It is obviously me! Look at this! Ranyinudo paused and then began to read aloud” (422). This post was then taken down by Ifemelu.

Paula like Ranyinudo also reads a blog post to her friends. She also requires her students to read Ifemelu’s blog. It is noted that Obinze read the whole archive of Ifemelu’s blog posts, his reaction to blogs is also accounted for. Some of the experiences Ifemelu has and the observations about life and the other characters form a significant part of the blog.

Blaine contributed to the blog indirectly by influencing Ifemelu through his comments. He reminded Ifemelu what he thought was her role and what the purpose of the blog should have been “Remember people are not reading you as entertainment; they’re reading you as cultural commentary. That’s real responsibility. There are kids writing college essays about your blog” (312). To the extent that the other characters make a contribution to this blog gives it an actional function.
The actional function applies to *Half of a Yellow Sun* on a very small degree because as much as the reader knows that Ugwu is writing a book; the narratives he writes do not contribute to the progression of the plot. The embedded narrative in this novel serves an explicative function but could easily stand on its own. This is emphasized by the haphazard positioning of the embeddings and the lack of introduction to them by the primary text. Compared to *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”; there is very little interaction of the other characters with this text.

**Aesthetic Function**

Aesthetics in literature refers to the investigation of the nature and perception of beauty in a piece of literary work. Peter Lamarque in “Aesthetics and Literature: A problematic Relation?” argues that “Aesthetic characterisations have implication for how the work appears, what impact it has, what is salient in it and what merits aesthetic attention” (6). The use of embedded narratives is one of the aesthetic choices Adichie makes to creatively present her work.

The embedded narratives in Adichie’s work positively affect the presentation of the works to the reader. The external appearance reveals breaks, with an indented bolded typeface in *Americanah*. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the excerpts of “The Book” are numbered and are in bold letter title. The font of “The Book” is different from that of the primary text. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the font used to present the embedded short story is similar to that of the primary text but in smaller size and indented.

In the works selected the embedded narratives provide obstruction in the continuity of the whole. This obstruction affords the narration with more ups and downs. The continuity of the primary
narration is momentarily suspended and a heightened suspense is created. In her longer forms the embedded narratives break the monotony of reading the primary narrative by offering a shift in the reader’s thought process.

In a number of instances the embedded narratives in *Half of a Yellow Sun* help us to break from the heavy matter of the war. In chapter twelve the reader is presented with the narration of the horrendous killings at the airport which are witnessed by Richard. He witnesses Nnaemeka’s “chest blow open” (153) and the soldiers line up Igbo people and shoot them. At the end of the chapter Richard lowers his head to the sink and begins to cry. Immediately after this scene the third excerpt of “The Book” is inserted just before the next chapter. This excerpt shifts the reader’s attention from the dreadful events of the airport killings to the narration of the independence of Nigeria. This excerpt also explains the state of the country at independence and suggests that “nothing had been done about the clamour of minority groups” (155). Apart from giving background information relating to the Biafran war, it offers a relief from the horrific details of the killings.

The same relief is offered in chapter eighteen which details the air raids that killed people and razed houses. The reader is moved by the effect of the raids on both the victims and survivors. The excerpt provides an obstruction by talking about the state of the economy of Nigeria. It also focuses on the 1966 massacres and the effect on the Biafrans.

In chapter thirty one of *Americanah* the tension raised by a heated discussion on race and relationships at a dinner party is cooled off by the insertion of a blog that discusses hair as a race metaphor: “Imagine if Michelle Obama got tired of all the heat and decided to go natural and
appeared on TV with lots of woolly hair, or tight spirally curls...She would totally rock but poor Obama would certainly lose the independent vote, even the undecided Democrat vote (297)”.

The tone of the blog is that of discussing race with a light touch and is peppered with humour. The reader is expected to get relief from the humour contained in the blog. Through the description of Michelle Obama’s hair as woolly and the effect of that on his election results, the heavy matter of race is discussed albeit in a humorous way.

The embedded narratives help to break the monotony of the primary narratives. In *Americanah* which spans four hundred and seventy seven pages; the blogs give the reader a much needed break from the monotony. The blogs give the readers fresh perspectives offered by Ifemelu and her blog followers. Unlike *Half of a Yellow Sun* where the embeddings are always located at the end of chapter, the blogs in *Americanah* appear both within the chapter and sometimes at the end of the chapter. The embedding in “Jumping Monkey Hill” appears at different points in the short story.

The embedded narratives help to create suspense in the novels and short story. Since the reader has to wait for the reading of the embedded narrative to pass, the experience of suspense is lengthened. Any questions raised in the reader’s mind have to be held in suspense till the embedded narrative is read for a possible resolution. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the abrupt presentation of the first excerpt of “The Book” in itself creates suspense. The reader has no idea who the author of “The Book” is and there is no introduction to the book. The reader wonders
what the book is about, who the author is and how long it will be. Adichie creates an urge within the readers to continue engaging with the novel.

In *Americanah* an instance of suspense is seen when a blog follows this statement- “When months later, Ifemelu had the fight with Blaine, she wondered if Shan had fuelled this anger, an anger she never fully understood” (337). While the reader is still wondering how and why the break up will take place, Adichie inserts the blog: Is Obama Anything but Black? The blog is totally unrelated to the preceding passages and thus suspense is created.

In the short story the embedded story written by Ujunwa serves as a break between different parts of the story. The embedded story appears immediately after breakfast following that excerpt it is dinner time then comes bed time; the next excerpt appears after breakfast the next day. This pattern continues dividing the primary story into various time frames. The embedded narrative also creates suspense in both the primary narrative and embedded narrative. Since the two stories obstruct each other, the reader is held in suspense as he or she awaits the next part.

The embedded narratives also slow down the tempo of the narrative. The reader is forced to slow down in order to fully comprehend the importance of a new embedding. This ensures that the reader understands its meaning and relates it to the structure of the story or novels’ total meaning. One of the concepts of Formalism is defamiliarization which Victor Shklovsky argues makes objects; “unfamiliar to makes forms difficult, to increase difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic in itself and must be prolonged (16). Borrowing from this concept this study views the use of embedded narratives as one way of
lengthening perception. The embeddings force the reader to slow down and effect a more strenuous but rewarding engagement with the text.

The embedded narratives also serve to help effectively introduce new plot lines; when Ifemelu returns to Nigeria she transitions into a home that is different from what it was thirteen years back. *Americanah* captures an aspect of the returnee narrative through a post in the blog: “The small Redemptions of Lagos”. The piece about the Nigropolitan Club describes the arrogance of Nigerian returnees who gather on a weekly basis to moan the disparities between Lagos and the cities they come from. Ifemelu uses this post to ridicule the air of pretentiousness that surrounds them and encourages the returnees to accept the way of life back home. This post underscores the definition of an “Americanah” presented earlier in the novel, “They roared with laughter at that word “Americanah”...and at the thought of Bisi...who had come from a short trip to America with odd affectations, pretending she no longer understood Yoruba, adding a slurred *r* to every word she spoke” (65).

Adichie uses the embedded narratives to enhance the reader’s understanding of the primary narratives while providing her readers an experience of combinational delight unique to the reading of stories within stories.

**Advancing the Oral Storytelling Tradition**

Obiechina observes in “Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel” that “the oral tradition impulse is strong in the modern African novel, which embodies this experience especially because the writers themselves are products of both oral traditions and literate education” (199). Roger Kurtz
describes the third generation of writers; a categorization in which Adichie belongs as “labouring under an obvious but understandable anxiety of influence as the giants of Nigerian literature who preceded them cast long shadows” (25). Heather Hewett observes in “Coming of Age: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and The Voice of the Third Generation.” that “Adichie like her peers is directly engaged with the Nigerian literary canon and is furthermore making a case for her inclusion in it” (78).

Embedded narratives were common in oral storytelling in independent traditions in parts of Africa. They are also used as a bridge between oral and written narrative. Herman argues that embedded narratives describe the historical consciousness of the present. There is a link with the past and a relaying of knowledge between two or more minds. *Half of a Yellow Sun* exemplifies this scenario. The embedded narrative found in “The Book” has a relationship of mediation. Adichie uses this embedding to narrate Nigeria’s history linking past events to the prevailing circumstances in her fiction.

Adichie is conscious of her position and role as an African writer and demonstrates this by borrowing from the rich reserves of traditional oral storytelling techniques. Narrative embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition. The first narrative level functions in a similar way to a storyteller’s role. The embedded narrative is an artistic device that enhances the performance of narrating. Abiola Irele argues that the interplay between orality and literacy is:

... not merely in a purely linguistic framework, as in the early phase of Africanist Studies, but also from a literary and artistic perspective. At the same time the
dominance of orality in the cultural environment of African expression seemed to offer possibilities for validating the endeavour to state the relevance of orality not only to a general understanding of the processes involved in human communication but also, and in particular, to formulate an all-encompassing idea of imaginative expression, one that would point toward a universal concept of literature. (24)

This statement points to the benefits of creating a situation where oral culture is assimilated and reorganized in written fiction. First it enhances artistry in a piece of work. Secondly it aids in stimulating the process of understanding a text. Thirdly as Obiechina notes “as a means of giving maximum authenticity to the writing...writers look to their indigenous poetics to create works that draw upon their living oral traditions to enrich forms, techniques and styles through literate education” (199).

“Jumping Monkey Hill” has in its first narrative level an oral story telling situation. The writers congregate at Jumping Monkey Hill to write and share their stories. This resembles the traditional fireside telling of stories in parts of Africa. The reading of the stories aloud by the characters’ enacts the performance aspect of narrating. In Americanah some of the characters like Paula and Ranyinudo are shown to read the blog posts aloud thus enacting a performance. Olanna in Half of a Yellow Sun narrates her train experience to Ugwu. He then records this narration in his prologue.
Creation of Multi-vocality

Bakhtin argues that the strength of a novel stems from the co-existence of and the conflict between the different types of speech: the speech of characters, the speech of the narrators and the speech of the author. This study approaches the Bakhtinian idea from the perspective that the vocal multiplicity is a narrative strategy that forces the reader to attend to the multi voiced potential of the text and interpret it. The embedded narratives create the infusion of a distinct quality of heterologlossia in the narrative.

The embedded narratives permit the author to create a “voice” for his narration (for example if he or she wants to use any special language effects) a voice which can be of a more closely involved narrator. This voice enables the reader to understand the effects of the action since they are immediate and clear. This second narrator or third narrator as the case may require can be made as naïve or as sophisticated as best serves the author’s purposes. This narrator may be faintly or distinctly separated from the author himself.

Aghogho Akpome in “Focalisation and Polyvocality in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun” asserts that “the generic diversity of “The Book’s” different segments – it incorporates verse, various prose forms, and journalist reportage- may be read as one way in which Adichie interrogates notions of narrative form and explores the different literary forms through which postcolonial rehistoricisation may be represented” (32). Following Akpome’s argument I add that those genres also represent the different voices or languages that give various meanings, various expressions and converse with each other.
Plaias in “The Danger of a Single Story in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* argues that the arrangement of the embedded narratives in the sequence in which they are arranged is “a way to spread and reinforce the perspective” (54) she continues to argue that “unlike the focalised perspectives the omniscient extradiegetic narrator may offer a de-personalised point of view to counterbalance or reinforce the main characters perspectives” (54). This gives the reader another opinion, through another voice.

Umelo Ojinmah in “No Humanity in War: Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” contends that the embedded narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is where Adichie’s real voice and opinion emerges. (10). Jane Bryce in “Half and Half Children: Third generation Women Writers and the New Nigerian Novel” argues that the embedding of the “The World Was Silent When We Died” is “a device that allows Adichie to gracefully relinquish her position as a narrative authority in favour of a spokesman for the voiceless, which she does not claim to be” (62). Both of these critics point to the double voiced nature of the discourse in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Through Adichie’s double voiced discourse her intentions are expressed albeit in a refracted way. The embedded narrative serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions, the express intention of the character speaking through his or her writing and the refracted intention of the author. The effect is that when the author’s words are introduced into the characters speech, they assume a new meaning and interpretation.

The writing of ‘The Book’ by Ugwu presents a voice which appeals to the reader to interpret his voice as the voice of the voiceless. This is necessitated by his position as a child narrator and as a houseboy one of the lowest cadres of employment. Richard Churchill who comes up with the
title “The World Was Silent When We Died” has an academic background, is an expatriate fascinated by the Igbo culture and history. His advantages over Ugwu not withstanding he realizes the war story is not his story to tell. If he told the story the interpretation would be different; it would not carry the same weight as a story told by a Biafran, conscripted into the army and with firsthand experience of the suffering the war caused.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the story that Ujunwa writes turns out to be autobiographical; it is written using auto-fiction techniques. The story is revealed as Ujunwa’s personal story at the end of the primary narrative to resolve the conflict in the primary narrative. The voices in this short story have a conversation about the idea of what constitutes real African experiences. Adichie chooses Ujunwa to write her own life story, which Edward refers to as implausible. This choice presents a voice that proves to the reader and the other voices in the story that foreign perceptions about Africa can be flawed.

In *Americanah* there are various voices and languages presented both in the primary narrative and the embedded narrative. The voices of Nigerian (village), Nigerian (town), accents of Nigerians who have just arrived in America and try to imitate the Americans, Americans and British mispronouncing African names to a Nigerian who’s lived in Britain for a while and has a British wife, to mention a few. The voice of the blogger and the respondents to the blog post add to the multiple voices in the text and the reader thus engages with the complex nature that is the human life.
In an interview with Brooke Obie of Ebony magazine, Adichie responds to the issue of using the blog as a “literary cheat” and editorializing through the blog by saying that she realized that if she editorialized in regular dialogue in the primary narrative it would not work. “I think that what I wanted to say (about race) and how I wanted to say it was in the kind of voice that would not have worked in dialogue or any other way (than through Ifemelu’s posts)” (n.p). Adichie through those confirms the Bakhtinian idea that the author orchestrates all other voices and directs the interactions of those voices. The author organizes the diversity of voices to achieve a desired end.

**Illusion of Reality**

I look at the subject of illusion of reality from the standpoint that illusion is essential to art and that art is an important resource for truth. The inclusion of an embedded narrative which can be oral or written is rationalized or motivated in a realistic way to preserve or imitate the illusion of reality. This illusion of reality consequently lends to both the embedded and embedding narrative credibility. Traditionally several devices are used by writers to achieve this goal. Examples include; gathering of characters who tell each other stories, dreams or hallucinations experienced by a character, the discovery of written manuscripts, diaries, letters and such other categories.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Adichie use the autobiographical genre as a textual disguise to stress the idea that the events in the embedded story are pure fact. This in effect counters the false perception about Africa by Edward in the primary narrative. As much as the primary narrative is
fictive the author creates a way for the reader to enter the characters world and therefore perceive this reality.

The use of the blog in *Americanah* creates the semblance of reality by Adichie’s accuracy in her simulation of how blogs work. This technique transports the reader to the blogosphere and the reader becomes part of the audience of the blog. Blogs provide centralized locations at which readers find web-based journals known as blogs and bloggers are able to find each other. Ifemelu’s blog has many followers, she edits her posts, comments and reactions of the blog are recorded in the text. She pulls down posts when she wants to and eventually she exits from that particular blog zone. She then begins another blog when she returns to Nigeria. All the events in the novel make for a believable story.

Another way Adichie achieves the illusion of reality in her fiction is by empowering the characters that author the embedded narratives. The characters involved all author from a point of experience. The experiences they have give them the authority to write the embedded narratives. The reader then believes the embedded narratives because he or she has shared the experiences with the character in the embedding narrative.

Adichie also accurately merges the information in the embedded narrative with that in the embedding narrative where required. An example in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is where Olanna sees the child’s head in the calabash on the train. Olanna then narrates this event to Kainene and Ugwu on separate occasions. Ugwu then includes this story in the prologue of “The Book”. The narration in the primary text corroborates the information in the embedded narrative.
Alongside other mediums employed in the novels to create an illusion of reality, the embedded narratives contribute effectively to this literary technique. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* we encounter letters, radio broadcasts, poems, songs newspaper articles and excerpts from a published book. In *Americanah* some of the other devices employed include emails between Ifemelu and Obinze and text messages from mobile phones.

*Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” address factual issues: war, race and the perceptions of foreigners about Africa. Since the issues discussed are real issues the author underscores their importance by employing a technique that enhances the perception by the reader that the issues are real.

**Functions of Embedded Narratives for the Characters**

Irene de Jong in “Narratological Theory on Narrators, Narratees, and Narrative” states that embedded narrative may have a function to the characters. She says “In the case of an embedded narrative told by a character it may also be relevant to distinguish between the function it has for secondary narratees, the characters who are listening and for the primary narratees”(10). This points to the usefulness of the embeddings for the characters; the characters may have been propelled or motivated by something to author the embedded narratives.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* Adichie attempts to capture the effects of the postcolonial and civil war trauma. The characters in the novel live through traumatic experiences which they struggle with. The characters in the novel experiences both personal and collective trauma. Focusing on Ugwu the author of the embedded narrative, I note that his trauma is of a different kind because he
plays the role of the perpetrator. When he is conscripted he rapes a girl at the prodding of his fellow soldiers. This action haunts him and traumatizes him. Frances White in her review of the book writes that “Ugwu takes up writing as a way of dealing with his bewildering and disturbing experiences” (n.p). Doseline Kiguru (2011) examines the role of the child figure in telling narratives based on Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. She notes that the book Ugwu writes is a reflection of the violence that defined the Biafra society and is an effort to deal with the trauma caused by the violence and destruction (68).

Maria Plaias in “The Danger of a Single Story in Chimamanda N. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” argues that “...Ugwu is atoned and healed through the process of writing and that the healing process entails a continuous engagement with the memory of the war” (64). As the scars of the war reminded Ugwu of his role as a perpetrator he tried to unburden the trauma of those episodes. “He would never be able to depict the bleakness of bombing hungry people. But he tried, and the more he wrote, the less he dreamed” (398).

The writing process is therapeutic not only to Ugwu but to Olanna and Richard as well. Adichie shows how narration may have a therapeutic effect not only to Ugwu but to her as part of the second generation Biafrans. Adichie is bruised by the war, having lost her grandfathers in it. On reasons why she wrote the book she says “my father has tears in his eyes when he speaks of losing his father and my mother still cannot speak at length about losing her father in a refugee camp” (Adichie, “The Story Behind the Book”). Olanna narrates the train episode to Ugwu and comes to a realization that her story is important when she notes Ugwu’s keenness:
Ugwu was writing as she spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of, and so she told him all she remembered about the train full of people who had cried and shouted and urinated on themselves. (410)

Richard witnessed a customs officer get shot at the airport, just because he was an Igbo. The soldiers went on to kill dozens more of Igbo people at the airport. These scenes flash through Richards mind over and over again to the point that he wishes “he would lose his mind or that his memory would suppress itself” (165). Richard desires to express his trauma through writing but he cannot get himself to do it. “The echo of unreality weighed each word down; he clearly remembered what had happened at that airport but to write about it, he would have to re-imagine it, and he was not sure if he could”(168).

Through these characters Adichie makes a point about the importance of narration and writing for the assimilation of individual and communal past. Adichie seems to feel that narration has the ability to bring on a therapeutic effect on the speaker or writer.

The blog set up by Ifemelu serves an important function in her life. As she pens down her thoughts and feelings on race, we see a metamorphosis in her. From the young lady who was unsure of herself when she arrived in America to a confident lady poised to return to Nigeria. Ifemelu uses the blog as means to understanding race and its complexities but also protecting herself from being swayed into accepting the falsehoods surrounding the race issue in America. The blog offered a catharsis to Ifemelu purging the pressures of immigrant life especially the
racism. The blog gave Ifemelu opportunity to evaluate her life, finally she senses the emptiness, the following excerpt explains:

Readers frightened and exhilarated her…made Ifemelu, nervous eager to be fresh and to impress, so that she began, over time to feel like a vulture hacking into the carcasses of people’s stories for something she could use. Sometimes making fragile links to race. Sometimes not believing herself. The more she wrote, the less sure she became. Each post scraped off yet one more scale of self until she felt naked and false (5).

Prior to the books opening scene, Ifemelu had written her final post and closed the blog. Ifemelu feared she had lost touch with part of herself and makes a decision to return home. Ifemelu feels that her personality is shaped by the blog and that she is losing her core to the blog. This revelation helps her to move to the next phase of her life.

The blog attracts comments from people affected by the issues Ifemelu blogs about. The blog gives them opportunity to vent out or to find solace from the knowledge that their experiences are not uncommon. When Ifemelu blogs about her experience with depression, a Congolese woman posts a long comment in response about a similar experience she had (158). Through the blogs Ifemelu opens up a space for people to talk about issues that disturb them but have
nowhere to air them. A comment on the blog “The Small Redemptions of Lagos” said “Thank God somebody is finally talking about this” (421). We therefore note that the embedded narratives serve different functions for different characters including those who author them.

**Development of Themes through Embedded Narratives**

Adichie’s fictional works address a myriad of themes among them love, violence, immigration, race, identity, sexual exploitation of women, sexuality, war and its effects. This research focuses on the themes expounded by the embedded narratives with an aim of evaluating the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique. Adichie uses the embedded narrative as a foregrounding strategy.

The term foregrounding has its origin with Czech theorist Jan Mukarovsky and other formalist critics who emphasize that stylistic features are characteristics of literary texts. The NTC’s dictionary of literary terms defines foregrounding as “calling attention to something –a rhythm, a character, an idea, a viewpoint by placing it in the foreground against a background” (87). Leech and Short in *Style in Fiction* have argued that “in order to make sure that the point is put across; the novelist tends to say the same thing in a number of different ways and at different levels of structure” (207). They add that “incident and mode of description combine to embody one of the major themes of the novel”. Adichie uses the embedded narratives to call attention to her major thematic concerns, the embedded narrative being in the foreground against the background of the embedding narrative.
The silence of the world is a major philosophical concern of Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Adichie questions how societies remain indifferent to others in times of war or genocide. The choice of the title of the embedded narrative, “The World Was Silent When We Died” develops a sense of curiosity within the reader to find out; who was silent? Why were they silent? This title is presented in bold text in all the eight excerpts within the book. It is highlighted in this manner to gnaw at the reader’s conscience. The reader cannot miss it and therefore is forced to think about it.

In the first excerpt the mention of the German women who fled Hamburg with charred bodies of their children stuffed in suitcases, the Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies alongside that of the woman Olanna met in a train with a dead baby’s head in a calabash (82), reminds the reader that there have been other massacres across the globe. This introduces the reader to the idea of death in Biafran war and though Ugwu is careful not to draw parallels of the Biafran war to the German or Rwandan killings, it helps us to visualize and appreciate the magnitude of the Biafran war. This then validates the questioning of the apathy expressed by the world.

It is noteworthy that the poem “Were You Silent When We Died” in excerpt seven of “The Book” (375) appears side by side with the discussion between Richard and the two American journalists about the American policy and the silence of America despite their knowledge that thousands of Biafrans were dying. On this same page the reader learns how the title “The World Was Silent We Died” comes to Richard. Richard is angry at the American journalists for their apathy towards Biafra. “He felt incredibly alone in their presence” (374) they were returning
back to America to the comfort of their homes after collecting stories and photographs from Biafra. This represents how the world left Biafra to deal with its problems.

Adichie uses the embedded narrative to emphasize concerns about the effect of the war. She does this by linking the content of the embedded narrative to the content in the embedding narrative through repetition. The poem in excerpt seven of “The Book” paints a picture of the magnitude of the starvation:

Imagine children with arms like toothpicks

With football for bellies and skin stretched thin

It was Kwashiorkor – difficult word

A word that was not quite ugly enough, a sin. (375)

This second stanza is replayed in the narration in the embedding narrative. “The nun cradled the smallest, a shrivelled doll with stick legs and a pregnant belly” (374). Through the use of rich metaphors and similes, she evokes the sympathy of the reader. The “arms like toothpicks” and “a shrivelled doll with stick legs” refer to the same situation and so does “with football for bellies” and “a pregnant belly”:

Naked children, as if the man

Would not take photos and then leave, alone. (375)
These last two lines of the same poem re-present a scene on an earlier page where the children clamoured around the American photographer begging for more sweets “Once he said, “ That’s a lovely smile !” and after he left them the children went back to roasting rats” (370). The laughter referred to in the poem symbolizes the hope the children had; that some form of salvation would come from the American man and by extension the world. This hope is dashed when the photographer leaves and they return to roasting rats.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the story Ujunwa writes expounds the theme on sexual exploitation of women. Chioma the protagonist in the embedded narrative is sexually exploited by a male interviewer who after saying he will hire her “walks across and stands behind her and reaches over to squeeze her breasts” (100). Ujunwa experiences some subtle form of exploitation from Edward, the workshop organizer. When she offers Edward a seat he responds by saying “I’d rather like you to lie down for me” (106). Edward also tells the Senegalese lady that he had dreamt of her naked navel. The repetition of the theme in both diegetic levels is used by Adichie for emphasis and calls the attention of the reader to that theme. This ensures that the reader stops and attends to that theme.

The major theme developed by the blog in *Americanah* is race. The question of race has been discussed over many decades. Yet it remains a relevant discussion even now. *Americanah* published in 2013 and whose setting captures the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, correctly assesses that racism still exists. The novel starts on a train journey to Trenton where Ifemelu goes to braid her hair. On the train she remembers an incident on a plane when she had to explain what she meant by “lifestyle blog” to a man who sat next to her. This man then asks
“Ever write about adoption?” Nobody wants black babies in this country and I don’t mean biracial, I mean black. Even black families don’t want them” (4). Ifemelu blogs about this man and this post receives the highest comments for a month. The positioning of this conversation in the very first chapter is to make the reader understand that this book is about race and the blog is a space for discussing race.

The rejection of black babies plays out in Dike’s life when later in the story he attempts to commit suicide. Dike experiences racism at his tender age; because he is black he is the first suspect when the school computers are hacked. The pastor at his church says hello to all the other kids but to Dike she says “What’s up bro?” (349), this makes him feel different and he says, “I feel like I have vegetables instead of ears, like large broccoli sticking out of my head” (349). Dike feels unwanted to the extent that he nearly takes his life.

The concept of race first occurs to Ifemelu when she arrives in the United States “I come from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America” (290). The covert and overt racisms she witnesses and experiences are what make her black. Ifemelu is angered at the silence, the things “unsaid and unfinished” (296) around the race issue. Ifemelu begins longing for other listeners and she longed to hear the stories of others. “How many other people had become black in America?” (296).

At the encouragement of her friend Wambui she sets up a blog. The blog is informed by her daily encounters with racism. These encounters form the titles of her posts and make up the
content of her discussion. The blog separates the race issue from the other issues in the novel. The blog is a technique used by the writer to foreground the race issues.

The blog effectively develops the theme of race in Americanah because of its unique nature. The nature of the blog embedded in Americanah borrows heavily from the real medium that the blog is. Ruth Aylett and Sandy Louchart in “Towards A Narrative Theory of Virtual Reality” argue that a story is not told or shown in the same way according to the medium in which it is displayed, nor is its content or intensity the same” (1). The blog in the novel does not address the issue of race in the same way the embedding narrative does. The blog by its nature allows for multiple comments on the issues posted, it also allows the blogger to edit or withdraw posts accordingly. Blogs also serve a wider reach because they can be re-posted onto many other sites.

The blog in Americanah supports the contention by Cornel West that the race question is urgent. “For me the race question is an urgent question of power and morality; for others, it is an everyday matter of life and death” (Morrison, 61). What better way to address an urgent issue than by putting it on a medium that delivers blog posts in real time? Through the use of the blog Adichie shows the need to view the race issue as one that requires urgent attention. Adichie chooses the blog over other forms because of the advantage it offers in terms of the immediacy in communicating and ability to reach a wide audience.

The existence of racism brings up the question of identity. The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy defines one’s personal identity as “what makes one the person one is” (n.p). Identity reflects on who we are and how others perceive us. Identity is a language and culture rooted
process that includes our position in the world and others thoughts about who we are as well as who they are.

Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* discusses the complexity of the concept of “identity”. Gilroy argues that historians should reconsider how they document the past “I want to develop the suggestion that cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single complex unit of analysis in their discussion of the modern world…and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective”(15). This suggests that black is black and there are no levels of blackness. It is assumptions such as these that Adichie problematizes as she explores the various categories of identities in *Americanah*.

There are several diasporas in different chronotypes as a result of creolization being a continuous process. Globalization has made it more complicated such that within the diasporic community there are various categories of identities. In the blog post “Understanding America for the Non-American Black: American Tribalism” (184). The different kinds of black are spelt out. Ifemelu talks about the ladder of racial hierarchy in America. “White is on top, specifically White Anglo Saxon Protestant (alluding to the possibility of another type of white). American Black is always on the bottom and what’s in the middle depends on time and place.” She includes an example about how in the “ladder of races Jewish is white but also some rungs below white”.

In another blog post “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: In America You Are Black, Baby”(220), Ifemelu addresses the idea of the Non American Blacks denying that they are black
because they are from other countries where the issue of blackness does not arise. This calls attention to the creation of a racial identity “black” that confronts immigrants to America. She also looks at the generalizations and assumptions surrounding black people. Black people are treated as though they have no individual identity. If a crime is committed by a black person all other black people are stopped for fitting the profile. Black people are made to feel that they have to compensate for other black people’s behaviour by being apologetic to the whites, or always being on guard because any offensive behaviour by one black will mean the other blacks get to pay for it. This post is written in a scornful tone, scorning at the ridiculous ideas that whites have about blacks.

Chinua Achebe argued that the role of the African writer included a responsibility to educate his or her readers. In the essay “The Novelist as Teacher” in a collection of essay *Hopes and Impediments* he states “…The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and re-generation that must be done. In fact he should march right in front…” (30) He adds that the African writer is more concerned with the importance of combating “our acceptance of …racial inferiority” (29) by confronting the “disaster brought upon the African psyche in the period of subjection to alien races” (29).

Adichie seems to have heeded the call by Achebe to march right in front and re-educate especially in the area of ownership and authorship of the African story. Adichie belongs to a group of writers described as the third generation of modern Nigerian Literature. Roger Kurtz in “The Intertextual Imagination in Purple Hibiscus” has outlined the generations as follows:
The first generation consists of writers like Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Flora Nwapa and others. The second generation includes names such as Femi Osofisan, Buchi Emecheta and Tanure Ojaide. The third generation comprises of those who were born and educated in 1960 and whose writings began to appear in the mid 1980’s. They include Ben Okri, Helen Oyeyemi, Helen Habila, Seffie Atta, Chimamanda Adichie and others. (24)

Adichie and her peers have found a platform to speak from through their writing. They are able to experiment with new avenues of expressing and formulating the African experience. Through the texts studied in this research Adichie has defined the role of the African writer and then shown who should be telling the African Story. She has exemplified this by her choice of characters and the embedded narratives authored by them.

Adichie underscores the glaring need for contextualized reading of African literature and the telling of authentic African stories. In her address “The Danger of a Single Story” Adichie explains how class and culture based prejudices is often fostered by individuals adherence to hegemonic narratives of societies and histories. Adichie argues that “The single story creates stereotypes and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (7).

Adichie highlights the fundamental function of the writer, like those of storytellers in traditional African communities. Preceding writers such as Rene Wellek (238-9), Wole Soyinka (21), Chinua Achebe (7-8) and Chukwudi Maduka (11) have on various occasions agreed that the
African writer is the conscience of the society and serves as a historian, preserving its past; critic, analyzing its current state and shepherd, helping to usher it towards its future.

*Half of a Yellow Sun* addresses the question of the authorship and ownership of history. Adichie juxtaposes the characters Ugwu and Richard Churchill. The two characters represent opposite perspectives in life. Ugwu is from a small village and comes to work as a houseboy for Odenigbo in Nsuka. Richard is a British man who comes to study Igbo-Ugwu art. Through the two who are both authors in the novel Adichie points to us who the African story belongs to and who should tell it. Ugwu writes “The Book” which is a historical account from the time period of the British colonizer to the Nigeria-Biafra war. For a long time the colonizer has had an upper hand and influence about the African continent and its history.

Richard is fascinated by Igbo Ugwu art and his novel titles borrow from the Igbo past and the culture: “The Basket of hands” and “In the Time of Roped Pots”. Richard learns Igbo and gets further enmeshed into the Igbo culture. He begins considering himself a Biafran. He says “We are still extracting from some fields we control in Egbema …*We* move the crude to *our* refineries at night…”. “You keep saying *we*” the Redhead said. (372) Eventually Richard realizes “The war story isn’t my story to tell, really”, something that Ugwu had always known: Ugwu nodded. He had never thought that it was” (425).

This exclusion of Richard from the Biafran experience is seen earlier when Richard sense’s it from Madu’s tone: “We are running our cars with a mix of kerosene and oil or we’ve perfected the flying *Ogbunigwe* or we’ve made an armoured car from scrap. His *we* was edged with
exclusion. The deliberate emphasis, the deepened voice, meant that Richard was not part of *we*; a visitor could not take the liberties of homeowners” (304).

The subject of Richard’s exclusion is repeated for emphasis when Madu tells Richard” the truth is this is not your war, this is not your cause” (305). When Richard tells Kainene how the book title “The World Was Silent When We Died” came to him “she arched her eyebrows “*We*”? The world was silent when *we* died? (374). The word *we* is italicized a number of times to make the reader sense the exclusivity that surrounds the right to tell the Biafran story.

It is remarkable that the title of the book Ugwu writes originates from the words of a Nigerian. As much as Richard picks it up and hands it over to Ugwu. Colonel Madu tells Richard “The world has to know the truth about what is happening, because they simply cannot remain silent when *we* die” (305). At this juncture Madu was requesting Richard to write for the Propaganda Directorate as a way of him contributing to the war effort. Adichie makes an important statement that the book title and the book content had to be owned by Biafrans. They had the exclusive right to tell their true story.

An example of the falsehoods that result from a single story are shown in *Half of a Yellow Sun* where the American journalist views the belief of the woman with one arm; that Biafra would win, a result of the Biafran propaganda machine. Richard likened his thoughts to “President Nixon’s’ fact finders from Washington or Prime Minister Wilson’s commission members from London who arrived with their firm protein tables and their firmer conclusions: that Nigeria was
not bombing civilians, that the starvation was over flogged, that all was well as it should be in the war” (371). While people died of starvation or air raids the fact finders twisted the story and said Biafra’s suffering was exaggerated. In short they lied about the real situation on the ground. Just like Richard desires to write a book after the war telling “a narrative of Biafra’s difficult victory, an indictment of the world” (374); Adichie through the embedded narrative reproaches the world for its silence during the Biafran war that led to the loss of thousands of lives. The sixth excerpt of “The Book” (258) sheds light on this silence.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the characterization and the interactions presented at the writers workshop portrays the situation Adichie denounces in the TED Talk “The Danger of The Single Story”. Isabel, the wife of the workshop organizer claims that the exquisite bone structure Ujunwa has must be from Nigerian royal stock. Edward dismisses most of the writers’ stories in the workshop as un-African or implausible. Adichie points to the fact that the erroneous foreign perceptions about Africa will only be countered when Africans tell their own stories.

This is presented to the reader when Ujunwa reveals that the story she writes is based on a personal experience. When Edward refers to her story as “agenda writing” and “implausible”, convinced that it was not a “real story of real people” (114); Ujunwa responds when she sees the victory in his eyes as he says those words. She stands up and begins laughing; this act of standing up symbolizes Adichie’s call to writers to be bold and courageous, to stand up for the truth, to rise up and tell their truth. The laughter is a mockery of the lies and false perceptions that the west perceives as truth. Ujunwa asks “A real story of real people”? She goes on to reveal
that this was an autobiographical account. Ujunwa the African writer triumphs, as her story turns out to be real.

In *Americanah* we learn very early in the novel about the writer’s role and voice. Sapphic Derrida, one of the most frequent posters writes of Ifemelu “you’ve used your irreverent, hectoring, funny and thought provoking voice to create a space for real conversations about an important subject”(5). This statement carries the description of who an African writer should be; irreverent meaning fearless and bold, thought provoking voice meaning one who stimulates the readers’ interests and creating spaces for real conversation about an important subject.

The genesis of the blog stems from a desire by Ifemelu to share her stories with a larger audience and longing to hear other people’s stories. Ifemelu had a desire to tackle things “unsaid and unfinished” (295). Ifemelu wonders “How many other people had become black in America? How many had felt as though their world was wrapped in gauze” (296). Ifemelu then creates a space where people can address the issues surrounding the race discussion.

The choice of the blog, a medium new and unfamiliar to Ifemelu can be interpreted as a way writers should push boundaries through use of new forms. Like Adichie, Ifemelu experiments by using the blog a medium new to her to voice her concerns; while Adichie embeds the blog in her novel. Adichie seems to say that writers should not shy away from using different mediums to communicate important concerns. Adichie’s creation of Ifemelu as a successful blogger attests to this.
The specific authorship of the blog is spelt out in the title of the blog: “Raceteenth or Curious Observations by a Non-American Black on the Subject of Blackness in America”. This is a pointer on the importance of who the author is. The statement that observations are made by a Non-American Black separates this particular voice from the many other voices that may have an interest in this discussion. It shows that being a Non American black qualifies Ifemelu to talk about blackness.

Like in “Jumping Monkey Hill”, Americanah is also concerned about telling the truth. The remarks “That’s a lie…It’s a lie” (290) by Ifemelu match with the question raised by Ujunwa “A real story of real people? (113), these remarks exhort writers to tell the reader about the importance of the “truth” being told by the African writer. Ifemelu is angered by the silences around the race issue and invites people to “unzip themselves” as this blog post shows:

Open thread: For All the Zipped-Up Negroes

This is for the Zipped-Up Negroes, the upwardly mobile American and Non-American Blacks who don’t talk about Life Experiences That have to Do Exclusively with Being Black. Because they want to keep everyone comfortable. Tell your story here. Unzip yourself. This is a safe space. (307)

Through the characters in the three pieces studied Adichie shows who should write the African history and the concerns that plague Africa. Her opinion resonates throughout her work but it is through the exemplification in the embedded narratives that she makes her opinion clear.
Closely linked to the issue of addressing the authorship of the African story is the attitude of silence. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Ujunwa questions this attitude when the Senegalese says she did not need to say anything to Edward about his sexually suggestive remarks. “But why do we say nothing?“ Ujunwa asked. She raised her voice and looked at the others. “Why do we always say nothing?”(112). Ujunwa goes on to give the black South African a tongue lash when he makes excuses for Edward. “Ujunwa shouted at him, “This kind of attitude is why they could kill you and herd you into townships and requires passes from you before you could walk on your own land!”(112). Ujunwa blames the attitude of silence for problems encountered by African states by using the example of apartheid in South Africa.

In the same story I read Edward’s comments about the stories written by the participants as a way of silencing them from telling their authentic stories. For example when he says that “homosexual stories weren’t reflective of Africa...This may indeed be the year 2000, but how African is it for a person to tell her family that she is homosexual?” Earlier on the Senegalese had mentioned to her colleagues that “her story was really her story, about how she had mourned her girlfriend...” (102). The Senegalese case matches that of Ujunwa where true stories are seen as implausible by foreigners because of their conditioned idea of what African life should be.

In Americanah Adichie addresses the issue of silence through Ifemelu’s uneasiness about the silences that surrounded the race question. Ifemelu had a desire to tackle things “unsaid and unfinished” (295). Ifemelu wonders “How many other people had become black in America (296)?” The silence of the world while Biafrans died is one of the major themes in Half of a Yellow Sun. This is repeated over and over again as the title of the embedded narrative “The
Book: The World Was Silent While we Died” and within various passages in the book. Adichie uses the embedded narratives to raise the question of why Africans choose silence. This helps the reader to reflect on the issue of silence and its consequences.

Ifemelu invites both Blacks and Whites to engage in dialogue and to ask questions. This is seen in the blog “Friendly Tips for the American Non: Black How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness” (325) quoted earlier. This blog calls for objectivity in the race discussion- “American Blacks are not telling you that you are to blame...ask questions...listen”. The Blacks are encouraged to speak about the race issue and the whites are encouraged to listen and ask questions about the concerns by blacks about race.

Limitations of the Embedded Narrative Technique

While this study has discussed Adichie’s skill in engaging the embedded narrative technique and evaluating the effectiveness of the use of the embedded narratives. There are a few limitations in the way Adichie uses the embedded narrative strategy. These do not overwhelm the quality of her fiction but are worth pointing out.

In Americanah there are places where we encounter interposition which can sometimes be exasperating and disruptive. For example in the scene where Aunty Uju tells Ifemelu about her decision to leave Bartholomew and move to Willow. The omniscient narrator says “Ifemelu liked the name of the town Willow; it sounded to her like freshly squeezed new beginnings” (221). Immediately below this line is a blog post that covers close to two pages, a new chapter then
begins after this. This has the potential of creating the feeling of being left hanging at the point the narration ends in the primary text. The reader without warning encounters a blog.

Adichie weaves full blog posts into the primary narrative. The blog posts were too many and quite lengthy. Fewer blogs would still have communicated and achieved the desired result. The too many blogs added unnecessary bulk to the text which may cause the reader to lose interest in reading them and as a result miss crucial information. The monotonous use of the blogs by Adichie makes them loose their desired impact.

Linda Alcoff in “The Problem of Speaking for Others” argues that “the practice of speaking for others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as one who more correctly understands the truth about another’s situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus achieve glory and praise” (22). Adichie creates a space for people to speak for themselves about their race issues. Though Ifemelu’s blog does not purport to speak for others it easily presents Ifemelu as one who understands the truth about others situations. The privileging of the Non-American black by creating that space for them to voice their concerns creates a situation where we cannot see or hear about whites fighting racism.

Some of the blog post titles in Americanah can be read as promoting exclusionism. The American Heritage Dictionary defines an exclusionist as one who advocates the exclusion of another or others, as from having or exercising a right or privilege. Examples are “Understanding America for the Non-American Blacks…” and “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks”. This specific categorization of who is invited to read and contribute to the blogs excludes other races.
It conflicts with the author’s desire to contribute to a debate whose ultimate purpose is to solve the race issue.

The embedded narratives in *Half of Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” could disrupt the reader in the process of reading the primary narrative. There is a possibility of the reader’s attention being diverted to the embedded narrative because of its nature. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* the embeddings are presented in a bold font, while in “Jumping Monkey Hill” they appear in a smaller font. This draws attention to them and they seem to compete with the primary narrative.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the functions of the embedded narratives in the selected works of Adichie. The chapter also evaluated the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique in communicating the author’s thematic concerns. It has also pointed out the limitations observed in Adichie’s use of this strategy. The observation is that Adichie effectively uses the embedded narrative to communicate on the themes of race, identity, the subtle sexual exploitation of women, war and the question of the authorship, the ownership of the African story and the dangers of an attitude of silence. The functions identified are actional, explicative, thematic, illusion of reality, aesthetic function, advancement of traditional oral storytelling, the development of multiple voices in the texts and the functions to the characters.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

In this research I set out to examine the nature and the function of embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works. The study of the nature of the embedded narratives included looking at the forms of the narratives, the narrative levels in the selected works and the relationships between the embedded narratives and the primary text. I also explored the functions of the embedded narratives in the selected texts. This study also evaluated the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating the author’s thematic concerns.

Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* shifts from conventional embedding and points to an alternative structural reading of her novel. The overlapping in *Half of a Yellow Sun* between the narration of the embedded narrative and the embedding narrative transgress the norms of embedding. The study reveals a limitation of the theory of narratology to the extent that it views metalepsis more of a transgression than of any merit. One of the merits of this transgression in this text is its use to connect the embedded and the embedding. The demerit is that metalepsis may cause confusion about who narrates and what they narrate.

Of the three texts studied *Americanah* employed the most extensive embedding. *Americanah* highlights how the pressure of extensive use of this literary device challenges the hierarchies in the narrative levels. Adichie creates clashes between the narrative levels; presenting a complex situation that does not amount to a structural system that would explain the relationship of the
narrative parts. This is seen where in some instances the extradiegetic narrator cuts across all possible levels of narration.

I tested the hypothesis that the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works take distinctive forms. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” a short story is inserted within the primary short story. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* a book is nested within the primary novel. In *Americanah* blog posts are embedded in the novel. I observe that the choice of those forms by the author plays a significant role in the function of the embedded narrative and in contributing to their effectiveness as tools for communicating thematic concerns. The primary texts vouch for the authenticity of the texts they embed and are presented as non-fictional texts within the fictional texts; this places them at a higher ontological level.

Apart from serving the explicative, actional and thematic function, the embedded narratives also help create vocal multiplicity in the texts, serve an aesthetic function, advance the oral storytelling technique and imitate an illusion of reality which lends the work credibility. The embedded narratives have specific functions for the characters that author them and those who either contribute to the embeddings or engage with the narrative. Ugwu’s writing is a reflection of the violence that defined the Biafran society and is an effort to deal with the trauma caused by the violence and destruction. Ifemelu uses the blog as a means of understanding race and protecting herself from the falsehoods that surround the issue of race in America.

Adichie foregrounds the core thematic issues in her works by using the embedded narrative technique. This strategy ensures that the reader attends to the issues raised. These issues are also
addressed in the primary text. The reader therefore looks at them twice thus attaining a better understanding about the concerns in question. Some of the ways Adichie effectively uses the embedded narratives to discuss her thematic concerns include the choice of the author for the narratives and the choice and meaning of the title where there is a title. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the embedded short story is untitled. In my view this is a deliberate choice by the author for the story to represent the many African stories that are classified as implausible.

The major theme developed by the embedded narratives in all the three texts is the question of ownership of the African story. Adichie underscores the glaring need for contextualized reading of African literature and the telling of authentic African stories by Africans themselves. Other themes addressed through the embedded narratives are war and the silence of the world during the Biafran war in Half of a Yellow Sun, race and identity in Americanah and sexual exploitation in “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

As this study was limited only to extensive embedding I suggest that future studies look at the nature and function of the other embeddings in the studied texts. Examples include radio broadcasts, letters, newspaper articles, speeches, poems and songs in Half of a Yellow Sun. In Americanah there are emails and phone texts. It would also be worth studying the other narrative techniques employed by Adichie to fully bring out the wealth of variety in her artistry.

As the foregoing analysis has illustrated the study of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works hopes to contribute to the growing interest in her oeuvre. This research has attempted to provide a narratological inquiry to the pieces studied, the significance is that it shows how the texts make meaning and how that process contributes to the interpretation of the
text. The narrative arrangement is an effectual means to communicating the author’s themes. Adichie questions notions of form and experiments with different literary forms through which she communicates her concerns.


THE ART OF NARRATIVE EMBEDDING IN CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE’S FICTION

JACQUELINE KUBASU OJIAMBO

C50/79598/2012

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

OCTOBER, 2014
DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for examination or the award of a degree at any other university.

Signature ................................ Date ................................

23rd October 2014

Jacqueline Kubasu Ojiamb

This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors.

Signature ................................ Date ................................

23rd October 2014

Prof. Peter Wasamba

Signature ................................ Date ................................

23th October 2014

Dr. Tom Odhiambo
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to

The late Reverends James and Ketry Kubasu, my inspiration

Were my love

Were (Jnr) my silly heart

Chinua my sweet laughter

And

To God Almighty, my help
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research project would not have come together in any cohesive manner without the consistent and immensely helpful guidance of my supervisors, Prof. Peter Wasamba and Dr. Tom Odhiambo. Thanks are also due to Dr. Jennifer Muchiri for her invaluable support and guidance during the conceptual stages of this project. I also thank the lecturers in the Department of Literature for providing a strong knowledge base in the course of my studies.

To my colleagues Jennifer, Jane, Kefa, Grace, Makokha, Margaret, Mike, Maureen, Munyiri, Obala, Odongo, Owiti, Amos, Angie, Korir, Winnie, Rachel, Bernard and Wafula for your moral support and genuine interest in my work. To Marciana and Doseline, thank you for being very kind “Big Sisters”. To my siblings for constant encouragement to push further. Finally but not least to Were, Were (Jnr) and Chinua for allowing me the space, time and peace required to study.
CONTENTS

DECLARATION..............................................................................................................i

DEDICATION...........................................................................................................ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS............................................................................................iii

CONTENTS..................................................................................................................iv

ABSTRACT..................................................................................................................vii

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY..................................................1

Introduction............................................................................................................1

Statement of the Problem.........................................................................................4

Objectives.................................................................................................................5

Hypothesis...............................................................................................................5

Justification..............................................................................................................5

Scope and Limitation...............................................................................................8

Literature Review......................................................................................................8

Theoretical Framework............................................................................................14

Methodology..........................................................................................................17

Chapter Outline......................................................................................................19
CHAPTER TWO: THE NATURE OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction.........................................................................................................................21
Nature of Embedding in Adichie’s Selected Works.............................................................21
Narrative Levels in Adichie’s Selected Works.................................................................26
Relationship between Embedding Texts and Embedded Texts.........................................33
Embedding and Authority..............................................................................................38
Conclusion.....................................................................................................................41

CHAPTER THREE: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction.........................................................................................................................43
Functions of the Embedded Narratives.............................................................................43
The Explicative Function.....................................................................................................44
Thematic Function............................................................................................................52
Actional Function.............................................................................................................53
Aesthetic Function...........................................................................................................55
Advancing the Oral Storytelling Tradition.......................................................................59
Creation of Multi-vocality ...............................................................................................62
Illusion of Reality...........................................................................................................65

Functions of Embedded Narratives for the Characters..................................................67

Development of Themes through the Embedded Narratives.............................................71

Limitations of the Embedded Narrative Technique ................................................... ....86

Conclusion................................................................................................................... 88

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION.........................................................................................89

WORKS CITED.................................................................................................................93
ABSTRACT

Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” feature diverse forms of narrative embedding. Although embedded narratives have attracted considerable attention, narrative analysts have not accounted for new forms of embedding such as blogs. This research examines the nature and function of embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works while evaluating the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating themes. The research draws upon Russian formalism to examine how the form of the work contributes to the overall meaning of the work. It also adopts the theory of narratology which outlines the basic approach to narrative levels. A close and comparative reading of the texts reveals the nature and function of the embedded narratives and the relationship between the primary and secondary narratives. The relationship between narrative levels in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* is complicated both by competing structural models and clashes between narrative levels. Adichie transgresses the norms of narrative embedding thus bringing into focus the assumptions that exist around it. Adichie’s deft use of embedded narratives is seen through the many functions it serves and its efficacy in developing central themes. This research adds to studies done on Adichie’s fiction by attempting a narratological inquiry. It also, hopefully, contributes to future research of structure and other narrative techniques applied in Adichie’s works.
CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction
Writers employ numerous narrative techniques in their work to achieve various outcomes. A narrative is a representation of one or more events by a narrator. This definition is derived from those of Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (2) and H. Porter Abbot, in *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (12). This definition emphasizes that a narrative requires a narrator; a narrative must be communicated by someone or a channel of communication. Narrative techniques are the methods that authors employ to tell their stories. All the techniques employed have important functions in the story. The method and means behind interesting stories are the techniques used.

Sometimes writers employ the technique of inserting one or more stories within the larger story that encompasses them. These stories within stories are referred to as embedded narratives. Some famous examples are Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* and *The Arabian Nights*. In *Canterbury Tales* the main story is about a band of pilgrims travelling to the shrine of Thomas A. Becket in Canterbury. The band passes time by having a story telling contest. The embedded narratives are the stories told by the pilgrims who participate in the storytelling contest. In *The Arabian Nights* the main story is of Scheherazade who is threatened by execution from her husband. Only if she beguiles her husband with a fascinating story will she survive. Every night she tells him a story and within that story new stories are embedded.
Embedded narratives are also common in African oral storytelling. African writers continue to merge the worlds of orality and literacy. An example is Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* where an anonymous Sudanese narrator tells of the journey of Mustafa Saeed, the protagonist of the novel. Salih’s narrative is a polyphonic novel in which the narrator assumes a crucial role as he gradually turns into a full blown character. Another example is Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* which contains nine embedded narratives; these include myths, folktales and anecdotes.

Mieke Bal in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* sees the narrator’s text as primary and the text narrated by the characters within the main primary text as the embedded text. These embedded texts have also been referred to as secondary narratives. Bal explains that she uses the term primary “without value judgement; neither (temporal) priority nor (qualitative) primacy is implied” (57). This implies that the primary text just means the text which comes first, the secondary narrative is the one which comes second and is embedded in the primary narrative. This means either the primary text or secondary text may be the main story depending on the intensity of either narrative. The primary text and secondary text are distinguished by levels in the technical sense such that the narrator’s text is the primary text and the actor’s text is secondary.

Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* distinguishes principal types of relations between embedding and embedded narrative: The first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, conferring on the second narrative an explanatory function. The second type consists of a purely thematic
relationship, therefore implying no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis: a relationship of contrast or of analogy. The third type involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content, a function of distraction, or obstruction. The most illustrious example according to Genette is found in *The Arabian Nights*, where Scheherazade holds off death with renewed narratives, (provided they interest the sultan) (232-233).

Chimamanda Adichie has earned reputation as a master story-teller with a fresh, lyrical and irreverent voice. An acclaimed contemporary African writer; Adichie has written three novels; *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Americanah* (2013), a collection of short stories *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009) and a short story “Transition to Glory” found within the anthology *African Love Stories* (2006) edited by Ama Ata Aidoo. *Half of a Yellow Sun*, which won the 2007 Orange Prize for fiction captures the experiences and impact of the Nigeria-Biafra war through the lives of its characters. “Jumping Monkey Hill”, a short story in the collection *The Thing around Your Neck* looks at the foreign perceptions of Africans in general and the subtle exploitation of women. *Americanah* which won the National Book Critics Circle award for fiction in 2014 is the story of Ifemelu a young immigrant from Nigeria to America and Obinze her boyfriend who goes to London and stays there illegally hoping to regularize his status. The authorities catch up with him and he is deported. The book details their immigrant experiences, their love, separation and eventual reunion.

It is intriguing that Adichie employs embedded narratives widely in her fiction. This research explores the significance of the embedded narrative strategy in African literature.
It is an inquiry in the nature and form of the embedded narratives and how the embedded narratives bear on ideological dimensions of literature while expounding its usefulness.

While all users of narrative embedding as literary device have their points of interest, some instances are so extreme that they call for critical attention, like in Adichie’s case. Adichie’s novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* feature highly complex structures of embedding. *Half of a Yellow Sun* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” employ the Mise en Abyme technique, a term coined in 1893 by Andre Gide that refers to a text within a text. This is a text that mirrors the text that holds it. Therefore in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, there is a book within the main book and in “Jumping Monkey Hill” a story within a story. In *Americanah*, one of the characters sets up blogs at various points in her life. Through the omniscient narrator we learn about the comments of visitors to the two blogs.

**Statement of the Problem**

Although the phenomenon of the story within a story has received considerable attention, the orientation has been towards oral narratives such as myths, folktales, fairy tales, animal fables, song tales and such other categories. The tendency of placing these oral narratives within the African novel has been used by African novelists to conjoin the creative forces from their oral tradition to those within the writer’s chosen form of writing.

Embedded narratives have received significant attention from theorists of narrative in recent years. However, narrative analysts have not sought to account for new forms of embedding such as emails, blogs or online chats. Though Adichie’s work has been received
with great interest most of it has been slanted toward the thematic concerns. There is limited narratological inquiry on her work.

The nature and function of embedded narratives vary from one piece of writing to another. This study therefore examines the narrative techniques in Adichie’s work with specific attention to the nature and function of embedded narratives in the novels *Half a Yellow sun*, *Americanah* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

**Objectives**

This research was guided by the following objectives:

i. To examine the nature of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s work;

ii. To evaluate the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating themes.

**Hypothesis**

This research tested the following hypotheses:

i. Adichie employs new forms of narrative embedding in her fiction.

ii. Embedded narratives are effective tools for communicating themes.

**Justification**

The colonial and immediate post-colonial African novelists were driven by the African experiences under the colonial system. This group of writers assimilated and synthesized
the traditions of orality and literacy. The oral tradition impulse is strong in their writing because the writers are products of both the oral and literate education. One significant aspect of merging the oral and literacy traditions is the use of story within a story technique. The writers introduce various oral narratives within the narrative structure of their work in the development of characters, plots and themes.

I define contemporary as occurring in or belonging to the present time. Contemporary writers therefore in my judgment are those whose works have been written and published from the 1980s to the present time. Adichie, born in 1977 and whose works in this study were published between the years 2006-2013 fits the description of a contemporary writer. Christina Abuk in her review of Yvonne Vera’s *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women’s Writing* defines ‘opening spaces’ as “pushing the limits of conventional expectations and then moving beyond interstitial positions, into arenas for new actions and relations.”

One of the important questions narratologists ask is; how the story is packaged. Stories are not always presented in a linear form. Writers may sometimes use frame narratives which contain within them embedded narratives. Tanure Ojaide in “Examining Canonisation in Modern African Literature” argues that the aesthetic choices African writers make in response to different social realities is important in any discussion of a literary canon. Studies on the growth of African literature have focused more on examinations of the importance of oral traditions, languages and thematic concerns at the expense of narratological observations and concerns. It is through the study of literature in terms of style, form, and narrative strategies that the thematic concerns are adequately addressed.
This research is also informed by the fact that African literature continues to grow and develop. Growth in African literature is marked by experimentation, particularly of form and by the realization that knowledge is not absolute. African writers explore new possibilities and at the same time putting into question any previously accepted means of grounding and evaluating ideas. Technological innovations, for example, contribute to modernist experimentation with new forms. Through this research I attempt to expand the observation by Ojaide that African literary canon is fluid and not cast in stone. Contemporary writers seem to follow Ezra Pound’s famous exhortation to ‘Make it new’. This exhortation encouraged writers to apply new energy to established forms.

The study of the new ways contemporary writers are telling their stories is a useful contribution to the ever-growing body of African literary criticism. Contemporary trends are expanding the African literary canon and thus literary critics need to be open minded and not biased when new forms emerge. Adichie’s choice to embed a blog within her novel is a pointer to how modern innovations affects the way writers tell their story.

The differently styled narratives and structures of embedding in Adichie’s selected works facilitate an exploration of the changing trends in writing. The study will also bring into focus the assumptions that exist around embedded narratives.

This study contributes to the studies already done on Adichie’s work by taking an approach that gives attention to the use of embedding in the selected works. This attention to the use of this narrative technique may transform readings of the text.
Scope and Limitation
In this project I focus on Chimamanda Adichie’s novels Americanah and Half of a Yellow Sun, and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” from the collection of short stories The Thing around your Neck. I am concerned with the nature and function of embedded narratives in these texts. In Americanah I examine the blogs set up by Ifemelu. In Half of a Yellow Sun I interrogate the book Ugwu writes; “The World Was Silent When We Died.” and in the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” I examine the untitled story written by Ujunwa.

My background readings of Adichie’s published fiction revealed that of her three novels only Purple Hibiscus does not contain embedded narratives. In the collection of short stories; The Thing around your Neck only “Jumping Monkey Hill” contains an embedded narrative. I have chosen the three texts because of the extended use of embedding in those texts. For example, in Americanah there is extensive use of the blog within the text. This study limited itself to these embeddings with an aim of interrogating their purpose and place in the selected works.

Literature Review
The purpose of this literature review is to provide a context for this research. I also include relevant discourses on embedding to show where this study fits in the existing body of knowledge. The literature selected has some bearing on my project and was reviewed to serve as building blocks upon which this study is pegged on.

Emmanuel Obiechina refers to the phenomenon of the story- within- the story as the narrative proverb. He explains that the embedded stories are referred to as the narrative
proverbs because they perform organic and structural functions of proverbs in oral speech and in creative literature. Obiechina argues that:

like the use of proverbs proper, the embedding of stories in the novels is based upon two main principles of the African oral tradition- authority and association through which an idea is given validity by being placed side by side with another idea that bears the stamp of communal approval and by its being linked to the storehouse of collective wisdom (201).

In discussing the embedded narratives in *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe he concludes that each embedded story brings “something total to the meaning of the novel, some insight to clarify the action, to sharpen characterization, to elaborate themes and enrich the setting and environment of action” (204). Thus narrative embedding expresses the distinctive quality of African fiction. This background points to the fact that as African literature develops it does not necessarily deviate from the historical context of embedding. Narrative embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition and has continued to be important as a way of bridging the gap between the culture of oral and communal storytelling and the experience of reading a text. In this research we look at how Adichie employs this age old technique in her contemporary style.

Abiola Irele in “Orality, Literacy and African Literature” argues that the development of the interplay between orality and literacy is “not merely in purely linguistic framework as in the phase of early Africanist studies, but also from a literacy and artistic perspective” (24). Narrative
embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition. The first narrative level functions in a similar way to the performance aspect of the storyteller’s role. The embedded narrative is an artistic device that enhances the performance of narrating.

Eileen Julien in “African Literature” says “the stuff of which literature is made of includes: language, aesthetic and literary tradition, culture and history and socio-political reality” (296). She adds that “the circumstances in which African novels, plays, and poetry are produced, many of them the legacy of colonialism, are as important to our understanding of African literature as are the style and images of texts we read” (304). This statement suggests that it is important to look at the style and form of a text in order to get a better understanding of it.

Frances E. White in her review ‘While the World Watched’, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Adichie” views the use of a “clever book within a book” (10) in *Half of a Yellow Sun* as one of the effective strategies that Adichie has used to confront Nigeria’s bloody past. White argues that Ugwu the child narrator and writer of the book within a book “takes up writing as a way of dealing with his bewildering and disturbing experiences: facing both shortcomings and strengths of his master; participating in atrocities as a child soldier; and sustaining serious physical damage during battle” (11).

While appreciating White’s observation, this study looks beyond what the writing of the book does for Ugwu the child narrator. It bears asking what the purpose or function is for the narrative that embeds it, what message the book carries, and of what significance the position of the
embedding takes in the book. This study also engages with the function of narrative embedding for the primary texts and its effect on the embedded text.

Doseline Kiguru (2011) examines the role of the child figure in telling narratives based on Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun. Kiguru notes that the writing of the book “The World was Silent When we Died” by Ugwu, a child narrator is a strategy Adichie uses creatively to point to the reader that the entire narrative in Half of a Yellow Sun is the story of Ugwu. She also adds that the strategy is used to create in the mind of the reader the illusion that the stories in Half of a Yellow Sun are not fictional but real. This observation points to the embedded narrative as not only a tool for expressing the author’s thematic concerns but as an artistic device. In looking at the nature of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s work this research highlights the creative strategies employed through the form of the embedded narratives.

Umelo Ojinmah in “No Humanity in War: Chimamanda Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun” contends that the embedded narrative “The World Was Silent When We Died” within Half of a Yellow Sun is Adichie’s real book, real voice and opinion. Ojinmah argues that it is in the exposition of the embedded narrative that Adichie’s voice and opinion are poignant. This research puts to test Ojinmah’s argument by looking at both the embedding text and the embedded text with an aim of establishing how Adichie merges the two. I map out for each text the structure of embedding as well as its relationship with the narrative discourse, the story and the meaning of the texts.
In *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women’s Writing* Yvonne Vera refers to the writers’ need to invent and to banish. This involves defiance of the convention of women’s silence. Writing has established a platform which is freer than speech due to comparative distance and autonomy of books. Critics of African literature have looked at the issues shaping contemporary fiction while giving little attention to how these issues are packaged in writing. Though Adichie’s work does not feature in this collection, it is worth noting that she has embraced the need to “invent and banish” through her choice of form. Adichie chooses to deviate from the common linear form of writing to extensive narrative embedding in her fiction.

David Herman in “Genette meets Vygotsky: Narrative Embedding and Distributed Intelligence” argues that “in conjunction with the cognitive activity of their interpreter embedded narratives constitute intelligent systems- systems that both stage and facilitate the process of shared thinking about past events and about one’s own and other minds” (357). Herman views narrative embedding as enhancing the overall power of the knowledge-generating system to which it lends structure. He further explains that there is a very complex process involved in comprehending the shifts between narrative levels and the changes entailed by those shifts in the status of characters doubling as narrators. In Herman’s view, the embedded text is a system for generating knowledge not just a mere vessel. This argument makes a case for a closer look at embedded narratives in search of the meaning and knowledge they hold.
William Nelles in his paper “Stories within Stories: Narrative Levels and Embedded Narratives” argues that all embedded narratives have a dramatic impact, if only that of deferring or interrupting the embedding narrative, and that all embedded narrative have a thematic function, if only one of relative contrast or analogy. I on the other hand, feel that there is more to the embedded narrative than just deferring or interrupting the embedding narrative. Rimmon-Kenan describes three classes of functions performed either individually or in combination by embedded narratives: actional, explicative and thematic. In this study I examine the function of embedded narratives without limiting the possibilities to a given standard; instead I use those as guides.

Mikhail Bakhtin in *Discourse in the Novel* defines heteroglossia in the novel as:

A special type of double-voiced discourse (which) …serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they- as it were-know about each other (just as two exchanges in a dialogue know of each other and are structured in this mutual knowledge of each other); it is as if they actually hold conversation with each other (324).

This study approaches the Bakhtinian ideal of the heteroglossic novel from the perspective that its vocal multiplicity is a narrative strategy that signals to the reader to attend to the multi-voiced potential of the text and to interpret it. Bakhtin envisions egalitarian polyphony for the novel as a genre. Bakhtin writes: “The novel must represent all the social and ideological voices of its era
the novel must be a microcosm of heteroglossia…one single unit of social becoming. Every language in the novel is a point of view, a socio-ideological conceptual system of real social groups and their embodied representatives” (411). This study examines how the embedded narratives contribute to the multi-vocality in the selected texts.

From the literature review it is clear that various scholars have researched the area of embedded narratives. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* having been published earlier than *Americanah* and the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill” has received more critical attention. The studies on Adichie’s work however, do not focus much on the embedded narratives save by way of mention. There exists a gap in the area of narratological inquiry in Adichie’s work. This study attempts to fill the gap by examining the use of embedded narratives in the selected works.

**Theoretical Framework**

The main focus in this research is on the nature and function of embedded narratives in Chimamanda Adichie’s work. I rely on two theories to achieve my objectives namely, Narratology and Russian Formalism.

Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* has defined narratology as “the study of how narratives make meaning, and what basic mechanisms and procedures are common to all acts of story-telling” (222). One of the most prominent narratologists Genette focuses on not just the narrative itself but how it is told, that is the process of narrating. To study the nature and function of embedded narratives I analyzed the narrative
structure of Adichie’s fiction. Narratology enabled me to answer vital questions such as: who is telling the story? And how is the story packaged?

Writers often make use of frame narratives sometimes called primary narratives which contain within them the embedded narratives also called secondary narratives. Mieke Bal in *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of Narrative* discusses the possible relationships between primary and embedded texts. In this discussion she notes that “the structure of narrative levels becomes more than a mere story-telling device; it is part of the narrative’s poetics and needs to be understood for the narrative to be fully appreciated” (59). This therefore suggests that to fully understand a text it is important to study the relationship between primary texts and embedded narratives to get the intended meaning.

This study also used formalism as an analytical tool. Formalism refers to a style of inquiry that focuses, almost exclusively, on features of the literary text itself, to the exclusion of biographical, historical or intellectual contexts. One of the central tenets of formalism thought is: that the form of any work of literature is inherently part of its content and that the attempt to separate the two is erroneous. Formalism has the advantage of forcing writers and critics to evaluate a work on its own terms rather to rely on “accepted” notions of a writer’s work.

This study will adopt the Russian formalism strand. Russian formalism refers primarily to the work of the Society for the Study of Poetic Language founded in 1916 in St. Petersburg by Boris Eichenbaum, Victor Shklovsky, and Yury Tynyanov, and secondarily to the Moscow Linguistic
Circle Founded in 1914 by Roman Jakobson. Russian formalists are interested in the analysis of the text but their main concern is with method as the scientific basis for literary theory.

One of the concepts of formalism is about, as Di Yanni Robert puts it, “how a literary work comes to mean what it does” (1580). Formalism’s concern with the formal elements of a text makes it suitable for this research because the embedded narratives take different forms and also the idea of embedding narratives in a work is an aspect of form.

Narratology and formalism have a close relationship brought about by the fact that narratology borrows elements from Russian Formalist critics such as Vladimir Propp. Propp investigates Russian fairy tales to determine there narrative functions. According to his analysis, all folk or fairy tales are based on thirty fixed elements that occur in a given sequence. Narratologists such as Genette have also developed methods of analyzing a story’s structure to uncover its meaning, each building upon the former work of another narratologist (and in some cases Russian Formalists) and adding an element or two.

The point of departure is that narratologists provide us with various systematic, thorough approaches to the mechanics of a narrative; narratology helps the reader to understand how a text makes meaning and not what it means. Formalists on the other hand emphasize the form of a literary work to determine its meaning focusing on literary elements such as plot, character, setting, diction, imagery, structure and point of view. Narratology and Formalism both look at the structure of a narrative. While narratologists study how narratives make meaning. Formalists focus almost exclusively on the form of a work.
Methodology

This study is concerned with the nature and function of the embedded narrative. To achieve my goals, my methodology included close and comparative reading of Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”. I examined Adichie’s work, narrowing down to the texts that have embedded narratives. My key focus was on the nature and function of these narratives. This process helped me to identify the relationship between the primary narrative and the secondary narratives in the texts.

I then interrogated the primary texts using the theory of narratology and the Russian formalist theory. Narratology was relevant in the analysis of the structural framework that underlies the order and manner in which a narrative is presented to the reader. Following Genette’s ideas in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* where he explains the relations between narrative levels; I studied the texts to identify the different narrative levels and the relationship between these levels. Genette suggests that in every narrative the narrator’s status is defined both by its narrative level (extra-or intradiegetic) and by its relationship to the story (hetero-or homodiegetic). Once I identified these relationships I looked at the differences and similarities in the selected texts.

The working presuppositions and the basic conceptual framework of this study were informed by the formalist approach to literary criticism so as to understand the organic unity in the text. I interpreted the texts by exploring ways in which the embedded narratives contribute to the organic unity in the selected works of Adichie.
I also reviewed secondary texts especially critical works dealing with Adichie’s works from different perspectives. Literary critics who have looked at Adichie’s work were useful in shedding light on the subject. Through the close and comparative reading I was able to further the arguments advanced or deviated from them based on my research findings.
Chapter Outline

Chapter one introduces the writer Chimamanda Adichie and the works selected for this research. Within this chapter I make a case for the study of the nature and function of embedded narratives. It also gives a background to narrative embedding as a literary technique. This chapter on the whole gives an introduction to the research, stating the objectives, scope and limitation, methodology and the theoretical framework which guided this study.

Chapter two makes an inquiry on the nature of embedded narratives in the selected texts. I examine the form the embedded narratives take, the position of the narratives in the text and the relationship between the embedded text and the embedding narrative. This chapter also looks at the differently styled narratives and structure of embedding in Adichie’s work bringing into focus the assumptions that exist around embedded narratives.

Chapter three explores the functions performed by the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works without limiting itself to the actional, explicative and thematic functions. It also examines the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating the writer’s thematic concerns. This chapter engages with the function of narrative embedding in terms of the embedding narrative’s effect on the embedded narrative and also the purpose and function of the embedded narratives for the narrative that embeds. It also addresses the function of embedded narratives to the characters.

The conclusion summarizes the research done with a focus on the findings observed in this study.
CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHIE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction
This section explores the nature of embedding in Adichie’s selected works. This has been done through an analysis of embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey” separately. This chapter discusses the forms of embedding found in the texts while examining how the embedded narratives bear on ideological dimensions of literature. In this chapter I identify the different narrative levels and the relationship between these levels.

Narrative embedding takes place where one narrative is subordinated to another narrative. Samuel Waldron in “Challenging Narrative Hierarchies: Embedded Narrative Structure in David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* and Mark Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*” suggests that narrative embedding requires a text with at least two narratives the embedded and the embedding. For the purpose of this research the embedding relationship will require the embedded narrative must be visible. The latter narrative must be present and observable in the text.

Nature of Embedding in Adichie’s selected works
“Jumping Monkey Hill” is a story set outside Cape Town in South Africa. Ujunwa the protagonist is part of a group of African writers attending a writers’ workshop. Authors from various African countries are gathered at this workshop. Within the story there is reference to the stories written by the other writers in the workshop. Only Ujunwa’s story
is displayed and the reader journeys with Ujunwa as she writes her story. Through the third person omniscient narrator the reader gets to know Ujunwa’s thoughts.

Adichie makes use of the *Mise en abyme technique* in the packaging of “Jumping Monkey Hill”. *Mise en abyme* is the French term referring to the practice in heraldry of placing the image of a small shield on a larger shield. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Ujunwa’s story is semi-autobiographical. The story Ujunwa writes is in the third person limited point of view. Ujunwa’s story is untitled. It is indented within the primary narrative and presented in smaller font to distinguish it from the primary text. The story is complete and can be read independent from the primary narrative.

The protagonist Chioma in Ujunwa’s story faces two situations where men in authority take advantage of her position through sexual exploitation. In the first instance, “the man says he will hire her and then walks across and stands behind her and reaches over her shoulders to squeeze her breasts. She hisses, stupid man! You cannot respect yourself! and leaves” (100). In the second instance, Chioma walks away after observing Yinka sitting on a customer’s lap and realizing that this would also be her fate. The alhaji runs a finger over Yinka’s arm. When the alhaji invites them in to give them perfume Chioma walks away. The choice of the short story form within the short story is valid because of the advantages of the short story form. An example is the ease with which an author maintains consistency of purpose since there are fewer characters and settings thus better dramatic and thematic unities.
Later when Ujunwa reads the story to the group, Edward the workshop leader says that “the whole thing is implausible”(113). At this point Adichie reveals to the reader and the other characters in the primary text that this story is the real life story of Ujunwa:

A real story of real people?” she said, with her eyes on Edward’s face. “The only thing I didn’t add in the story is that after I left my co-worker and walked out of the alhaji’s house, I got into the jeep and insisted that the driver takes me home because I knew it was the last time I would be riding it. (114)

*Half of a Yellow Sun* recounts the ghastly historical events of the Nigeria-Biafra war. The central characters in the novel are Ugwu, the twin sisters; Olanna and Kainene, Odenigbo and Richard. To a large extent, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is Ugwu’s story, but, the chapters are written in turn from the point of view of Ugwu, Olanna and Richard. The action in the novel moves between the early and the late nineteen sixties.

Interspersed throughout the book are brief passages taken from a book entitled; “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The authorship of this book is ambiguous; Adichie leads the reader to believe that the book is written by Richard, “the title of the book came to Richard: “ ‘The World Was Silent When We Died’. He would write it after the war, a narrative of Biafra’s difficult victory…” (375) but we learn towards the end of the book that it was Ugwu who was writing the book; “Ugwu was writing as she
spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of…” (210).

*Americanah*, Adichie’s most recent novel traverses three nations and addresses a myriad of issues; identity, nationality, race, love, loneliness and aspiration. The book opens in Princeton where Ifemelu lives, as she heads to Trenton, the closest place she can get her hair braided. Her hair being braided at the salon is symbolic of Adichie braiding and weaving her story. Through flashbacks we get to know the story of Ifemelu and Obinze that begins twenty years earlier in Nigeria.

Ifemelu and her boyfriend Obinze are caught up in a state that is surrounded by dysfunction and corruption. The two respond by leaving the country in search of brighter prospects. Obinze heads to England due to rejection from post 9/11 stringent immigration policies in America. He travels on a tourist visa but extends his stay illegally. Eventually he is discovered and deported to Nigeria. Ifemelu goes to the United States and cuts all communication with Obinze. She struggles to make it and finally succeeds. Ifemelu launches a blog about race in America. By the time we meet her at the salon she has made up her mind to return to Nigeria.

*Americanah* has a seven part structure that holds fifty five chapters. The story takes the third person omniscient perspective. The chapter narration oscillates between Obinze and Ifemelu’s point of view. Adichie establishes that *Americanah* is primarily Ifemelu’s story
by writing chapter one from Ifemelu’s point of view. Chapter two is from Obinze’s point of view, this establishes that his story is also of importance.

The frame of the story is rendered by the braid salon. From the salon the details of the story are laid out as flashback within that frame. Interestingly, Ifemelu leaves the salon at the end of chapter forty one. The following chapters deal with Ifemelu’s transition on the verge of returning to Nigeria. Chapters forty four to fifty five are set in Nigeria and deal with the issues in Ifemelu and Obinze’s relationship and provide a closure to the novel.

There are blog posts spread throughout the novel. While in America Ifemelu sets up a blog called “Raceteenth or Curious Observations by a Non-American Black on the subject of Blackness in America” (296). Ifemelu later changes its name to “Raceteenth or Various Observations in America About American Blacks (Those formerly known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black” (315). When Ifemelu returns to Nigeria she sets up another blog called “The Small Redemptions of Lagos”.

Adichie’s use of the blogosphere in Americanah is in keeping with the narrative time. The advancement of technology has significantly changed the mode of communication; people have turned to the use of Twitter, Facebook and blogs to express opinions on significant issues. Though we are not given specific dates in the novel, the allusion to 9/11 tragedy attack and the election of President Barack Obama to office helps us to place the setting as contemporary. The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines blogosphere as “an online journal where an individual, group,
or corporation presents a record of activities, thoughts or beliefs…many blogs provide a forum to allow visitors to leave comments and interact with the publisher” (n.p).

The choice of a blog as the form that carries the embedded text is very significant. Blogs are perpetual and can reach a wide audience. Each blog post has its own title and content. Visitors to the blog read the posts and share them so that other people can see and read them. Visitors can also make comments and participate in the discussion. Blogs are also easily accessible through computers and mobile phones. One of the characters in the novel, Paula reads one of Ifemelu’s blog posts in a gathering of friends from her phone (325).

**Narrative Levels in Adichie’s Selected Works**

Martin Gray’s dictionary of literary terms defines the various types of narrators and narrative levels as follows:

An extradiegetic narrator tells a story on the extradiegetic level, a ‘higher’ level that includes everyone and everything that determines how the story is told. His or her narration can include one or more other narrations (told by intradiegetic narrators). An intradiegetic narrator tells the story on the narrative level of the characters; the diegetic level which describes how the characters of a story communicate with each other and which is embedded at the extradiegetic level.

A homodiegetic narrator describes his or her own personal experience as a character in the story. Such a character cannot know more about other characters than what their
actions reveal. A heterodiegetic narrator on the other hand describes the experiences of the characters that appear in the story.

The narrator in Ujunwa’s story is presented to the reader as a heterodiegetic narrator. As we read the story we cannot link the events of the story to Ujunwa. It is only through the primary text or at the extradiegetic level that we learn that the narrator is actually homodiegetic. Ujunwa the character in “Jumping Monkey Hill” is actually Chioma in the untitled story she writes.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the reader is presented with a first narrative level through the third person omniscient narrator and then the second level narrative act Ujunwa writes a short story. At each level, the narrative is truncated before it attains closure.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in “Jumping Monkey Hill”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Narrative Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Omniscient third person narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story about Ujunwa and other participants in a writers workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second level</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ujunwa writes a short story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative act</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded</td>
<td>Metadiegetic</td>
<td>Story of Chioma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, at the extradiegetic level, the third person omniscient narrator presents the events around the Nigeria-Biafra war. This constitutes the intradiegetic level in which Ugwu writes a book. This book within the primary text constitutes the metadiegetic level of narratives. This structure is similar to that of the short story “Jumping Monkey Hill”. Adichie also applies the *Mise en Abyme* technique, since the embedded narrative mirrors the embedding narrative in terms of form.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” is written from the omniscient third person point of view. The brief passages appear as summaries that tell the reader what is contained in the chapters of that book:

1. **The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died**
   
   For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash. She sat on the floor. Olanna tells him this story and he notes the details. She tells him how the bloodstains on the woman’s wrapper blended into the fabric to form a misty manure…(82).

The omniscient narrator of the novel and the writer of “The Book” constantly overlap. In this first part it is obvious that the writer has access to the information in the novel. At this point in the story we do not know who is writing the book. The only person mentioned to have an interest in writing a book about Nigeria is Richard, a British journalist. The reader easily assumes the writer is Richard.

---

1 All the excerpts from “The Book” are numbered as such I have numbered them in my quotes for ease of reference.
Genette in *Narrative Discourse* defines metalepsis as “any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a Metadiegetic universe etc) or the inverse (234-235). Metalepsis therefore is a paradoxical transgression of the boundaries between narrative levels. Dorrit Cohn in “Metalepsis and Mise en Abyme” defines interior metalepsis as “all metalepsis that occurs between two levels of the same story; that is to say, between a primary and secondary story” (106).

Interior metalepsis occurs in *Half of a Yellow Sun* when at the extradiegetic level the reader finds out that the ‘he’ referred to in the first part of “The World Was Silent when We Died” is Ugwu. This is found in part four of the novel which covers the late Sixties. “Then she described the head itself, the open eyes, the greying skin. Ugwu was writing as she spoke and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important…” (210).

The transgression here occurs between the primary narrative and the secondary narrative. It appears that the narrator of the primary narrative is the same narrator in “The Book: The World Was Silent When we Died”. The book’s passages are written from the third person point of view similar to primary text:

2. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

He discusses the British soldier merchant Taubman Goldie, how he coerced, cajoled and killed…(115).

3. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died
He writes about independence. The second world war changed the world order: Empire was crumbling...(155).

5. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

He writes about starvation, starvation was a Nigerian weapon of war. (237)

When towards the end of the novel we realize it is Ugwu writing the book we discover that Adichie collapses the idea of narrative levels and the hierarchy of the same. There are no longer boundaries. The levels become intertwined. Adichie creates an illusion of a real book but in the real sense the passages are summaries of “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The summaries of “The Book” are presented to the reader by the same extradiegetic narrator.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>levels</th>
<th>Narrative content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Third person omniscient narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story about Nigeria-Biafra war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second level narrative</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ugwu writes a book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded narrative</td>
<td>Metadiegetic</td>
<td>The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Genette suggests that “metalepsis designates the transgression of a line of demarcation that authors usually do not touch, namely the shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells and the world of which one tells” (236). Adichie looks away from
conventional embedding and points to alternative structural reading of her novel. The overlapping in *Half of a Yellow Sun* suggests links between the narrative levels. A close observation of the narrative structure in this particular text reveals a limitation of the theory of narratology to the extent that it views metalepsis more of a transgression than of any merit. One of the merits seen in this text is its use to connect the embedded and the embedding. The demerit is that metalepsis may cause confusion about who the narrators are to the readers of the novel.

It is important to note that there are other forms of embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The novel contains speeches, radio broadcasts, songs, poems, Richard’s articles, letters and such other categories. This research focuses on the major embedded narrative. The term ‘major’ for the purposes of this research refers to any narrative that takes a significant portion of the text, where significant is any narrative longer than three to four paragraphs. While this distinction may not be perfect, it is nevertheless a useful one. The intent is not to brush aside the text’s shorter narratives but to provide a clearer comprehensible picture of the predominant narrative structure.

The narrative structure in *Americanah* is multi-layered. At the extradiegetic level is the third person omniscient narrator narrating from Ifemelu’s and Obinze’s perspective at different times. The next level is the intradiegetic level where Ifemelu writes a blog and posts blogs on different topics. The reader observes the narration of ‘tales’ by the intradiegetic narrator both about the narrator (homodiegetic) and about others (heterodiegetic). The next level is the Metadiegetic, which comprises the blog posts by Ifemelu. Beyond this is the meta-metadiegetic which arises from blog comments by blog visitors on different topics.
This type of embedding presents a complex situation because the narrative levels follow no clear pattern. The result is that it does not amount to a structural system that would explain the relationship of the narrative parts. In some instances the extradiegetic narrator presents the blog contents from the meta-metadiegetic level. An example is: “Years later she would blog about this: ‘On the Subject of Non-American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know.’ A Congolese woman wrote a long comment in response: She had moved to Virginia from Kinshasa and months into her first semester of college begun to feel dizzy … (158).” In this example the extradiegetic narrator cuts across all the possible levels of narration in the novel as follows; the intradiegetic- Ifemelu writing the blog, The Metadiegetic- the blog post; “On the Subject of Non-American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know” (158) The meta-metadiegetic, the Congolese woman writing her experience of panic attacks.

Table presentation of the narrative levels in *Americanah*²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>levels</th>
<th>Narrative content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main plot</td>
<td>Extradiegetic</td>
<td>Story told from the third person omniscient point of View</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Story</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Story revolves around the lives of Obinze and Ifemelu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Level</td>
<td>Intradiegetic</td>
<td>Ifemelu sets up a blog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² This table presentation is *Americanah’s* basic narrative level structure. The complex nature of the embedding caused by the overlapping of narrative levels could not be tabulated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embedded Narrative</th>
<th>Metadiegetic</th>
<th>Blog – Raceteenth or Various observations about American Blacks (Those Formerly known as Negroes) by a Non-American black Blog – The Small Redemptions of Lagos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third Level Narrative</td>
<td>Meta-metadiegetic</td>
<td>Comments and stories posted by blog visitors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Relationship between embedding texts and embedded texts in Adichie’s selected works**

Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* differentiates the main types of relationships that can connect the metadiegetic narrative to the primary narrative in which it is inserted. The first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, conferring on the second narrative an explanatory function. The second type consists of a purely thematic relationship, therefore implying no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis: a relationship of contrast or of analogy. The third type involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content a function of distraction, for example and/or obstruction (232-233).

Mieke Bal observes that when the embedded text presents a complete story with an elaborate fabula, we gradually forget the fabula of the primary narrative: This apparently loose relationship between primary and embedded text is relevant to the development of the primary fabula (57). Another possible relationship between the two texts presents itself when the two fabulas are
related to each other. This structure has two possible meanings. Either the embedded story explains the primary story, or it resembles the primary story. In the first case the relationship is made explicit by the actor narrating the embedded story; in the second the explanation is usually left to the reader, or merely hinted at, in the fabula (58).

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the narrator relates the writing process of one of the characters. The omniscient third person narrator says, “She sat there for a long time, moving the mouse from side to side, trying to decide whether to name her character something common, like Chioma or something exotic like Ibani” (100). From this narration we learn that Ujunwa is writing a story about a female protagonist. Just beneath this excerpt is a display of the story Ujunwa is writing.

The two texts are related to each other. The embedded story explains the primary story. Adichie uses the embedded story to develop pertinent issues that the primary text raises. This relationship is made explicit by the character Ujunwa narrating the embedded story through her writing. Though the short story written by Ujunwa is complete the primary text takes a larger part of the story “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

In Half of a Yellow Sun “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” is interspersed throughout the novel. The distinction between the primary narrative and this narrative is that the excerpts are short passages, printed in a different typeface, they are all titled “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died.” The primary text takes a larger part of the novel since the embeddings are summaries and not whole chapters.
The reader finds the first part of embedded book in part one of the novel which covers the early sixties. This portion summarizes the prologue of the book within the novel. It is worth noting that the presentation of the book is abrupt, no mention of what it is about or who the author is has been given this far. The embedded narratives are short passages that are presented as chapter summaries that are numbered.

The embeddings have no relation with the chapter content of the chapters that hold them. Though the arrangement of the embedded narratives within the text appears haphazard, a closer study reveals an orderly pattern. Each segment of “The Book” appears at the end of either one or two series of three chapters focalised by each of the three main focalisers. In part one and three the embeddings appear after one series and in part two and four after every two series.

In total, the embeddings are eight and the last is found on the last page of the novel:

8. The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

Ugwu writes his dedication last. For my master, my good man (433).

The ending of the novel at the same time with the ending of the embedded narrative is significant because it places them on the same level. This implies that both narratives are of equal import.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the embedded narrative and the embedding narrative are related to each other. The embedded narrative explains the primary story. Bal explains in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* that “this relationship is made explicit by the
actor narrating the embedded story” (58). By stating clearly in the last chapter of the embedded narrative that Ugwu wrote, Adichie wants to ensure there is no doubt about the authorship of the book. This also reveals the connection between the two texts. Ugwu the child narrator in the primary text rises to write about his experience and observations about the war in the embedded text.

Genette’s *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* refers to this relationship as one of “direct causality” (232). He further explains that these kinds of embedded narratives seek to answer the question “what events led to the present situation?” The information contained in “The Book: The World was Silent When We Died” gives background details to events in the extradiegetic narrative.

In *Americanah* the narrator furnishes us with background information on the blogger (Ifemelu) and the blog. The reader is introduced to the blog in the first chapter of the book. This is an indication to the reader that the blog is an important part of the novel and its story. Unlike *Half of a Yellow Sun* where the embedded narrative just appears without warning; the blog in *Americanah* has an external introduction. From the outset of the novel the reader knows there is a blog and gets a feel of what the blog is about when the narrator mentions some posts in the blog and visitor comments on the second and third page of the novel.

The blog and primary text have a close relationship. There is spatio-temporal continuity between the metadiegesis and diegesis. This relationship is not of direct causality like the one observed in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The second narrative takes on an explanatory function. Some of the
fabulas in *Americanah* also resemble one another and the blog is intertwined with the primary narrative. Contained in the blogs are incidents of interest that Ifemelu experiences or observes in her day to day life. There is a repetition within the blog of events that the reader has already seen in the primary text.

An example is when Ifemelu works as a babysitter for a white family that lived in a grand stone house with white pillars; she encounters a carpet cleaner who is hostile to her because she is black and a black should not own such a stately house: “She would begin the blog post “Sometimes in America, Race is Class” with the story of his dramatic change and end it with: *It didn’t matter to him how much money I had. As far as he was concerned I did not fit as the owner of that stately house because of the way I looked. In America’s public discourse ... (166).”*

Another example is the blog on the expensive lifestyles of some young Nigerian women posted in “The Small Redemptions of Lagos” (422). The blog post is about Ranyinudo, Ifemelu’s friend. Before the post, on an earlier page is a description of Ranyinudo that matches the blog. “Ifemelu... wondered if she would be like Ranyinudo, working for an advertising company, living in a one bedroom flat whose rent her salary could not pay...dating a married chief executive who bought her business class tickets to London ” (389). The blog reads in part;

“*There are many young women in Lagos with Unknown Sources of Wealth; they live lives they cannot afford. They have only ever travelled business class to Europe but have jobs that can’t even afford them a regular ticket. One of them is my friend a beautiful, brilliant woman who works in advertising” (422).*
Bal defines resemblance between two fabulas as follows: “we speak of resemblance when two fabulas can be paraphrased in such a way that the summaries have one or more striking elements in common” (60). In the case of the two blog posts cited above in one the resemblance with the text is that both texts address the issue of race in America using the same incident. In the second the blog and text are a social critique on the lives of certain women in Nigeria. When confronted by Ranyinudo for airing her story in public, Ifemelu says “Your story is so common” (422). Ifemelu uses Ranyinudo’s life story to talk about women “who define their lives by men they can never truly have and are crippled by a culture of dependence” (422).

Embedding and Authority

All the embedding narratives in Adichie’s work vouch for the authenticity of the narrative they embed. The embedding texts do not just present the embedded text; they provide a context for the embedded narrative, credit it to a specific person and establish its credentials.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” and Americanah it is very clear from the outset who the authors of the embedded texts are. Ifemelu sets up the two blogs in Americanah. Ujunwa writes the untitled story in “Jumping Monkey Hill”. Half of a Yellow Sun takes a different approach: the author of the book within the novel is not revealed at the outset. The reader has to contend with the ambiguity of whether it is Richard or Ugwu who writes the book. It is eventually made clear towards the end of the novel that Ugwu is the author of the book. The ambiguity of the authorship of the embedded text is employed by Adichie to create suspense and at the same time make a statement about who should tell the African story.
The embedding narratives attest to the credibility of the narratives that they embed. In *Americanah* the narrator presents Ifemelu’s blog as a successful blog with a growing readership. The omniscient narrator says this about the blog:

> She had written the final post only days ago. Trailed by two hundred and seventy-four comments so far. All those readers growing month by month, linking, cross posting, knowing so much more than she did; they had always frightened and exhilarated her (5)

In another instance, Paula one of Ifemelu and Blaine’s friends tells her students to read the blog (325). Paula equates the blog to any other authoritative text that the students are required to read. This puts forth a case about the importance of the blog. The various blog posts and comments from blog visitors create an interesting patchwork of conversations giving an impression of a series of supporting sources.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the embedding narrative backs up the information in “*The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died*” by creating an illusion that the information in the embedded narrative is true. In the first chapter of the embedded book the reader learns the source of the story in the prologue of that book is Olanna (81). To authenticate this story about the baby in calabash the extradiegetic narrator narrates this episode in chapter eleven. The narrator gives the reader details of the train journey and uses similar words; from the embedded narrative we read; “For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash. She sat on the floor of a train...” (81). From the primary text we read that; “Olanna sat on the floor of the train with her knees drawn up” (149). The narrator further endorses that prologue by narrating how the actual
process of writing that prologue takes place in chapter thirty four; “Then she described the head itself, the open eyes, the graying skin. Ugwu was writing as she spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose…” (410). Captured in that narration is an affirmation of the author of the book as earnest and keen to tell the story and a pointer to the importance of the story shared in the embedded narrative.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the reader learns that Ujunwa is a fine writer. The third person omniscient narrator says: “It was the British Council that had made the call for entries and selected the best” (96). This sets the readers expectation high; we anticipate that the story she writes will be good. After she reads her story some of the comments from the other participants were that; the story was “strong…believable…captured Lagos well…had a realistic portrayal of what women were going through in Nigeria” (113). This approval places the embedded story in good standing to counter Edward’s negative opinion about it.

An important piece of information that the embedding narrative reveals is that the story is actually Ujunwa’s real life experience. Since autobiography is more believable than fiction; Adichie effectively creates the illusion that the embedded narrative is a true story. The embedded narrative is therefore placed at a level higher than the one embedding it by being presented as a true story while the one that holds it is fictional.

The authors of the embedded narratives in the works studied write from a point of experience. Ugwu writes about his experiences during the war. Ifemelu blogs about her immigrant experiences in America. Ujunwa writes her own story. This validates their suitability to write
these stories. The experience gives them the knowledge and power to write the embedded narratives and the reader easily believes them.

Adichie’s choice to represent the embedded narratives as non-fictional text within the context of the embedding narrative elevates them in the ontological level. Ontological levels point out the subordination of worlds or realities. Waldron describes a subordinate world as one which is “fictional; it is subordinated to the real world because it has no independent existence beyond what is described or imagined in the real world” (17). In the works selected the primary narratives take a subordinate level.

Conclusion
This chapter has examined the nature of the embedded narratives in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”. It has discussed the various forms that shape the embedded narratives. I have attempted to present a working narratological model for the texts; discussing the narrative levels and their relationships. I have also observed that in some cases like *Americanah* the extensive embedding creates a clash between the narrative levels. In this chapter I also looked at the relationships between the embedding narrative and embedded narratives and concluded that the relationship is one where the embedding narrative justifies the embedded narrative. This discussion leads us to the next chapter that looks at the function of the embedded texts and how it contributes to developing Adichie’s thematic concerns.
CHAPTER 3

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMBEDDED NARRATIVES IN ADICHE’S SELECTED WORKS

Introduction

This chapter looks at the functions of the embedded narratives in the texts selected. It also evaluates the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique in communicating the author’s thematic concerns. It highlights the limitations of the embedded narrative technique in Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah and “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

Functions of the Embedded Narratives

Authors choose to employ the embedded narrative technique in their work for various reasons. Some common uses are; for aesthetic purpose as a means of adding diversity to the narrative act, dramatic impact, sharpening characterization, developing thematic concerns and increasing the complexity of the narrative. This study focuses on the roles played by the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works.

Narratologists such as Genette and Bal have discussed possible functions of embedded narratives. Shlomith Rimmon Kenan builds on the earlier work of Genette and Bal in Narrative Fiction Contemporary Poetics. She argues that there are three types of embedded narrative function: actional, where the telling itself progresses the plot; explicative, which explain the diegesis; and thematic, which function as Mise en abyme, stories that reflect in some way the
narrative around them (93). This study begins the examination of the functions of the embedded narrative from the functions identified by Kenan and then expands to other functions revealed in the short stories “Jumping Monkey Hill” and the novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah.*

**The Explicative Function**

Embedded narratives may serve as an answer to questions that arise in the primary narrative. This function helps the reader to understand how the events in the primary narrative came to be.

“All these narratives, explicitly or not, answer a question of the type “what events have led to the present situation?” (Genette 232).

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the excerpts of “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” focus on saying, this is how things were and this is why things turned out this way. The prologue introduces the reader to the effects of the senseless killing during the war by recounting the story of the woman with the calabash. Ugwu contextualizes the senseless killings within the wider narratives of war and violence in the world by mentioning “the German women who fled Hamburg with the charred bodies of their children in stuffed suitcases and the Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies” (82).

The second excerpt explains the colonial aspect of how Nigeria was formed. How the British preferred the North to the South. The flourishing of the Christianity and education brought by the missionaries, the merging of the North and the South in 1914 and the picking of the name Nigeria by the governor-general’s wife (115).
The third excerpt talks about independence and highlights the state of Nigeria during independence “At independence in 1960, Nigeria was a collection of a fragments held in a fragile clasp” (155). This statement is important in explaining the state of the country at independence. This signals the reader to the volatile nature of the state and it therefore does not come as a surprise that the country broke into war. This excerpt also reveals the tension between the North and the South: “The North was wary; it feared domination of the more educated South and had always wanted a country separate from the infidel South …Nothing was done about the clamour of the minority groups and the regions were already competing so fiercely that some wanted separate foreign embassies (155).”

The fourth excerpt talks about the economy of Nigeria which was nonexistent until independence. This excerpt points to the poor governance and complex problems facing the country. It focuses on the 1966 massacres and mentions the ostensible reason for the massacre as revenge for the “Igbo Coup”. The attitude of the Igbo is shown as resilient and what mattered to them was the unity forged among the Igbo and the creation of the fervent Biafrans out of former Nigerians.

The fifth excerpt discusses the starvation that was prevalent in the Biafra war. How starvation was used by Nigeria as a weapon of war and how it drew attention to Biafra. He also talks of how people used that starvation for their own gains. For example, photographers use of the photos of the hunger stricken children to grow their careers. Parents also used the mention of starvation to get their children to eat.
The sixth excerpt discusses the reactions of the international community to the Biafran Republic. It mentions the silence and the indifference from some. “In the United States, Biafra was “Under Britain’s sphere of interest”. In Canada the prime minister quipped, “Where is Biafra?”(257). Within this portion Ugwu explains the reason for the silence of the world toward Biafra. This discussion is very crucial because it underscores the notion “The World Was Silent When We Died” which is also the title of the book Ugwu writes.

The seventh excerpt contains the epilogue which is a poem Ugwu wrote, modelled after a poem by Okeoma one of the characters. The poem is titled “Were you Silent When We Died?” This title is also related to the title of the embedded book. This linkage and repetition point to the importance of questioning the silence or attitude of indifference among nations when a nation faces a crisis especially one that leads to massive loss of human life. This is an important socio-political question for Africa since the continent continues to face crises that cause loss of lives. A current example is the South Sudan conflict where hundreds of people continue to be killed because of their ethnicity and political alignment.

The eighth and final excerpt of the embedded book constitutes one line; “Ugwu writes his dedication last: For Master, my good man” (433). This line sums up Ugwu’s appreciation to Odenigbo for is mentorship. Through this final line the issue of the ambiguity of the authorship of the book is finally put to rest. There is no doubt about whose story this is and who writes it.

The embedding in *Half of a Yellow Sun* serves an explicative function where the embedded narrative explains the events in the embedding narrative. It gives the reader a deeper understanding of what the scenario was during the Biafran War. This is important because some
of the readers may have no idea what the Biafran war was about. The Book functions as a device to anchor the reader. Maria Plaias in “The danger of a single story in Chimamanda N. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” states that “the line of reasoning in “The Book” provides the basis for analysing and interpreting the characters political views in the main narrative and affirms and reinforces the major ideas of these characters” (54).

The embedding narrative presents to us the action of the story while the embedded narrative presents to us the cause of the action. An example is the issue of starvation as a tool of war. Through description Adichie paints a picture of the inhumanity of starvation; she shows girls fighting for food (270), the desperation Olanna experiences when she goes to the gate of the relief centre to collect food for five consecutive days and finds the gate locked. She details the inward rush of the crowds into the relief centre when it finally opens (271), the theft of Olanna’s corned beef by five soldiers (272). How children roasted rats to eat (370) and how every leaf became a vegetable (371). Through these scenes and many others in the book we see the effect of starvation on the Biafran people. It is only from the fifth excerpt of the embedded book that we understand that starvation was a weapon of war:

> Starvation broke Biafra and brought Biafra fame and made Biafra last as long as it did. Starvation made the people of the world take notice and sparked protests and demonstrations in London and Moscow and Czechoslovakia…Starvation made the international Red Cross call Biafra its gravest emergency since the Second World War (237).
The blog Ifemelu puts up in *Americanah* explains the countless different approaches to race, gender, ethnicity and beauty both in Nigeria and in the United States of America. From the title of the Ifemelu’s blog: “Raceteenth or Various Curious Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non American Black” it is clear that Adichie wants to tackle race from an African perspective. To avoid the subjectivity that may come from an American Black because of the history of slavery and earlier racist practices which they were subjected too; Adichie looks at it from an outsider’s perspective (through Ifemelu). Through the blogs Adichie avoids being didactic about the issue of race.

Similar to the *Half of a Yellow Sun* approach the primary narrative presents to the reader the action of the story while the blog explains the “why” and “how” of the situation in the primary text. The blog allows the public to comment on the issues at hand. The blogs in the novel play a complementary role while facilitating explanation of the primary text. An example is the case of Abe who does not see Ifemelu as female because of the racial divide:

…Abe in her ethics class, Abe was white, Abe who liked her well enough, who thought her smart and funny, even attractive but who did not see her as female. She was curious about Abe, interested in Abe… Abe would hook her up with his black friend… She was invisible to Abe (192).

Later in the novel Ifemelu is involved romantically with Curt, a wealthy white man. During the duration of this relationship she experiences racial prejudice firsthand. When Curt introduced Ifemelu as his girlfriend she saw on the faces of the white women the expression of the question
“why her” (292). Other instances are when they walked into the restaurant and the host asked Curt “Table for one?” and when the owner of the bed and breakfast in Montreal refused to acknowledge her and looked only at Curt (294). Ifemelu felt slighted by this treatment but she could not tell Curt because he would say she was overreacting. Finally when Ifemelu starts her blog her first post entails the prejudices she experienced when seen with a white man and the racially skewed magazines. She ends the blog with words she remembered a long time after that post and recited at the dinner table of a French and American couple. The blog reads:

The simplest solution to the problem of race in America? Romantic love. Not friendship. Not the kind of safe, shallow love where the objective is that both people remain comfortable. But real deep romantic love, the kind that twists you and wrings you out and makes you breathe through the nostrils of your beloved. And because that deep romantic love is so rare, because American society is set up to make it even rarer between American Black and American White, the problem of race in America will never be solved. (296)

This post explains her brutal honesty to a comment by a Haitian poet who had dated a white man for three years. The poet said that race was never an issue for them. Ifemelu reacts by saying “That’s a lie” (290) she repeats “it’s a lie” (290). Through this narration and the blog post Adichie expresses her anger at the idea of sweeping of the race issue under the carpet by saying “race is not an issue” or race does not matter (291).
The blog posts are also used to explain the meaning of concepts around the race issue that cannot be explained in the text. An example is the blog post titled “Understanding America for the Non-American Black: A few Explanations of What Things Really Mean” (350). This blog captures the evasive nature of Americans when handling conversations that address racial issues. They are reported to refer to race using abstract terms such as “simplistic” or “complex”. Among other terms the blogger discusses how diversity means different things to blacks and to whites. “To the whites diverse means nine per cent black people and if it gets to ten per cent they can’t stand it. To the blacks diverse neighbourhood means forty per cent black” (350).

Another post “What Academics Mean by White Privileges, or Yes it Sucks To Be Poor and White but Try Being Poor and Non-White”. This post is one of the lengthier posts, spanning close to two pages. It discusses, explaining at length the imbalances created by racism. An example is given about what would happen if a black person was found in possession of drugs and if a white person was found in a similar situation. The post reads “the white guy is more likely to be sent to treatment and the black guy is more likely to be sent to jail” (346).

Just like *Half of a Yellow Sun’s* embedded narrative the “Raceteenth” blog in *Americanah* helps the reader to trace the histories around the race issue, this explains to the reader how the current situation arose and why the race issue remains unresolved. In the post “Friendly Tips for the American Non-Black: How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness.” (325) Ifemelu outlines the ways in which the whites offer alternative explanations about racial issues and how they want to wish away the past. In this post she records history to anchor the reader on the race issue:
Dear Non-American Black, If an American Black person is telling you about an experience about being black, please do not eagerly bring up examples from your own life. ...Don’t be quick to find alternative explanations for what happened. Don’t say “Oh, it’s not really race, it’s class. Oh, it’s not race it’s gender... A hundred years ago the white ethnics hated being hated, but it was sort of tolerable because at least black people were below them on the ladder. ... being American means you take the whole Shebang, America’s assets and America’s debts, and Jim Crow is a big ass debt. ... Don’t say “Oh Racism is over, slavery was so long ago.” We are talking about the problem from the 1960s not 1860s ...325-327.

The mention of the historic events; the slavery, Jim Crow, blacks stepping off the curb because a white person was passing, white women standing outside schools shouting “Ape” because they did not want their children to mix with black children among other incidences mentioned in the post, gives the reader background information on why the racial wound still festers. At the end of this blog post Ifemelu does not stop at listing the do’s and don’ts of the appropriate way whites should respond to blacks discussing race. She invites the two races to a possibility of a friendship where there is mutual understanding and respect:

American Blacks are not telling you that you are to blame. They are just telling you what is. If you don’t understand, ask questions. If you are uncomfortable asking questions, say you are uncomfortable about asking questions and then ask anyway. It’s easy to tell when a question is coming from a good place...sometimes
people just want to feel heard. Here’s to possibilities of friendship connection and understanding. 327

**Thematic Function**

Rimon-Kenan defines the thematic function of the embedded narrative as one that establishes a relationship of analogy, that is, similarity and contrast” between the narrative levels (92). Genette in *Narrative Discourse* explains that this “purely thematic relationship implies no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis; a relationship of contrast or of analogy. Based on these two definitions of the embedded narratives studied, only the story nested in “Jumping Monkey Hill” serves this function. In *Americanah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* there exists a form of continuity in space and time in the events related in the embedded narratives and embedding narratives.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the untitled story Ujunwa writes has nothing to do with the primary narrative in terms of time and space. Adichie use this story to exemplify the mistaken perceptions of Africans and issues that affect them by foreigners. In the primary narrative Isabel a British assumes that only royal blood could explain the good looks of African people, Edward believes that homosexual weren’t reflective of Africa and women are never victims of sexual exploitation in crude ways. Edward has a warped idea of what the “real Africa” is and insists that his perception of Africa is correct. The story Ujunwa writes and reads unbeknownst to her audience is a true story of her experiences and so when Edward comments that; “The whole thing is implausible,”…This is agenda writing, it isn’t a story of real people.(113)” She responds: “A real story of real people? …The only thing I didn’t add in the story is that after I
left my co-worker and walked out of the alhaji’s house I got into the Jeep and insisted that the driver take me home because I knew it was the last time I would be riding it (113)

The revelation that the embedded story is a true story serves to show that Edward’s (foreigners) perceptions about Africa are sometimes so wrong. It gives an analogy of similarity by showing that the comments Edward had been making about the unrealistic nature of the other participants African stories was wrong.

**Actional Function**

The actional function occurs when the very telling of the embedded narrative progresses the plot. This function borrows from Genette’s third type of function expounded in *Narrative Discourse* where such an embedded narrative: “Involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content- a function of distraction, for example and/ or of obstruction (233)”.

The embeddings in the selected texts do not fit this definition completely because they are not completely independent of the diegesis and have no function of obstruction or distraction. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the attendees of the African writers’ workshop are expected to produce one story for possible publication. It therefore follows that Ujunwa the protagonist of the story writes a story which she is required to read to the other attendees.

The short story written by Ujunwa serves as a plot device employed by Adichie to advance the plot in this story. Once Ujunwa reads the story the reactions of the other participants and those of Edward form the rising action. One of the key conflicts of the story is the fixed perceptions of Africa by foreigners. The embedded narrative also makes possible the denouement of the story.
The final outcome of the events is the story is directly linked to the story Chioma writes because it is at this point that she reveals that she is the protagonist in the story that she writes. This revelation then proves Edward wrong in referring to her story as implausible.

In *Americanah* there are other characters from the primary text who are involved with the blogs either directly or indirectly. Ranyinudo for example is upset that Ifemelu had written about her in one of the blog posts. Ifemelu had posted a blog about “the expensive lifestyles of some young women in Lagos”. Ranyinudo calls Ifemelu and says “It is obviously me! Look at this! Ranyinudo paused and then began to read aloud” (422). This post was then taken down by Ifemelu.

Paula like Ranyinudo also reads a blog post to her friends. She also requires her students to read Ifemelu’s blog. It is noted that Obinze read the whole archive of Ifemelu’s blog posts, his reaction to blogs is also accounted for. Some of the experiences Ifemelu has and the observations about life and the other characters form a significant part of the blog.

Blaine contributed to the blog indirectly by influencing Ifemelu through his comments. He reminded Ifemelu what he thought was her role and what the purpose of the blog should have been “Remember people are not reading you as entertainment; they’re reading you as cultural commentary. That's real responsibility. There are kids writing college essays about your blog” (312). To the extent that the other characters make a contribution to this blog gives it an actional function.
The actional function applies to *Half of a Yellow Sun* on a very small degree because as much as the reader knows that Ugwu is writing a book; the narratives he writes do not contribute to the progression of the plot. The embedded narrative in this novel serves an explicative function but could easily stand on its own. This is emphasized by the haphazard positioning of the embeddings and the lack of introduction to them by the primary text. Compared to *Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill”; there is very little interaction of the other characters with this text.

**Aesthetic Function**

Aesthetics in literature refers to the investigation of the nature and perception of beauty in a piece of literary work. Peter Lamarque in “Aesthetics and Literature: A problematic Relation?” argues that “Aesthetic characterisations have implication for how the work appears, what impact it has, what is salient in it and what merits aesthetic attention” (6). The use of embedded narratives is one of the aesthetic choices Adichie makes to creatively present her work.

The embedded narratives in Adichie’s work positively affect the presentation of the works to the reader. The external appearance reveals breaks, with an indented bolded typeface in *Americanah*. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the excerpts of “The Book” are numbered and are in bold letter title. The font of “The Book” is different from that of the primary text. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the font used to present the embedded short story is similar to that of the primary text but in smaller size and indented.

In the works selected the embedded narratives provide obstruction in the continuity of the whole. This obstruction affords the narration with more ups and downs. The continuity of the primary
narration is momentarily suspended and a heightened suspense is created. In her longer forms the embedded narratives break the monotony of reading the primary narrative by offering a shift in the reader’s thought process.

In a number of instances the embedded narratives in *Half of a Yellow Sun* help us to break from the heavy matter of the war. In chapter twelve the reader is presented with the narration of the horrendous killings at the airport which are witnessed by Richard. He witnesses Nnaemeka’s “chest blow open” (153) and the soldiers line up Igbo people and shoot them. At the end of the chapter Richard lowers his head to the sink and begins to cry. Immediately after this scene the third excerpt of “The Book” is inserted just before the next chapter. This excerpt shifts the reader’s attention from the dreadful events of the airport killings to the narration of the independence of Nigeria. This excerpt also explains the state of the country at independence and suggests that “nothing had been done about the clamour of minority groups” (155). Apart from giving background information relating to the Biafran war, it offers a relief from the horrific details of the killings.

The same relief is offered in chapter eighteen which details the air raids that killed people and razed houses. The reader is moved by the effect of the raids on both the victims and survivors. The excerpt provides an obstruction by talking about the state of the economy of Nigeria. It also focuses on the 1966 massacres and the effect on the Biafrans. In chapter thirty one of *Americanah* the tension raised by a heated discussion on race and relationships at a dinner party is cooled off by the insertion of a blog that discusses hair as a race metaphor: “Imagine if Michelle Obama got tired of all the heat and decided to go natural and
appeared on TV with lots of woolly hair, or tight spirally curls...She would totally rock but poor Obama would certainly lose the independent vote, even the undecided Democrat vote (297)”.

The tone of the blog is that of discussing race with a light touch and is peppered with humour. The reader is expected to get relief from the humour contained in the blog. Through the description of Michelle Obama’s hair as woolly and the effect of that on his election results, the heavy matter of race is discussed albeit in a humorous way.

The embedded narratives help to break the monotony of the primary narratives. In *Americanah* which spans four hundred and seventy seven pages; the blogs give the reader a much needed break from the monotony. The blogs give the readers fresh perspectives offered by Ifemelu and her blog followers. Unlike *Half of a Yellow Sun* where the embeddings are always located at the end of chapter, the blogs in *Americanah* appear both within the chapter and sometimes at the end of the chapter. The embedding in “Jumping Monkey Hill” appears at different points in the short story.

The embedded narratives help to create suspense in the novels and short story. Since the reader has to wait for the reading of the embedded narrative to pass, the experience of suspense is lengthened. Any questions raised in the reader’s mind have to be held in suspense till the embedded narrative is read for a possible resolution. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the abrupt presentation of the first excerpt of “The Book” in itself creates suspense. The reader has no idea who the author of “The Book” is and there is no introduction to the book. The reader wonders
what the book is about, who the author is and how long it will be. Adichie creates an urge within
the readers to continue engaging with the novel.

In *Americanah* an instance of suspense is seen when a blog follows this statement- “When
months later, Ifemelu had the fight with Blaine, she wondered if Shan had fuelled this anger, an
anger she never fully understood” (337). While the reader is still wondering how and why the
break up will take place, Adichie inserts the blog: Is Obama Anything but Black? The blog is
totally unrelated to the preceding passages and thus suspense is created.

In the short story the embedded story written by Ujunwa serves as a break between different
parts of the story. The embedded story appears immediately after breakfast following that
excerpt it is dinner time then comes bed time; the next excerpt appears after breakfast the next
day. This pattern continues dividing the primary story into various time frames. The embedded
narrative also creates suspense in both the primary narrative and embedded narrative. Since the
two stories obstruct each other, the reader is held in suspense as he or she awaits the next part.

The embedded narratives also slow down the tempo of the narrative. The reader is forced to slow
down in order to fully comprehend the importance of a new embedding. This ensures that the
reader understands its meaning and relates it to the structure of the story or novels’ total
meaning. One of the concepts of Formalism is defamiliarization which Victor Shklovsky argues
makes objects; “unfamiliar to makes forms difficult, to increase difficulty and length of
perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic in itself and must be prolonged (16).
Borrowing from this concept this study views the use of embedded narratives as one way of
lengthening perception. The embeddings force the reader to slow down and effect a more strenuous but rewarding engagement with the text.

The embedded narratives also serve to help effectively introduce new plot lines; when Ifemelu returns to Nigeria she transitions into a home that is different from what it was thirteen years back. *Americanah* captures an aspect of the returnee narrative through a post in the blog: “The small Redemptions of Lagos”. The piece about the Nigerpolitan Club describes the arrogance of Nigerian returnees who gather on a weekly basis to moan the disparities between Lagos and the cities they come from. Ifemelu uses this post to ridicule the air of pretentiousness that surrounds them and encourages the returnees to accept the way of life back home. This post underscores the definition of an “Americanah” presented earlier in the novel, “They roared with laughter at that word “Americanah”...and at the thought of Bisi...who had come from a short trip to America with odd affectations, pretending she no longer understood Yoruba, adding a slurred r to every word she spoke” (65).

Adichie uses the embedded narratives to enhance the reader’s understanding of the primary narratives while providing her readers an experience of combinational delight unique to the reading of stories within stories.

**Advancing the Oral Storytelling Tradition**

Obiechina observes in “Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel” that “the oral tradition impulse is strong in the modern African novel, which embodies this experience especially because the writers themselves are products of both oral traditions and literate education” (199). Roger Kurtz
describes the third generation of writers; a categorization in which Adichie belongs as “labouring under an obvious but understandable anxiety of influence as the giants of Nigerian literature who preceded them cast long shadows” (25). Heather Hewett observes in “Coming of Age: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and The Voice of the Third Generation.” that “Adichie like her peers is directly engaged with the Nigerian literary canon and is furthermore making a case for her inclusion in it” (78).

Embedded narratives were common in oral storytelling in independent traditions in parts of Africa. They are also used as a bridge between oral and written narrative. Herman argues that embedded narratives describe the historical consciousness of the present. There is a link with the past and a relaying of knowledge between two or more minds. *Half of a Yellow Sun* exemplifies this scenario. The embedded narrative found in “The Book” has a relationship of mediation. Adichie uses this embedding to narrate Nigeria’s history linking past events to the prevailing circumstances in her fiction.

Adichie is conscious of her position and role as an African writer and demonstrates this by borrowing from the rich reserves of traditional oral storytelling techniques. Narrative embedding is linked with the oral storytelling tradition. The first narrative level functions in a similar way to a storyteller’s role. The embedded narrative is an artistic device that enhances the performance of narrating. Abiola Irele argues that the interplay between orality and literacy is:

... not merely in a purely linguistic framework, as in the early phase of Africanist Studies, but also from a literary and artistic perspective. At the same time the
dominance of orality in the cultural environment of African expression seemed to offer possibilities for validating the endeavour to state the relevance of orality not only to a general understanding of the processes involved in human communication but also, and in particular, to formulate an all-encompassing idea of imaginative expression, one that would point toward a universal concept of literature. (24)

This statement points to the benefits of creating a situation where oral culture is assimilated and reorganized in written fiction. First it enhances artistry in a piece of work. Secondly it aids in stimulating the process of understanding a text. Thirdly as Obiechina notes “as a means of giving maximum authenticity to the writing...writers look to their indigenous poetics to create works that draw upon their living oral traditions to enrich forms, techniques and styles through literate education” (199).

“Jumping Monkey Hill” has in its first narrative level an oral story telling situation. The writers congregate at Jumping Monkey Hill to write and share their stories. This resembles the traditional fireside telling of stories in parts of Africa. The reading of the stories aloud by the characters’ enacts the performance aspect of narrating. In Americanah some of the characters like Paula and Ranyinudo are shown to read the blog posts aloud thus enacting a performance. Olanna in Half of a Yellow Sun narrates her train experience to Ugwu. He then records this narration in his prologue.
Creation of Multi-vocality

Bakhtin argues that the strength of a novel stems from the co-existence of and the conflict between the different types of speech: the speech of characters, the speech of the narrators and the speech of the author. This study approaches the Bakhtinian idea from the perspective that the vocal multiplicity is a narrative strategy that forces the reader to attend to the multi voiced potential of the text and interpret it. The embedded narratives create the infusion of a distinct quality of heterologlossia in the narrative.

The embedded narratives permit the author to create a “voice” for his narration (for example if he or she wants to use any special language effects) a voice which can be of a more closely involved narrator. This voice enables the reader to understand the effects of the action since they are immediate and clear. This second narrator or third narrator as the case may require can be made as naïve or as sophisticated as best serves the author’s purposes. This narrator may be faintly or distinctly separated from the author himself.

Aghogho Akpome in “Focalisation and Polyvocality in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun” asserts that “the generic diversity of “The Book’s” different segments – it incorporates verse, various prose forms, and journalist reportage- may be read as one way in which Adichie interrogates notions of narrative form and explores the different literary forms through which postcolonial rehistoricisation may be represented” (32). Following Akpome’s argument I add that those genres also represent the different voices or languages that give various meanings, various expressions and converse with each other.
Plais in “The Danger of a Single Story in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* argues that the arrangement of the embedded narratives in the sequence in which they are arranged is “a way to spread and reinforce the perspective” (54) she continues to argue that “unlike the focalised perspectives the omniscient extradiegetic narrator may offer a de-personalised point of view to counterbalance or reinforce the main characters perspectives” (54). This gives the reader another opinion, through another voice.

Umelo Ojinmah in “No Humanity in War: Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” contends that the embedded narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is where Adichie’s real voice and opinion emerges. (10). Jane Bryce in “Half and Half Children: Third generation Women Writers and the New Nigerian Novel” argues that the embedding of the “The World Was Silent When We Died” is “a device that allows Adichie to gracefully relinquish her position as a narrative authority in favour of a spokesman for the voiceless, which she does not claim to be” (62) .Both of these critics point to the double voiced nature of the discourse in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Through Adichie’s double voiced discourse her intentions are expressed albeit in a refracted way. The embedded narrative serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions, the express intention of the character speaking through his or her writing and the refracted intention of the author. The effect is that when the author’s words are introduced into the characters speech, they assume a new meaning and interpretation.

The writing of ‘The Book’ by Ugwu presents a voice which appeals to the reader to interpret his voice as the voice of the voiceless. This is necessitated by his position as a child narrator and as a houseboy one of the lowest cadres of employment. Richard Churchill who comes up with the
title “The World Was Silent When We Died” has an academic background, is an expatriate fascinated by the Igbo culture and history. His advantages over Ugwu notwithstanding he realizes the war story is not his story to tell. If he told the story the interpretation would be different; it would not carry the same weight as a story told by a Biafran, conscripted into the army and with firsthand experience of the suffering the war caused.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the story that Ujunwa writes turns out to be autobiographical; it is written using auto-fiction techniques. The story is revealed as Ujunwa’s personal story at the end of the primary narrative to resolve the conflict in the primary narrative. The voices in this short story have a conversation about the idea of what constitutes real African experiences. Adichie chooses Ujunwa to write her own life story, which Edward refers to as implausible. This choice presents a voice that proves to the reader and the other voices in the story that foreign perceptions about Africa can be flawed.

In *Americanah* there are various voices and languages presented both in the primary narrative and the embedded narrative. The voices of Nigerian (village), Nigerian (town), accents of Nigerians who have just arrived in America and try to imitate the Americans, Americans and British mispronouncing African names to a Nigerian who’s lived in Britain for a while and has a British wife, to mention a few. The voice of the blogger and the respondents to the blog post add to the multiple voices in the text and the reader thus engages with the complex nature that is the human life.
In an interview with Brooke Obie of Ebony magazine, Adichie responds to the issue of using the blog as a “literary cheat” and editorializing through the blog by saying that she realized that if she editorialized in regular dialogue in the primary narrative it would not work. “I think that what I wanted to say (about race) and how I wanted to say it was in the kind of voice that would not have worked in dialogue or any other way (than through Ifemelu’s posts)” (n.p). Adichie through those confirms the Bakhtinian idea that the author orchestrates all other voices and directs the interactions of those voices. The author organizes the diversity of voices to achieve a desired end.

**Illusion of Reality**

I look at the subject of illusion of reality from the standpoint that illusion is essential to art and that art is an important resource for truth. The inclusion of an embedded narrative which can be oral or written is rationalized or motivated in a realistic way to preserve or imitate the illusion of reality. This illusion of reality consequently lends to both the embedded and embedding narrative credibility. Traditionally several devices are used by writers to achieve this goal. Examples include; gathering of characters who tell each other stories, dreams or hallucinations experienced by a character, the discovery of written manuscripts, diaries, letters and such other categories.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Adichie use the autobiographical genre as a textual disguise to stress the idea that the events in the embedded story are pure fact. This in effect counters the false perception about Africa by Edward in the primary narrative. As much as the primary narrative is
fictive the author creates a way for the reader to enter the characters world and therefore perceive this reality.

The use of the blog in *Americanah* creates the semblance of reality by Adichie’s accuracy in her simulation of how blogs work. This technique transports the reader to the blogosphere and the reader becomes part of the audience of the blog. Blogs provide centralized locations at which readers find web-based journals known as blogs and bloggers are able to find each other. Ifemelu’s blog has many followers, she edits her posts, comments and reactions of the blog are recorded in the text. She pulls down posts when she wants to and eventually she exits from that particular blog zone. She then begins another blog when she returns to Nigeria. All the events in the novel make for a believable story.

Another way Adichie achieves the illusion of reality in her fiction is by empowering the characters that author the embedded narratives. The characters involved all author from a point of experience. The experiences they have give them the authority to write the embedded narratives. The reader then believes the embedded narratives because he or she has shared the experiences with the character in the embedding narrative.

Adichie also accurately merges the information in the embedded narrative with that in the embedding narrative where required. An example in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is where Olanna sees the child’s head in the calabash on the train. Olanna then narrates this event to Kainene and Ugwu on separate occasions. Ugwu then includes this story in the prologue of “The Book”. The narration in the primary text corroborates the information in the embedded narrative.
Alongside other mediums employed in the novels to create an illusion of reality, the embedded narratives contribute effectively to this literary technique. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* we encounter letters, radio broadcasts, poems, songs newspaper articles and excerpts from a published book. In *Americanah* some of the other devices employed include emails between Ifemelu and Obinze and text messages from mobile phones.

*Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” address factual issues: war, race and the perceptions of foreigners about Africa. Since the issues discussed are real issues the author underscores their importance by employing a technique that enhances the perception by the reader that the issues are real.

**Functions of Embedded Narratives for the Characters**

Irene de Jong in “Narratological Theory on Narrators, Narratees, and Narrative” states that embedded narrative may have a function to the characters. She says “In the case of an embedded narrative told by a character it may also be relevant to distinguish between the function it has for secondary narratees, the characters who are listening and for the primary narratees”(10). This points to the usefulness of the embeddings for the characters; the characters may have been propelled or motivated by something to author the embedded narratives.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* Adichie attempts to capture the effects of the postcolonial and civil war trauma. The characters in the novel live through traumatic experiences which they struggle with. The characters in the novel experiences both personal and collective trauma. Focusing on Ugwu the author of the embedded narrative, I note that his trauma is of a different kind because he
plays the role of the perpetrator. When he is conscripted he rapes a girl at the prodding of his fellow soldiers. This action haunts him and traumatizes him. Frances White in her review of the book writes that “Ugwu takes up writing as a way of dealing with his bewildering and disturbing experiences” (n.p). Doseline Kiguru (2011) examines the role of the child figure in telling narratives based on Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow sun*. She notes that the book Ugwu writes is a reflection of the violence that defined the Biafra society and is an effort to deal with the trauma caused by the violence and destruction (68).

Maria Pliaias in “The Danger of a Single Story in Chimamanda N. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” argues that “...Ugwu is atoned and healed through the process of writing and that the healing process entails a continuous engagement with the memory of the war” (64). As the scars of the war reminded Ugwu of his role as a perpetrator he tried to unburden the trauma of those episodes. “He would never be able to depict the bleakness of bombing hungry people. But he tried, and the more he wrote, the less he dreamed” (398).

The writing process is therapeutic not only to Ugwu but to Olanna and Richard as well. Adichie shows how narration may have a therapeutic effect not only to Ugwu but to her as part of the second generation Biafrans. Adichie is bruised by the war, having lost her grandfathers in it. On reasons why she wrote the book she says “my father has tears in his eyes when he speaks of losing his father and my mother still cannot speak at length about losing her father in a refugee camp”.(Adichie, “The Story Behind the Book”). Olanna narrates the train episode to Ugwu and comes to a realization that her story is important when she notes Ugwu’s keenness:
Ugwu was writing as she spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest suddenly made her story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of, and so she told him all she remembered about the train full of people who had cried and shouted and urinated on themselves. (410)

Richard witnessed a customs officer get shot at the airport, just because he was an Igbo. The soldiers went on to kill dozens more of Igbo people at the airport. These scenes flash through Richard’s mind over and over again to the point that he wishes “he would lose his mind or that his memory would suppress itself” (165). Richard desires to express his trauma through writing but he cannot get himself to do it. “The echo of unreality weighed each word down; he clearly remembered what had happened at that airport but to write about it, he would have to re-imagine it, and he was not sure if he could”(168).

Through these characters Adichie makes a point about the importance of narration and writing for the assimilation of individual and communal past. Adichie seems to feel that narration has the ability to bring on a therapeutic effect on the speaker or writer.

The blog set up by Ifemelu serves an important function in her life. As she pens down her thoughts and feelings on race, we see a metamorphosis in her. From the young lady who was unsure of herself when she arrived in America to a confident lady poised to return to Nigeria. Ifemelu uses the blog as means to understanding race and its complexities but also protecting herself from being swayed into accepting the falsehoods surrounding the race issue in America. The blog offered a catharsis to Ifemelu purging the pressures of immigrant life especially the
racism. The blog gave Ifemelu opportunity to evaluate her life, finally she senses the emptiness, the following excerpt explains:

Readers frightened and exhilarated her…made Ifemelu, nervous eager to be fresh and to impress, so that she began, over time to feel like a vulture hacking into the carcasses of people’s stories for something she could use. Sometimes making fragile links to race. Sometimes not believing herself. The more she wrote, the less sure she became. Each post scraped off yet one more scale of self until she felt naked and false (5).

Prior to the books opening scene, Ifemelu had written her final post and closed the blog. Ifemelu feared she had lost touch with part of herself and makes a decision to return home. Ifemelu feels that her personality is shaped by the blog and that she is losing her core to the blog. This revelation helps her to move to the next phase of her life.

The blog attracts comments from people affected by the issues Ifemelu blogs about. The blog gives them opportunity to vent out or to find solace from the knowledge that their experiences are not uncommon. When Ifemelu blogs about her experience with depression, a Congolese woman posts a long comment in response about a similar experience she had (158). Through the blogs Ifemelu opens up a space for people to talk about issues that disturb them but have
nowhere to air them. A comment on the blog “The Small Redemptions of Lagos” said “Thank God somebody is finally talking about this” (421). We therefore note that the embedded narratives serve different functions for different characters including those who author them.

**Development of Themes through Embedded Narratives**

Adichie’s fictional works address a myriad of themes among them love, violence, immigration, race, identity, sexual exploitation of women, sexuality, war and its effects. This research focuses on the themes expounded by the embedded narratives with an aim of evaluating the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique. Adichie uses the embedded narrative as a foregrounding strategy.

The term foregrounding has its origin with Czech theorist Jan Mukarovsky and other formalist critics who emphasize that stylistic features are characteristics of literary texts. The NTC’s dictionary of literary terms defines foregrounding as “calling attention to something—a rhythm, a character, an idea, a viewpoint by placing it in the foreground against a background” (87). Leech and Short in *Style in Fiction* have argued that “in order to make sure that the point is put across; the novelist tends to say the same thing in a number of different ways and at different levels of structure” (207). They add that “incident and mode of description combine to embody one of the major themes of the novel”. Adichie uses the embedded narratives to call attention to her major thematic concerns, the embedded narrative being in the foreground against the background of the embedding narrative.
The silence of the world is a major philosophical concern of Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Adichie questions how societies remain indifferent to others in times of war or genocide. The choice of the title of the embedded narrative, “The World Was Silent When We Died” develops a sense of curiosity within the reader to find out; who was silent? Why were they silent? This title is presented in bold text in all the eight excerpts within the book. It is highlighted in this manner to gnaw at the reader’s conscience. The reader cannot miss it and therefore is forced to think about it.

In the first excerpt the mention of the German women who fled Hamburg with charred bodies of their children stuffed in suitcases, the Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies alongside that of the woman Olanna met in a train with a dead baby’s head in a calabash (82), reminds the reader that there have been other massacres across the globe. This introduces the reader to the idea of death in Biafran war and though Ugwu is careful not to draw parallels of the Biafran war to the German or Rwandan killings, it helps us to visualize and appreciate the magnitude of the Biafran war. This then validates the questioning of the apathy expressed by the world.

It is noteworthy that the poem “Were You Silent When We Died” in excerpt seven of “The Book” (375) appears side by side with the discussion between Richard and the two American journalists about the American policy and the silence of America despite their knowledge that thousands of Biafrans were dying. On this same page the reader learns how the title “The World Was Silent We Died” comes to Richard. Richard is angry at the American journalists for their apathy towards Biafra. “He felt incredibly alone in their presence” (374) they were returning
back to America to the comfort of their homes after collecting stories and photographs from Biafra. This represents how the world left Biafra to deal with its problems.

Adichie uses the embedded narrative to emphasize concerns about the effect of the war. She does this by linking the content of the embedded narrative to the content in the embedding narrative through repetition. The poem in excerpt seven of “The Book” paints a picture of the magnitude of the starvation:

> Imagine children with arms like toothpicks
>
> With football for bellies and skin stretched thin
>
> It was Kwashiorkor – difficult word
>
> A word that was not quite ugly enough, a sin. (375)

This second stanza is replayed in the narration in the embedding narrative. “The nun cradled the smallest, a shrivelled doll with stick legs and a pregnant belly” (374). Through the use of rich metaphors and similes, she evokes the sympathy of the reader. The “arms like toothpicks” and “a shrivelled doll with stick legs” refer to the same situation and so does “with football for bellies” and “a pregnant belly”:

> Naked children, as if the man
>
> Would not take photos and then leave, alone. (375)
These last two lines of the same poem re-present a scene on an earlier page where the children clamoured around the American photographer begging for more sweets “Once he said, “That’s a lovely smile!” and after he left them the children went back to roasting rats” (370). The laughter referred to in the poem symbolizes the hope the children had; that some form of salvation would come from the American man and by extension the world. This hope is dashed when the photographer leaves and they return to roasting rats.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the story Ujunwa writes expounds the theme on sexual exploitation of women. Chioma the protagonist in the embedded narrative is sexually exploited by a male interviewer who after saying he will hire her “walks across and stands behind her and reaches over to squeeze her breasts” (100). Ujunwa experiences some subtle form of exploitation from Edward, the workshop organizer. When she offers Edward a seat he responds by saying “I’d rather like you to lie down for me” (106). Edward also tells the Senegalese lady that he had dreamt of her naked navel. The repetition of the theme in both diegetic levels is used by Adichie for emphasis and calls the attention of the reader to that theme. This ensures that the reader stops and attends to that theme.

The major theme developed by the blog in *Americanah* is race. The question of race has been discussed over many decades. Yet it remains a relevant discussion even now. *Americanah* published in 2013 and whose setting captures the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, correctly assesses that racism still exists. The novel starts on a train journey to Trenton where Ifemelu goes to braid her hair. On the train she remembers an incident on a plane when she had to explain what she meant by “lifestyle blog” to a man who sat next to her. This man then asks
“Ever write about adoption?” Nobody wants black babies in this country and I don’t mean biracial, I mean black. Even black families don’t want them” (4). Ifemelu blogs about this man and this post receives the highest comments for a month. The positioning of this conversation in the very first chapter is to make the reader understand that this book is about race and the blog is a space for discussing race.

The rejection of black babies plays out in Dike’s life when later in the story he attempts to commit suicide. Dike experiences racism at his tender age; because he is black he is the first suspect when the school computers are hacked. The pastor at his church says hello to all the other kids but to Dike she says “What’s up bro?” (349), this makes him feel different and he says, “I feel like I have vegetables instead of ears, like large broccoli sticking out of my head” (349). Dike feels unwanted to the extent that he nearly takes his life.

The concept of race first occurs to Ifemelu when she arrives in the United States “I come from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America” (290). The covert and overt racisms she witnesses and experiences are what make her black. Ifemelu is angered at the silence, the things “unsaid and unfinished” (296) around the race issue. Ifemelu begins longing for other listeners and she longed to hear the stories of others. “How many other people had become black in America?” (296).

At the encouragement of her friend Wambui she sets up a blog. The blog is informed by her daily encounters with racism. These encounters form the titles of her posts and make up the
content of her discussion. The blog separates the race issue from the other issues in the novel. The blog is a technique used by the writer to foreground the race issues.

The blog effectively develops the theme of race in *Americanah* because of its unique nature. The nature of the blog embedded in *Americanah* borrows heavily from the real medium that the blog is. Ruth Aylett and Sandy Louchart in “Towards A Narrative Theory of Virtual Reality” argue that a story is not told or shown in the same way according to the medium in which it is displayed, nor is its content or intensity the same” (1). The blog in the novel does not address the issue of race in the same way the embedding narrative does. The blog by its nature allows for multiple comments on the issues posted, it also allows the blogger to edit or withdraw posts accordingly. Blogs also serve a wider reach because they can be re-posted onto many other sites.

The blog in *Americanah* supports the contention by Cornel West that the race question is urgent. “For me the race question is an urgent question of power and morality; for others, it is an everyday matter of life and death” (Morrison, 61). What better way to address an urgent issue than by putting it on a medium that delivers blog posts in real time? Through the use of the blog Adichie shows the need to view the race issue as one that requires urgent attention. Adichie chooses the blog over other forms because of the advantage it offers in terms of the immediacy in communicating and ability to reach a wide audience.

The existence of racism brings up the question of identity. The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy defines one’s personal identity as “what makes one the person one is” (n.p). Identity reflects on who we are and how others perceive us. Identity is a language and culture rooted
process that includes our position in the world and others thoughts about who we are as well as who they are.

Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* discusses the complexity of the concept of “identity”. Gilroy argues that historians should reconsider how they document the past “I want to develop the suggestion that cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single complex unit of analysis in their discussion of the modern world…and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective”(15). This suggests that black is black and there are no levels of blackness. It is assumptions such as these that Adichie problematizes as she explores the various categories of identities in *Americanah*.

There are several diasporas in different chronotypes as a result of creolization being a continuous process. Globalization has made it more complicated such that within the diasporic community there are various categories of identities. In the blog post “Understanding America for the Non-American Black: American Tribalism” (184). The different kinds of black are spelt out. Ifemelu talks about the ladder of racial hierarchy in America. “White is on top, specifically White Anglo Saxon Protestant (alluding to the possibility of another type of white). American Black is always on the bottom and what’s in the middle depends on time and place.” She includes an example about how in the “ladder of races Jewish is white but also some rungs below white”.

In another blog post “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: In America You Are Black, Baby”(220), Ifemelu addresses the idea of the Non American Blacks denying that they are black
because they are from other countries where the issue of blackness does not arise. This calls attention to the creation of a racial identity “black” that confronts immigrants to America. She also looks at the generalizations and assumptions surrounding black people. Black people are treated as though they have no individual identity. If a crime is committed by a black person all other black people are stopped for fitting the profile. Black people are made to feel that they have to compensate for other black people’s behaviour by being apologetic to the whites, or always being on guard because any offensive behaviour by one black will mean the other blacks get to pay for it. This post is written in a scornful tone, scorning at the ridiculous ideas that whites have about blacks.

Chinua Achebe argued that the role of the African writer included a responsibility to educate his or her readers. In the essay “The Novelist as Teacher” in a collection of essay *Hopes and Impediments* he states “…The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and re-generation that must be done. In fact he should march right in front…” (30) He adds that the African writer is more concerned with the importance of combating “our acceptance of …racial inferiority” (29) by confronting the “disaster brought upon the African psyche in the period of subjection to alien races” (29).

Adichie seems to have heeded the call by Achebe to march right in front and re-educate especially in the area of ownership and authorship of the African story. Adichie belongs to a group of writers described as the third generation of modern Nigerian Literature. Roger Kurtz in “The Intertextual Imagination in Purple Hibiscus” has outlined the generations as follows:
The first generation consists of writers like Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Flora Nwapa and others. The second generation includes names such as Femi Osofisan, Buchi Emecheta and Tanure Ojaide. The third generation comprises of those who were born and educated in 1960 and whose writings began to appear in the mid 1980’s. They include Ben Okri, Helen Oyeyemi, Helen Habila, Seffie Atta, Chimamanda Adichie and others. (24)

Adichie and her peers have found a platform to speak from through their writing. They are able to experiment with new avenues of expressing and formulating the African experience. Through the texts studied in this research Adichie has defined the role of the African writer and then shown who should be telling the African Story. She has exemplified this by her choice of characters and the embedded narratives authored by them.

Adichie underscores the glaring need for contextualized reading of African literature and the telling of authentic African stories. In her address “The Danger of a Single Story” Adichie explains how class and culture based prejudices is often fostered by individuals adherence to hegemonic narratives of societies and histories. Adichie argues that “The single story creates stereotypes and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (7).

Adichie highlights the fundamental function of the writer, like those of storytellers in traditional African communities. Preceding writers such as Rene Wellek (238-9), Wole Soyinka (21), Chinua Achebe (7-8) and Chukwudi Maduka (11) have on various occasions agreed that the
African writer is the conscience of the society and serves as a historian, preserving its past; critic, analyzing its current state and shepherd, helping to usher it towards its future.

*Half of a Yellow Sun* addresses the question of the authorship and ownership of history. Adichie juxtaposes the characters Ugwu and Richard Churchill. The two characters represent opposite perspectives in life. Ugwu is from a small village and comes to work as a houseboy for Odenigbo in Nsuka. Richard is a British man who comes to study Igbo-Ugwu art. Through the two who are both authors in the novel Adichie points to us who the African story belongs to and who should tell it. Ugwu writes “The Book” which is a historical account from the time period of the British colonizer to the Nigeria-Biafra war. For a long time the colonizer has had an upper hand and influence about the African continent and its history.

Richard is fascinated by Igbo Ugwu art and his novel titles borrow from the Igbo past and the culture: “The Basket of hands” and “In the Time of Roped Pots”. Richard learns Igbo and gets further enmeshed into the Igbo culture. He begins considering himself a Biafran. He says “We are still extracting from some fields we control in Egbema …We move the crude to our refineries at night…” “You keep saying we” the Redhead said. (372) Eventually Richard realizes “The war story isn’t my story to tell, really”, something that Ugwu had always known: Ugwu nodded. He had never thought that it was” (425).

This exclusion of Richard from the Biafran experience is seen earlier when Richard sense’s it from Madu’s tone: “We are running our cars with a mix of kerosene and oil or we’ve perfected the flying Ogbunigwe or we’ve made an armoured car from scrap. His we was edged with
exclusion. The deliberate emphasis, the deepened voice, meant that Richard was not part of we; a
visitor could not take the liberties of homeowners” (304).

The subject of Richard’s exclusion is repeated for emphasis when Madu tells Richard” the truth
is this is not your war, this is not your cause” (305). When Richard tells Kainene how the book
title “The World Was Silent When We Died” came to him “she arched her eyebrows “We”? The
world was silent when we died? (374). The word we is italicized a number of times to make the
reader sense the exclusivity that surrounds the right to tell the Biafran story.

It is remarkable that the title of the book Ugwu writes originates from the words of a Nigerian.
As much as Richard picks it up and hands it over to Ugwu. Colonel Madu tells Richard “The
world has to know the truth about what is happening, because they simply cannot remain silent
when we die” (305). At this juncture Madu was requesting Richard to write for the Propaganda
Directorate as a way of him contributing to the war effort. Adichie makes an important statement
that the book title and the book content had to be owned by Biafrans. They had the exclusive
right to tell their true story.

An example of the falsehoods that result from a single story are shown in Half of a Yellow Sun
where the American journalist views the belief of the woman with one arm; that Biafra would
win , a result of the Biafran propaganda machine. Richard likened his thoughts to “ President
Nixon’s’ fact finders from Washington or Prime Minister Wilson’s commission members from
London who arrived with their firm protein tables and their firmer conclusions: that Nigeria was
not bombing civilians, that the starvation was over flogged, that all was well as it should be in
the war” (371). While people died of starvation or air raids the fact finders twisted the story and
said Biafra’s suffering was exaggerated. In short they lied about the real situation on the ground.
Just like Richard desires to write a book after the war telling “a narrative of Biafra’s difficult
victory, an indictment of the world” (374); Adichie through the embedded narrative reproaches
the world for its silence during the Biafran war that led to the loss of thousands of lives. The
sixth excerpt of “The Book” (258) sheds light on this silence.

In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the characterization and the interactions presented at the writers
workshop portrays the situation Adichie denounces in the TED Talk “The Danger of The Single
Story”. Isabel, the wife of the workshop organizer claims that the exquisite bone structure
Ujunwa has must be from Nigerian royal stock. Edward dismisses most of the writers’ stories in
the workshop as un-African or implausible. Adichie points to the fact that the erroneous foreign
perceptions about Africa will only be countered when Africans tell their own stories.

This is presented to the reader when Ujunwa reveals that the story she writes is based on a
personal experience. When Edward refers to her story as “agenda writing” and “implausible”,
convinced that it was not a “real story of real people” (114); Ujunwa responds when she sees the
victory in his eyes as he says those words. She stands up and begins laughing; this act of
standing up symbolizes Adichie’s call to writers to be bold and courageous, to stand up for the
truth, to rise up and tell their truth. The laughter is a mockery of the lies and false perceptions
that the west perceives as truth. Ujunwa asks “A real story of real people”? She goes on to reveal
that this was an autobiographical account. Ujunwa the African writer triumphs, as her story turns out to be real.

In *Americanah* we learn very early in the novel about the writer’s role and voice. Sapphic Derrida, one of the most frequent posters writes of Ifemelu “you’ve used your irreverent, hectoring, funny and thought provoking voice to create a space for real conversations about an important subject”(5). This statement carries the description of who an African writer should be; irreverent meaning fearless and bold, thought provoking voice meaning one who stimulates the readers’ interests and creating spaces for real conversation about an important subject.

The genesis of the blog stems from a desire by Ifemelu to share her stories with a larger audience and longing to hear other people’s stories. Ifemelu had a desire to tackle things “unsaid and unfinished” (295). Ifemelu wonders “How many other people had become black in America? How many had felt as though their world was wrapped in gauze” (296). Ifemelu then creates a space where people can address the issues surrounding the race discussion.

The choice of the blog, a medium new and unfamiliar to Ifemelu can be interpreted as a way writers should push boundaries through use of new forms. Like Adichie, Ifemelu experiments by using the blog a medium new to her to voice her concerns; while Adichie embeds the blog in her novel. Adichie seems to say that writers should not shy away from using different mediums to communicate important concerns. Adichie’s creation of Ifemelu as a successful blogger attests to this.
The specific authorship of the blog is spelt out in the title of the blog: “Raceteenth or Curious Observations by a Non-American Black on the Subject of Blackness in America”. This is a pointer on the importance of who the author is. The statement that observations are made by a Non-American Black separates this particular voice from the many other voices that may have an interest in this discussion. It shows that being a Non American black qualifies Ifemelu to talk about blackness.

Like in “Jumping Monkey Hill”, Americanah is also concerned about telling the truth. The remarks “That’s a lie…It’s a lie” (290) by Ifemelu match with the question raised by Ujunwa “A real story of real people? (113), these remarks exhort writers to tell the reader about the importance of the “truth” being told by the African writer. Ifemelu is angered by the silences around the race issue and invites people to “unzip themselves” as this blog post shows:

Open thread: For All the Zipped-Up Negroes

This is for the Zipped-Up Negroes, the upwardly mobile American and Non-American Blacks who don’t talk about Life Experiences That have to Do Exclusively with Being Black. Because they want to keep everyone comfortable. Tell your story here. Unzip yourself. This is a safe space. (307)

Through the characters in the three pieces studied Adichie shows who should write the African history and the concerns that plague Africa. Her opinion resonates throughout her work but it is through the exemplification in the embedded narratives that she makes her opinion clear.
Closely linked to the issue of addressing the authorship of the African story is the attitude of silence. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” Ujunwa questions this attitude when the Senegalese says she did not need to say anything to Edward about his sexually suggestive remarks. “But why do we say nothing?” Ujunwa asked. She raised her voice and looked at the others. “Why do we always say nothing?”(112). Ujunwa goes on to give the black South African a tongue lash when he makes excuses for Edward. “Ujunwa shouted at him, “This kind of attitude is why they could kill you and herd you into townships and requires passes from you before you could walk on your own land!”(112). Ujunwa blames the attitude of silence for problems encountered by African states by using the example of apartheid in South Africa.

In the same story I read Edward’s comments about the stories written by the participants as a way of silencing them from telling their authentic stories. For example when he says that “homosexual stories weren’t reflective of Africa...This may indeed be the year 2000, but how African is it for a person to tell her family that she is homosexual?” Earlier on the Senegalese had mentioned to her colleagues that “her story was really her story, about how she had mourned her girlfriend...” (102). The Senegalese case matches that of Ujunwa where true stories are seen as implausible by foreigners because of their conditioned idea of what African life should be.

In Americanah Adichie addresses the issue of silence through Ifemelu’s uneasiness about the silences that surrounded the race question. Ifemelu had a desire to tackle things “unsaid and unfinished” (295). Ifemelu wonders “How many other people had become black in America (296)?” The silence of the world while Biafrans died is one of the major themes in Half of a Yellow Sun. This is repeated over and over again as the title of the embedded narrative “The
Book: The World Was Silent While we Died” and within various passages in the book. Adichie uses the embedded narratives to raise the question of why Africans choose silence. This helps the reader to reflect on the issue of silence and its consequences.

Ifeemulu invites both Blacks and Whites to engage in dialogue and to ask questions. This is seen in the blog “Friendly Tips for the American Non: Black How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness” (325) quoted earlier. This blog calls for objectivity in the race discussion- “American Blacks are not telling you that you are to blame...ask questions...listen”. The Blacks are encouraged to speak about the race issue and the whites are encouraged to listen and ask questions about the concerns by blacks about race.

**Limitations of the Embedded Narrative Technique**

While this study has discussed Adichie’s skill in engaging the embedded narrative technique and evaluating the effectiveness of the use of the embedded narratives. There are a few limitations in the way Adichie uses the embedded narrative strategy. These do not overwhelm the quality of her fiction but are worth pointing out.

In *Americanah* there are places where we encounter interposition which can sometimes be exasperating and disruptive. For example in the scene where Aunty Uju tells Ifemelu about her decision to leave Bartholomew and move to Willow. The omniscient narrator says “Ifemelu liked the name of the town Willow; it sounded to her like freshly squeezed new beginnings” (221). Immediately below this line is a blog post that covers close to two pages, a new chapter then
begins after this. This has the potential of creating the feeling of being left hanging at the point
the narration ends in the primary text. The reader without warning encounters a blog.

Adichie weaves full blog posts into the primary narrative. The blog posts were too many and
quite lengthy. Fewer blogs would still have communicated and achieved the desired result. The
too many blogs added unnecessary bulk to the text which may cause the reader to lose interest in
reading them and as a result miss crucial information. The monotonous use of the blogs by
Adichie makes them loose their desired impact.

Linda Alcoff in “The Problem of Speaking for Others” argues that “the practice of speaking for
others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as one who more correctly
understands the truth about another’s situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus
achieve glory and praise” (22). Adichie creates a space for people to speak for themselves about
their race issues. Though Ifemelu’s blog does not purport to speak for others it easily presents
Ifemelu as one who understands the truth about others situations. The privileging of the Non-
American black by creating that space for them to voice their concerns creates a situation where
we cannot see or hear about whites fighting racism.

Some of the blog post titles in Americanah can be read as promoting exclusionism. The
American Heritage Dictionary defines an exclusionist as one who advocates the exclusion of
another or others, as from having or exercising a right or privilege. Examples are “Understanding
America for the Non-American Blacks...” and “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks”. This
specific categorization of who is invited to read and contribute to the blogs excludes other races.
It conflicts with the author’s desire to contribute to a debate whose ultimate purpose is to solve the race issue.

The embedded narratives in *Half of Yellow Sun, Americanah* and “Jumping Monkey Hill” could disrupt the reader in the process of reading the primary narrative. There is a possibility of the reader’s attention being diverted to the embedded narrative because of its nature. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* the embeddings are presented in a bold font, while in “Jumping Monkey Hill” they appear in a smaller font. This draws attention to them and they seem to compete with the primary narrative.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the functions of the embedded narratives in the selected works of Adichie. The chapter also evaluated the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique in communicating the author’s thematic concerns. It has also pointed out the limitations observed in Adichie’s use of this strategy. The observation is that Adichie effectively uses the embedded narrative to communicate on the themes of race, identity, the subtle sexual exploitation of women, war and the question of the authorship, the ownership of the African story and the dangers of an attitude of silence. The functions identified are actional, explicative, thematic, illusion of reality, aesthetic function, advancement of traditional oral storytelling, the development of multiple voices in the texts and the functions to the characters.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

In this research I set out to examine the nature and the function of embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works. The study of the nature of the embedded narratives included looking at the forms of the narratives, the narrative levels in the selected works and the relationships between the embedded narratives and the primary text. I also explored the functions of the embedded narratives in the selected texts. This study also evaluated the effectiveness of the embedded narratives in communicating the author’s thematic concerns.

Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun shifts from conventional embedding and points to an alternative structural reading of her novel. The overlapping in Half of a Yellow Sun between the narration of the embedded narrative and the embedding narrative transgress the norms of embedding. The study reveals a limitation of the theory of narratology to the extent that it views metalepsis more of a transgression than of any merit. One of the merits of this transgression in this text is its use to connect the embedded and the embedding. The demerit is that metalepsis may cause confusion about who narrates and what they narrate.

Of the three texts studied Americanah employed the most extensive embedding. Americanah highlights how the pressure of extensive use of this literary device challenges the hierarchies in the narrative levels. Adichie creates clashes between the narrative levels; presenting a complex situation that does not amount to a structural system that would explain the relationship of the
narrative parts. This is seen where in some instances the extradiegetic narrator cuts across all possible levels of narration.

I tested the hypothesis that the embedded narratives in Adichie’s works take distinctive forms. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” a short story is inserted within the primary short story. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* a book is nested within the primary novel. In *Americanah* blog posts are embedded in the novel. I observe that the choice of those forms by the author plays a significant role in the function of the embedded narrative and in contributing to their effectiveness as tools for communicating thematic concerns. The primary texts vouch for the authenticity of the texts they embed and are presented as non-fictional texts within the fictional texts; this places them at a higher ontological level.

Apart from serving the explicative, actional and thematic function, the embedded narratives also help create vocal multiplicity in the texts, serve an aesthetic function, advance the oral storytelling technique and imitate an illusion of reality which lends the work credibility. The embedded narratives have specific functions for the characters that author them and those who either contribute to the embeddings or engage with the narrative. Ugwu’s writing is a reflection of the violence that defined the Biafran society and is an effort to deal with the trauma caused by the violence and destruction. Ifemelu uses the blog as a means of understanding race and protecting herself from the falsehoods that surround the issue of race in America.

Adichie foregrounds the core thematic issues in her works by using the embedded narrative technique. This strategy ensures that the reader attends to the issues raised. These issues are also
addressed in the primary text. The reader therefore looks at them twice thus attaining a better understanding about the concerns in question. Some of the ways Adichie effectively uses the embedded narratives to discuss her thematic concerns include the choice of the author for the narratives and the choice and meaning of the title where there is a title. In “Jumping Monkey Hill” the embedded short story is untitled. In my view this is a deliberate choice by the author for the story to represent the many African stories that are classified as implausible.

The major theme developed by the embedded narratives in all the three texts is the question of ownership of the African story. Adichie underscores the glaring need for contextualized reading of African literature and the telling of authentic African stories by Africans themselves. Other themes addressed through the embedded narratives are war and the silence of the world during the Biafran war in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, race and identity in *Americanah* and sexual exploitation in “Jumping Monkey Hill”.

As this study was limited only to extensive embedding I suggest that future studies look at the nature and function of the other embeddings in the studied texts. Examples include radio broadcasts, letters, newspaper articles, speeches, poems and songs in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In *Americanah* there are emails and phone texts. It would also be worth studying the other narrative techniques employed by Adichie to fully bring out the wealth of variety in her artistry. As the foregoing analysis has illustrated the study of the embedded narratives in Adichie’s selected works hopes to contribute to the growing interest in her oeuvre. This research has attempted to provide a narratological inquiry to the pieces studied, the significance is that it shows how the texts make meaning and how that process contributes to the interpretation of the
text. The narrative arrangement is an effectual means to communicating the author’s themes. Adichie questions notions of form and experiments with different literary forms through which she communicates her concerns.
WORKS CITED


