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<td>Supervisor: Brita Strand Rangnes</td>
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Abstract

This thesis will be a study of whether the behavioural patterns of postcolonial Nigerians are able to conform to gender roles and expectations during the Nigerian civil war as portrayed in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006). This thesis will investigate the behavioural patterns of male and female characters, the effects of gender roles and expectations on the behavioural patterns of these characters, and the transformation of these behavioural patterns, either conforming to or resisting gender roles before and during the Nigerian civil war.

Chapter two offers an overview of the theoretical background for this thesis, such as colonial and postcolonial theory, gender, femininity and masculinity, and identity. The essentiality of colonial and postcolonial theory in this thesis is grounded in the historical contextualisation of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, a novel set in postcolonial Nigeria, precisely during the Nigerian civil war. Theorists such as Frantz Fanon and Edward Said are essential to this course. The concepts of gender, femininity and masculinity provide basis for the investigation of the effects of gender roles and expectations on male and female behavioural patterns. Identity in this thesis, provide an insight to the dynamics of the individuality of the characters and the factors that define their existence.

The third chapter is mainly about the analysis of female characters in the novel. The analysis of female characters includes behavioural patterns of characters and how these behavioural patterns conform and/or contradict the gender roles and expectations of the postcolonial Nigerian woman. This chapter also investigates the modifications and alterations that occur in the behavioural patterns of these female characters in the advent of political and sociocultural revolution, to discover if these altered or unaltered behavioural patterns also conform to, or contradict the gender roles and expectations of the postcolonial Nigerian woman.

In the fourth chapter, the analysis of male characters is carried out. The behavioural patterns of male characters and the influence of gender expectations on these patterns are discussed. Traces of femininity and masculinity are examined in the characters and their compliance or noncompliance with gender expectations are investigated. This chapter also investigates the modifications and alterations that occur in the behavioural patterns of these male characters in the advent of political and sociocultural revolution, to discover if these
altered or unaltered behavioural patterns also conform to, or contradict the gender roles and expectations of the postcolonial Nigerian man.

The results of the interpretation and discussion in this thesis show that *Half of a Yellow Sun* depicts changing and unstable gender roles and expectations, and nonconformity of behavioural patterns, especially from characters who greatly conformed to these gender expectations before the Nigerian civil war. This thesis also observes that gender roles do not exist in isolation but are actualised in specific contexts, and that both male and female can express traditional feminine and masculine roles. Finally, this thesis argues for a focus on individuality, the uniqueness of the postcolonial Nigeria, rather than his/her sex.
Acknowledgment

First and foremost, I would like to thank God almighty, especially for the grace to complete this thesis at a point when I thought I was losing my mind and in the midst of persistent dolour. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Brita Strand Rangnes for suggesting the primary text of this thesis, and for her innumerable support and patience. Her support and guidance have been invaluable, and I am very grateful for all her help and encouragement.

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1. **Introduction**

Gender roles and expectations have existed for a long time and are embedded deep within the psyche of the society. Societies and families prepare their children to perform their roles as either masculine or feminine with very different expectations. Such that a female child in a Nigerian context is expected to aspire to marriage and a male child is expected to conquer all odds and return exultantly with inestimable wealth and affluence (Adichie 2013). Gender roles and expectations require men to act in ways that should not be feminine and women, in ways that should not be masculine, and oppositions to these roles and expectations may cast negative lights upon nonconformists. Bearing in mind that people are diverse and may react differently to similar situations, including people of the same sex, the society still expects that males must certainly act differently from females. It therefore seems interesting to ask: what happens to the behavioural patterns of people when contextual and environmental changes occur, and are people still able to conform to gender roles and expectations in the cause of these changes?

This thesis will be a study of whether the behavioural patterns of postcolonial Nigerians are able to conform to gender roles and expectations during the Nigerian civil war as portrayed in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006). This thesis will investigate the behavioural patterns of male and female characters, the effects of gender roles and expectations on the behavioural patterns of these characters, and the transformation of these behavioural patterns, either conforming to or resisting gender roles before and during the Nigerian civil war.

Gender roles are sets of traditional norms associated with each sex within a culture with social expectations for psychological traits, behaviour, attitudes, perceptions, appearance, affective reactions, and familial roles such as mother or provider (Chandler and Munday 2016a). Nigeria is a colonial construct, and was a colony until October 1st 1960, and thereafter, the consequences of colonialism began to ensue (Metz et al. 1992:29-57). One of the major consequences of colonialism in Nigeria is the Nigerian Civil War; an ethnic conflict majorly between the Igbo people and the Nigerian government, emanating from the secession of the Igbo people due to economic, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions. In the advent of war, contextual changes occur, bringing about destruction of infrastructure,
reduction in labour force, displacement of people, cessation of education, among many others. The major consequence of the Nigerian civil war that concerns this thesis, is gender. If war causes numerous changes, which may very likely affect the lives of people, what then is the probability that gender roles and expectations that existed before the war began were attainable during the war? If the answer to this question is negative, what transformed about the people who no longer performed those roles but did prior to the war, and what kind of people bore the responsibilities of performing those roles?

To achieve these aims, this thesis will investigate the following research questions:

- What are the behavioural patterns of male and female characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun*?
- What are the effects of gender roles and expectations on the behavioural patterns of characters?
- Do the behavioural patterns of characters undergo transformation during the war, and is the transformation(s) in conformity with the postcolonial Nigerian gender roles and expectations?

In order to effectively provide answers to this questions, this thesis will employ tactical literary tools. A close reading of the primary text of this thesis, *Half of a Yellow Sun* will be carried out. This thesis will engage with critical interpretations and evaluations of literary scholars and critics; interpreting and analysing their judgements for the purpose of generating credible results. Since this thesis is about gender roles and expectations, critical concepts, such as ‘gender’ and ‘femininity’, ‘masculinity’, and ‘identity’ will be employed to achieve an in-depth analysis. Due to the historical contextualisation of the primary text of this thesis, theories such as colonialism and post-colonialism are critical to the development of this thesis, and will certainly be explored.

The research questions of this thesis will be intensively investigated chronologically in two body chapters. The next chapter of this thesis will explore and elaborate on the theoretical background of this thesis. A brief history of the author of the primary text, as well as a brief introduction of the primary text will be laid out. Also, a historical background about Nigeria, Igbo culture, literacy education in Nigeria, and their relevance to this thesis will be discussed. Furthermore, colonial and postcolonial theory will be reviewed, considering works of profound and critical theorists such as Frantz Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth* (1967) and Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978). In addition, the concepts of gender, femininity,
masculinity, and their relevance to this thesis will be discussed. Here again, Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Mask* (1967) and theories of various categories of feminism will be considered. Finally, the concept of identity as propounded in *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* (2016) by Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle will be essential to this study.

The third chapter is mainly about the analysis of female characters in the novel. Not only will the behavioural patterns of characters be discussed, but the extent to which they are affected and influenced by gender expectations, will be discussed. More so, an investigation of traces of traditional femininity and masculinity in the female characters will be carried out, to determine the conformity and/or nonconformity of these behavioural patterns to gender expectations. This chapter will reveal the ideal postcolonial Nigerian femininity. Furthermore, this chapter will examine the state of the behavioural patterns of the characters during the Nigerian civil war; searching for transformations, and the extent to which these behavioural patterns conform or resist gender roles and expectations, and also observing the categories of gender roles these characters occupy. Factors such as literacy, sexuality, motherhood, and identity in relation to the female characters will be considered, and tools from the theoretical background will be implemented in the analysis.

In the fourth chapter, analysis of mainly male characters will be executed. The behavioural patterns of male characters and the influence of gender expectations on these patterns will be discussed. Elements of traditional femininity and masculinity will be searched for in the characters, and their compliance or noncompliance with gender expectations will be investigated. The ideal postcolonial Nigerian masculinity will be revealed as well as the factors that determine this idealness. Also, the transformation or preservation of the behavioural patterns of the male characters during the Nigerian civil war will be analysed and the conformity of these patterns to gender expectations. Lastly, the gender roles these male characters occupy will be observed. Factors such as literacy, sexuality, fatherhood, and identity in relation to the male characters will be examined, and tools from the theoretical background will be employed in the analysis.

The fifth and last chapter, which is the conclusion, will offer a summary of the main ideas that the thesis has been concerned with. Additionally, the conclusion will seek to clarify the eventualities of gender roles and expectations in the cause of contextual and environmental changes; outlining the effects on male and female characters and on the society at large, and also suggesting solutions if need be.
2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Chimamanda Adichie is the author of *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The author was born in Enugu, Nigeria. She grew up in Nsukka, in the south-eastern part of Nigeria, where the University of Nigeria is located. Her father was a professor of statistics at the university of Nigeria, and her mother was the university registrar. Adichie went on to study medicine and pharmacy at the University of Nigeria for a year and a half. In the course of her study, she edited The Compass, a magazine run by the university's Catholic medical students. At the age of 19, Adichie aborted her study in Nigeria and moved to the United States of America. She went on to Drexel University in Philadelphia to study communications and political science and transferred to Eastern Connecticut State University so that she could be close to her sister who had a medical practice in Coventry. She received a bachelor's degree from Eastern, where she graduated Summa Cum Laude in 200. She went ahead to complete a master’s degree in creative writing at John Hopkins University in 2003, and in 2008, she received a master of arts in African studies from Yale University (Reference 6).

Adichie is one of Africa’s most celebrated writer, and has published several other books and articles. She has won several awards, precisely twenty-eight as at the time of this writing, among which are the Orange prize for fiction in 2004, Commonwealth writers prize in 2010, and Girls Write Now Awards in 2015. Adchie declared herself a feminist (Tedx Talks 2013) and the theme of feminism is often embedded in her works. Quite a number of Adichie’s books such as *Purple Hibiscus, The Thing Around Your Neck, Americanah*, as well as *Half of a Yellow Sun*, contain feminist views and portray gender related issues (Reference 6).

The author’s feminism can be traced backed to her childhood days. Adichie (Tedx Talks 2013) told a story of how she had written a test and had got the highest score, so that she could qualify for the position of a class monitor in her primary school days. Even though she had the highest score, she was not granted the post owing to the fact that she is a female. Only a boy could be class captain. Adichie confesses her inability to forget that incident. The
author also narrates how her great grand-mother whom she never met was also a feminist, inferring from her from stories about her deeds. Her grandmother had ran away from her a man whom she did not want to marry and had protested about being denied access to a landed property because she was a female (Tedx Talks 2013). Even as a grown woman, Adichie has had experienced relegated, such as: the source of her money being associated with a man and not to her own hard work, and her presence not being acknowledge by a waitress simply because she is female (Tedx Talks 2013).

Although an African, Adichie’s influence as a writer and feminist has risen beyond the African context. A popular African-American singer, Beyonce, featured an excerpt of Adichie’s Tedx Talk We Should All Be Feminist (Tedx Talks 2013) in one of her songs titled Flawless (BeyonceVEVO 2014), which has over 30 million views on YouTube. This same Tedx Talk, titled We Should All Be Feminist, in a Swedish version, has been distributed to every second grade high school student in Sweden with the hope that it will provide a platform for discussing gender equality and feminism (Reference 1). Majority of Adichie’s fictional works address gender related issues and often comprise of themes such as womanhood, motherhood and violence.

*Half of a Yellow Sun* is set in the 1960s in Nigeria. The novel was published in 2006 and recounts the Nigerian civil war and the Biafran story; the struggle to establish an independent state during the 1960s in Eastern Nigeria. The title of the novel is a derivative of the image of the Biafran flag, which comprises of half of a yellow sun over stripes of red, black and green. “Red was the blood of the siblings massacred in the North, black was for mourning them, green was for the prosperity Biafra would have, and, finally, the half of a yellow sun stood for the glorious future” (Adichie 2006:281). The novel is a story about love and war.

2.2. Nigeria

*Half of a Yellow Sun* is situated in Nigeria and is to a large extent, a narrative of conflict and war in Nigeria, therefore, the importance of a brief study of Nigeria to this thesis. The Federal Republic of Nigeria also known as Nigeria, is a country in West Africa. The capital of
Nigeria is Abuja, but was formerly Lagos until 1991 (Metz et al. 1992:xv). Citizens of Nigeria are referred to as Nigerians. Nigeria is made up of 36 states and the federal capital territory, Abuja. The country is populated with 182.2 million people (reference 4) and has “250 to 400 or more recognised ethnic groups” (Metz et al. 1992:xvi). The number of languages spoken in Nigeria is between 450 to 500 (Ayeomoni 2012:12). However, Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa are the three major languages. English is the official language; used in political and economic activities as well the education sector. There are three major religions in Nigeria: Christianity, Islam, and Traditional-worship. Islam is practised mostly in northern Nigeria and the western region. Christianity is practiced mostly in the south east and the west. Indigenous traditional worshippers are found in nearly every region. Nigeria is the world’s 6th largest oil exporter, as well as an exporter of cocoa (Metz et al. 1992:xviii).

Nigeria is a colonial construct, and was a victim of the European slave trade that spanned from the late 15th century to 1807 in Africa. The regions that form Nigeria today, became a British colony in 1861. Besides slave trade, natural resources such as cocoa and palm oil attracted the European government to Nigeria. In the process, European missionaries brought Christianity to the people of southern Nigeria. However, before the arrival of the European missionaries, Islam had been introduced during the Holy war waged within what has become the Sokoto Caliphate in Northern Nigeria between 1804 to 1808. In 1960, Nigeria gained independence from the British government and became a Republic in 1963 (Metz et al. 1992:xxiii).

There is no doubt that Nigeria is multicultural since it is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. Cultural multiplicity will likely produce people with different principles and preferences. Having this sort of multiplicity under a unitary government is very likely to produce conflict. Nigeria is a federal republic and operates a presidential system of government (Metz et al. 1992:233-238). There are three tiers of government: federal, state and local. The president (federal government) exercises executive authority and has overriding power compared to the other tiers of government. The federal government controls the financial autonomy and allocation of resources to the state and then to the local. If the presidency, which is on the federal level, has executive power, it is only natural for every tribe in Nigeria to desire an occupancy of that position, especially the three major tribes.

Commercial agricultural activities in Nigeria is mostly in the northern region while the location and refinery of natural resources such as crude oil is in south-eastern Nigeria.
Ross (2003) records that the production of oil in Nigeria as at 2000 generated 99.6 percent of its export income. Hence, south-easterners are very likely to desire a south-eastern Nigerian president, rather than a northern or western president. Situations such as this create division and conflict among the Nigerian people. The crude oil illustration is only an example and not the only reason why Nigeria is prone to conflict. Edewor et al. identify the basis of conflict in Nigeria as the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorate of Nigeria (2014:72). The mere presence of diverse languages and religions is enough to create conflict.

2.3. The Igbo People and Culture

Majority of the main characters in Half of a Yellow Sun are Igbos. The major setting of the novel is eastern Nigeria which is occupied by mostly Igbo people. More so, Half of a Yellow Sun is a historical novel that narrates the Nigerian civil war; a war which the Igbo people were a major part of, and a novel which narrates the secession of Biafra and its failure. Biafra is largely made up of Igbo people. It is therefore necessary to discuss the Igbo people and their culture. The Igbo people occupy south-eastern part of Nigeria and they are one of the three major tribes of Nigeria. Their language is known as Igbo.

The Nri civilization is believed and claimed by most Igbo people to be the origin and ancestral home of Igbo culture and civilization (Nwoye 2011:305). Bronze works were excavated as far back as the 19th century in the Nri region. The bronzes mined in this area, especially the Igbo-Ukwu, were regarded as outstanding and exceptional in quality among expatriates, art archivists and archaeologists (Okpara 2012:899). One major feature of the precolonial Igbo tribe is that they are regarded as a non-centralized society. The precolonial Igbo society was an egalitarian society characterized by social equality and equal rights for all its people (Metz et al. 1992:8). As such, every Igbo person was believed to be as important as the other person and none is, therefore, voiceless in the administrative affairs of the Igbo society. In this non-centralized society, most Igbos relied on priestly instructions and guidance to ensure fairness in dispute resolutions among the Igbo communities and its people (Metz et al. 1992:8). Religion in precolonial Igbo and its concept of universality claims that the sky is the supreme being’s (Chukwu) palace and he is believed to dwell with a host of
powerful divinities such as Anyawu (the sun god), Amadioha (the god of thunder), Igwe (the sky god) (Nwoye 2011:307).

Furthermore, in the postcolonial Igbo society, birth, marriage and burial are considered important family events. Birth establishes life on earth without which there is no existence. Marriage in Igboland is not merely an affair between a husband and a wife, rather, parents of the couples as well as the extended families and villages are involved (Nwoye 2011:312). Birth and marriage are intertwined for the reason that child bearing is a vital part of marital union in Igboland, especially the birth of a ‘male child’ (Ezejiofor 2008:108). Generally, masculinity dominates the gender ideology among the Igbos (Nwoye 2011:313). Death and birth are as well entwined in Igbo culture. It is believed that a dead person can be reincarnated and come back to life through the birth of a child (Nwoye 2011:309). Also, death in Igboland is regarded as the transition of an individual from the physical world into the spirit world. However, only the second burial ceremony can transport the dead into the spirit world, otherwise, the deceased would wander amid the earth and the spirit realm (Nwoye 2011:309).

2.4. The Nigerian Civil War (The Biafran War)

_Half of a Yellow Sun_ is a fictional novel synchronised with history. The novel is set in the eastern part of Nigeria, majority of the characters are Igbos and the duration is between the 1960s and 1970s, sharing some of its timespan with that of the civil war. _Half of a Yellow Sun_ deals with political and historical characters and events. One major historical event in the novel is the Nigerian Civil War also referred to as the Biafran war. This war was a crucial one and a defining moment for the postcolonial and modern Nigeria. Major historical people who contributed to the Biafran war, are characters in _Half of a Yellow Sun_ playing the same roles in the novel as they had done in reality.

The Nigerian civil war was a battle to counter the secession of Biafra from Nigeria. The war took place from 6 July 1967 to 15 January 1970, six years after Nigeria gained her independence (Akresh et al. 2011:273). Biafra represented pro-independence goals of the eastern people, whose leadership was convinced that they could no longer dwell with the Northern dominated federal government (Bird and Ottanelli 2014:379-380).
Peter Baxter narrates a comprehensive account of the causes and history of the Biafran war (2014:11-60) and will be summarised below. One major cause of the war was a military coup carried out by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu which led to the death of significant Northern leaders, such as Tafawa Balewa. Nzeogwu had led this coup claiming that the Nigerian government officials as at that time were corrupt officials who looted public funds. A counter-coup was led by Gen. Yakubu Gowon, and this led to the ruthless murder of Aguiyi Ironsi, Nigeria’s first head of state, his deputy and the Igbos living in Northern as well as western Nigeria as at that time. The massacre of the Igbos in northern and western Nigeria was to be a retribution for the government coup led by the Igbos. Thereafter, Yakubu Gowon, the military head of state, attempted to split Nigeria into twelve states. Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, the leader of the eastern region of Nigeria during that period, saw the creation of states, which was without a formal discussion with the easterners, as an exclusion of the opinion of the eastern region. Owing to the massacre of the Igbos in other regions and unfavourable decisions made by the Nigerian government, Ojukwu therefore declared the eastern region an independent state of Biafra, which was to be a mark of hope for the assailed Igbo people (Adichie 2006:161-162). However, the federal government of Nigeria saw this as an illegal act of secession.

More so, crude oil is believed to have played a role in the war. Crude oil is one of Nigeria’s natural resources and great source of income (Onuoha 2016:30). Most of the country’s oil wells are in the south-east region, and this is alleged to be one of the motivating factors that led to Biafra’s secession. The Nigerian government saw the oil as a course worth protecting for the survival of the North. The Nigerian government as at the time of the war was said to have received arms and ammunition from other countries who had interest in the oil. Edgerton claims that the British provided the Nigerian government with large amounts of vehicles and ammunitions (2002:67).

Numerous meetings were held after the secession to resolve the conflict peaceably, but without success; leaving the Nigerian government with no other choice but to forcefully retrieve the territory. Even though the population of Biafrans had drastically reduced after two years of war, they persevered and kept on with the war to the surprise of the Nigerian government. However, col. Ojukwu fled the country with his family in search of peace. Ojukwu handed over to General Phillip Effiong who surrendered to the Nigerian government, bringing to an end three years of war and starvation.
Adichie discloses the tragedy of the Nigerian civil war in her novel, revealing the personal and emotional experiences of the Biafran people. The author captures terrifying scenes that create war imageries in the mind of the reader (Adichie 2006:317). During the civil war, there were cases of starvation since people were unable to farm and go about their usually businesses. “Of the 1 to 3 million Igbos that are estimated to have lost their lives, only a small fraction (10%) died of military violence. The majority succumbed to starvation” (Hult et al. 2010:2). Stremlau reports that there was an outburst of mass starvation by July 1968 during the war, and millions of Igbo refugees suffered it (1977:206). Adichie narrates in her novel, how the famishment of the Biafran people became a means by which their adversaries ensnared some of them to their death (Adichie 2006:384).

It is important to note that when issues of the Nigerian civil war are discussed, the colonial and postcolonial era of Nigeria hardly escape analysis. The Biafran people sought independence from Nigeria; Nigeria which is an amalgamation of different ethnic groups by the British government during the colonial period.

2.5. Colonial and Postcolonial Period in Nigeria

*Half of a Yellow Sun* is a postcolonial literature. The novel addresses the issues and consequences of a postcolonial Nigeria. Owing to the fact that Nigeria is a country in West Africa and was colonized by the British who took interest in Nigeria because of its resources, colonial and postcolonial theories must therefore be considered. More so, the Nigerian civil war, which is a major event in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, was a consequence of a colonised Nigeria. Horvath argues that colonialism is the practice of domination and political control over another country and exploiting it economically and culturally (1972:46). In other words, colonialism involves a racial connexion between nations that breeds on the superiority of the stronger nation over the other. Colonized countries are portrayed as uncivilised, “inferior, childlike, or feminine, incapable of looking after themselves (...) and requiring the paternal rule of the west for their own best interests” (Young 2003:2). To buttress this point, Mohanty explains that the term “colonization has been used to characterize everything from the most evident economic and political hierarchies to the production of a particular cultural discourse
about what is called the “Third World” (1984:333). Such that the nations of the earth are stratified into first, second, and third worlds, based on to their level of developments. Nigeria is classified as a third world nation.

Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1978) is adjudged the cornerstone on which postcolonial theory developed (Moosavinia et al. 2011:103). Said has come to be seen as an established and controversial cultural critic, and his book, *Orientalism*, as a Bible of a detailed consequence and cultural representation of a Eurocentric third world (Kennedy 2000:1). *Orientalism* queries the stereotyped margins that have been drawn between the first world countries and the third world countries. Although Said (1978) focuses mostly on the stereotypes of the Middle-East, nevertheless, these same concepts can be broadened to encompass an analysis of a postcolonial and third world Nigeria. “Postcolonial literature, criticism and theory are about scrutinizing power relations and resisting imperialist prerogatives” (Said 2008:11), beckoning upon readers to reflect on the way colonialisit and anti-colonialist messages are presented in literary texts. As such, Said defines Orientalism as "a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, (…) about what 'we' do and what 'they' cannot do" (1978:12). By ‘we’, Said refers to the West, and by ‘they’, to the Western colonies. He argues that one of the ways colonizers achieve their aim is through scholarly definitions of the coloniser as subordinate and inferior, and that such depictions of the colonised are false assumptions upon which the superiority of the West is built.

Furthermore, Moosavinia et al explain that Orientalism as a Western literature about the Orient, which refers to the colonised countries of East Asia, “is guilty of legitimizing civilizing mission, essentialism, expansionism and imperialism and on the other hand, convincing natives of their own inferiority” (2011:104). In other words, the Western invented portrayal of the Orient, was a foreword and a validation of the Western imperial rule over the Orient. The colonisers defined the Orient, and their definition of the Orient portrays the Orient as inferior, and therefore at the mercy of the colonisers. The Orient is “the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West)” (Said 1978:1). Said argues that Europe’s superiority, specifically, its identity as a world power, is dependent on
its portrayal of the Orient as mediocre. “The relationship between Occident (countries of the west, especially Europe and America) and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (Said 1978:5), of which the relationship between the Orient and the Occident is portrayed to represent the Orient as the ‘Other’; the one without form or identity.

The ‘Other’ is a term employed by Frantz Fanon in his theorization of colonialism in Black Skin, White Mask (1967). Fanon’s books, The Wretched of the Earth (1967) and Black Skin, White Mask (1967), provide a broad analysis of dehumanising effects of colonialism; its cultural and social implications. Burke notes that The Wretched of the Earth was “widely hailed as the most passionate and brilliant analysis of the process of decolonization” (1976:127). Fanon “was a fearless critic of colonialism and a key figure in Algeria’s struggle for independence. Since his untimely death in 1961, Fanon’s intellectual reputation has grown on the strength of his works (…) with their incisive insights into issues of race and colonialism” (Alessandrini 1998:i). In his study of colonialism, Fanon asserts that the colonized world is divided into two compartments wherein the colonized is positioned, and principally made to perform the role of a foreigner in his or her own land (1967:31-32). Colonialism is not merely a political domination and economic manipulation, it is also the separation of the colonized from their values and individuality because it forces the people it dominates to question their identity: “In reality, who am I?” (Fanon 1967:250). In this sense, the colonized becomes the ‘Other’, who “by definition lacks identity, propriety, purity, literality” and is made a binary opposition to the ‘Self’ (Al-Saidi 2014:95). “The Self is ordered, rational, masculine, good, then the Other is chaotic, irrational, feminine, and evil” (Al-Saidi 2014:96). The ‘Self’ then is the colonizer and the ‘Other’, the colonized.

Therefore, Nigeria as a colony was portrayed as the ‘Other’, lacking form and identity; portrayed as chaotic and irrational and in an undeniably need of salvation from the colonisers. This may be a reason for the coloniser’s decision to amalgamate the northern and southern protectorate, creating Nigeria, so that the formerly ‘undefined’ people may acquire an appropriate identity. As such, Britain projected itself as the rational and ordered ‘Self’ in opposition to its portrayal of the impure and disordered Nigerian ‘Other’.

Initially, there was no Nigeria. A precolonial Nigeria was not Nigeria, rather, Britain colonized the regions that constitute Nigeria today in 1884 until Nigeria gained independence in 1960. Prior to the colonialization of Nigeria, Britain was involved in the African slave
trade that began mid-15th A.D (Ogundele 2011:4). Rulers of West African empires traded Africans as slaves to Europeans. Accounts from Metz et al. state that Britain was the “dominant slaving power in the eighteenth century. Its ships handled two-fifths of the transatlantic traffic during the century”; over 3.5 million slaves were shipped from Nigeria lands to the Americas (1992:17). In 1807, with the rise of the industrial revolution, slave trade was eventually abolished and the British trading emphasis moved from slaves to raw materials. Vast quantity of the resources needed in the industries were largely available in African soils, which greatly motivated the Europeans to invade Africa. Toyin Falola, a Nigerian historian and professor, records that indications of British colonization became apparent with the appointment of John Beecroft in 1849 to monitor British political and economic interests, particularly in the trade of palm products. Britain commenced invasion into the localities of what is known as Nigeria today, encountering resistance from the indigenous people that were in no way parallel with the weaponries of Great Britain (2009:2).

The birth of Nigeria itself has been a case of violence and war; no wonder the secession tensions. “Colonization was achieved in Nigeria either by the use of war or by surrender because of the threat of war. The list of casualties is long” (Falola 2009:1); subduing various West-African rulers including King Jaja of Opobo, Oba Ovonramwen of Benin Kingdom, King Ibanichuka of Okrika, and so on. The defeat of these rulers paved way for Britain to establish and sustain its economic control over the colonies through military power and indirect rule; premeditated alliances with indigenous rulers (Oduwobi 2011:20). After decades of British supremacy and foreign policies, the sovereign regions that constitute Nigeria currently were unified. The amalgamation of these formerly sovereign states framed a multi-ethnic society with over 374 cultural nationalities whose values and traditions significantly differ (Sampson 2014:313). Malachy et al. contend that the formation of Nigeria was forcefully implemented to gratify Britain’s inconsiderate motives, and has therefore, created political and regional opposition for who rules and creates policies among the different ethnic groups after Nigeria gained independence in 1960 (2014:149-151). These tensions and rivalries are fragments of the elements that constitute the postcolonial Nigeria.

Post-colonialism is without a specific theory as there are different aspects and approaches to the subject. Postcolonial theory is studied by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in their canonical work on postcolonial studies, The Empire Writes Back (1989). They define post-colonialism as “all the culture affected by the imperial process from
the moment of colonization to the present day” (1989:2); in other words, the effect of post-colonialism on the political, economic and cultural state of a previous colony. According to Childs and Williams, postcolonial theory accounts for “the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day (and the) continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression” (2013:3). Ashcroft et al. similarly argue that post-colonialism does not necessarily begin at the end of a colonial era, rather, it “begins from the very first moment of colonial contact. It is the discourse of oppositionality which colonialism brings into being” (1995:117).

Arguments about the defects of a postcolonial Nigeria are reinforced by Fanon’s concept of “absolute mutation” (2008:3) where he laments that the black man will always feel inferior and seek recognition from the western world. Despite the fact that Nigeria has been decolonized, colonialism seems to appear at the point when it departs. Nigeria still operates according to the patterns and systems carved out and left behind by the colonizers whether or not these patterns are suitable for the Nigerian structure. The Nigerian civil war is a product of disputes of structure and system; various ethnic groups disagreeing on the system of government and economic activities, especially because some Nigerians may consider the white man wiser because of his advanced standard of living. Fanon sadly concludes that “for the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white”, for “black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect” (1967:12). His education, his technology, even his language of commerce and academics is most likely western.

Postcolonial countries cannot but always seek development in the patterns left behind by the imperialists. Fanon draws a line of equilibrium between the colonizer and the decolonized; So that, even though their initial encounter was marked off by violence, their bond will never be broken as they both depend on each other for survival. He refers to them as “old acquaintances” (1967:28) who will always need each other to preserve their esteems; the white man deriving his superiority from the black man’s inferiority. Post-colonialism, generally, is the cultural and political sequel of colonialism. Post-colonialism deals with the effects of the permeation of the colonizer’s culture into that of the colonized. With regards to Ashcroft et al (1995:117) usage of “oppositionality”, it can be rational to claim that the initial opposition that commenced when Britain conquered the regions that compose Nigeria, has
not ceased even though colonization has been exterminated, but has rather thrived, as evident in the Nigerian civil war and other ethnic tensions that continue to rise in Nigeria.

*Half of a Yellow Sun* exposes a reader to what Edward Said (1994) has termed “Contrapuntal reading”. Said educates literary critics about postcolonial studies when he affirms that

As we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to reread it not univocally but contrapuntally, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts.

(1994:59)

To alternatively state this, Contrapuntal reading defines a method of reading which reveals the deep implications of imperialism ideologies and colonialism in literary texts. While telling a story of love and war, Adichie stirs up a historical Nigeria, not unfamiliar to the world but from an unfamiliar perspective; exposing the good and bad sides of each rivalry (Nigeria and Biafra). Adichie takes no preference of rivalries. The plot of war and violence does not usurp the plot of love in the novel, however, it is difficult to read this novel and not ponder on the historical background of Nigeria. Questions such as the following begin to arise during the reading of *Half of a Yellow Sun*: ‘why did Britain amalgamate the northern and southern protectorate of Nigeria? Was it for the developmental cause of Nigeria or for Britain’s own selfish interest? Did Britain envisage the ethnic tensions that have occurred over time before amalgamating the protectorates? For instance, a Nigerian reader of this novel may be provoked to question his or her identity and cultural beliefs, to ascertain if such ideologies are truly ethnical or Eurocentric (influenced by European culture) which leads to another important part of this thesis: Literacy education.
2.6. Literacy Education in Nigeria

It is important to discuss literacy education in Nigeria because *Half of a Yellow Sun* is as well a book about how literacy defines and describes people in the eyes of others. In other words, literacy education is a symbol for knowledge and also a means of classifying and grading people in the Nigerian society as revealed in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Literacy education in the novel also functions as an opposition to Nigerian cultures and traditions, especially because a large percentage of literacy education in Nigeria is Eurocentric. Discussing literacy education is also necessary for the reason that it is a means through which characters in the novel either find their voice or lose it. To further explain this, there is a strong link between education and the Biafran war as portrayed in the novel; the acquisition, loss, and transformation of a character’s identity.

The word education is a derivative of the Latin words “educare” and “educere”; educare meaning to train or mold and educere to lead out (Craft 1984 in Bass and Good 2004:162). In a more holistic sense, education refers to “no particular process; rather it encapsulates criteria to which any one of a family of processes must conform” (Peters 2010:1). Alternatively said, education is not defined by schooling. Schooling is a kind of education as seen in some cultures. Rather, education is the conformity of every process involved in a particular kind of education to the outlined principles that guide such an education. Such that if an examination is required to serve as a medium of assessment in a certain kind of education, non-compliance to this criterion denies a participant of such education as educated.

Literacy education (western education) in Nigeria is structured into three major progressive stages: primary, secondary and tertiary. The educational system is traditionally referred to as the 6-3-3-4 system; each number representing the number of years spent at each level of education (Amaghionyeodiwe and Osinubi 2006:32). The first 6 years are spent in Primary school, the next 3 years are spent in the Junior Secondary School (JSS), the next 3 years at the Senior Secondary School (SSS), and the last 4 years are the University years (Bachelor’s degree). The number of years spent at the university varies depending on the course of study; ranging between 4 to 6 years. An amendment to the 6-3-3-4 education system recently occurred. The new system is the 9-3-4 system; merging the 6 primary school years and the 3 junior secondary school years (Reference 2). The highest level of education is the Doctorate (PhD) which succeeds the Masters university education.
The acquisition of literacy education in Nigeria is often equated to progress and success. Such that literacy has become a means to alleviate poverty and increase standard of living, and individuals without education may be seen as contributing factors to poverty increase in Nigeria (Omoniyi 2013:178). Well-paying jobs in Nigeria most often require educational certification which the uneducated are unqualified for. Statistics also show that many of the poor Nigerians are uneducated which explains the reason for their penury (Reference 3; Nwagwu 2014:25). On the other hand, it should be noted that education is not the only route to success since there are prosperous farm owners and traders who are uneducated. However, a study carried out by Aiyedogbon and Ohwofasa shows that regardless of the prosperity of uneducated business owners, education of these entrepreneurs is a “significant factor influencing efficiency, an indication of the need for more proactive actions to raise the level of efficiency and thus employment and reduce unemployment” (2012:272). In other words, education to an extent determines the level of knowledge attained in a business sphere thereby increasing productivity and management.

Literacy education in Nigeria functions as a class system. The reason for this is not farfetched; literacy education is a major means of poverty alleviation in Nigeria. “In the contemporary Nigeria, the acquisition of formal education and skills with high market value has been found to be the root of social status distinction” (Adeleke et al. 2014:12). Wealth is as well a tool for social stratification in Nigeria, however, only a few wealthy Nigerians are uneducated. More so, the language of literacy education in Nigeria is English. The attainment of education further improves the spoken English of its participants. And since English is the official language of Nigeria, even the language of trade among locals, it is indeed necessary for Nigerians to improve in their spoken and written English. Adesina explains how the early dominance of education changed the class system that existed before colonialism began in Nigeria (1972:221-222). The educated ones who had absorbed western values and culture were placed ahead of the population, so that, only educated Nigerians were appointed as leaders by the colonizers (Adesina 1972:222). As such, literacy education is power for Nigerians, especially because the system of governance, economic management, and industrialisation are western.

In addition, western education functions as a taxonomy stratagem not only within Nigeria but even in the eyes of the white man, such that it is used as a tool to distinguish between a ‘real negro’ and ‘very very dark’ men (Fanon 2008:50). A black man with a
western education is considered civilised to an extent and as such not an authentic black man because black men are meant to be realistically savages (Fanon 2008:50-51). In this case, education is the ‘blood of the lamb’ that washes away the ‘sins’ of the black man. Not all of his sins though, his skin is still ‘very very dark’ after all. Adichie (2008) as well relates a similar experience. A professor at John Hopkins university was of the opinion that *Purple Hibiscus*, one of Adichie’s work of fiction, was not ‘authentically African’ because the characters in the novel educated, middle class, drove cars and were not starving (Adichie 2008). It is apparent that Africa has been categorized by privation, misery, irrationality, and only features that are considered to be authentically western (intelligence and civilisation) can bring salvation to Africa.

It is therefore only natural for traditional precolonial adherent Nigerians, who prefer not to embrace literacy education, to feel threatened by literacy education and those who acquire it (Nwabughuogu 2009 in Enwo-Irem 2013:166). Prior to the imperialism in Nigeria and thereafter, western education, the African people had their own mode of education and literacy popularly referred to as Traditional education. Ozigi and Ocho (1981) cited in Mbakwe (2015) confirm the indigenous traditional education when they make known that:

There was a traditional form of education which had existed in our own societies, as in other societies, for centuries. This type of education, formally and informally imbibed a lot of cultural values, norms, traditions and beliefs system of societies on our children and these had helped them to know how to produce things needed for the well being of the society.

(Mbakwe 2015:2)

Marah notes that in African societies, initiation rites and several rituals marking, the passage from childhood to adulthood, were cultural modus-operandi to instil a spirit of community, responsibility, loyalty to the community and to the people (2006:19).

There are arguments that the western education introduced to Nigeria embodies little or nothing of African culture and values. Onwuachi laments that the school curricula in Nigerian schools, as at the time of his writing, are “fashioned and relished with western cultural ideas and values” with very little references to African values (1966:290). Furthermore, is the language of education in Nigeria. In Nigeria, English language is the
medium of instruction in virtually all levels of schooling. Kenyan author, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, narrates the terrible ordeal of how he watched his mother tongue become irrelevant in the field of education in Kenyan. English language suddenly became the language of education, prestige and achievement (1994:438). As a result, language and literature took Thiong’o far away from himself, from his culture to other cultures as he gradually lost a sense of his identity (1994:439). Thiong’o’s lamentation of language and his identity is corroborated by Ahmad’s concept of “classificatory practices” (1992:79) which denotes that the larger part of academic knowledge is generated in western metropolitan organizations and has been constructed to suit the racial and identity taxonomy that exist today. Young (2003:14) then expatiates on the subject of “classificatory practices” by emphasizing that the knowledge learnt formally is someone else’s knowledge and the authority that underpins such knowledge is either unknown or not universally altruistic. In Thiong’o’s case, the knowledge he acquired in form of education was western and not his indigenous values. Nevertheless, it should be noted that western education has been fully immersed into the Nigerian society and the issue of language and identity varies for different persons.

2.7. Gender

Another important aspect of this thesis is gender studies, which is the basis of this thesis. The necessity of the theory of gender for this thesis is due to the constant occurrence of the theme of gender roles and expectations in Half of a Yellow Sun. Female characters as well as male characters appear to have defined roles peculiar to each sex in the novel, such that, attributes of characters who do not meet with their required gender roles and expectations are questioned and regarded as unusual. Part of what gender also does in Half of a Yellow Sun is reveal the gendered changes that occur in characters who live up to the expectations of their gender roles when the social factors that determined the initial gender roles are no longer obtainable as a result of unusual or unexpected societal changes.

Essentialism, a belief in the fixed properties of entities (Fuss 1989:xi), propounds that every culture has features peculiar to it. Before the colonial era, the Nigerian people definitely had a way of life, culture and traditions peculiar to each ethnic group. These
precolonial cultures and traditions must have undergone changes during the colonial era as supported by the notion of “hybridity”; “the productivity of colonial power” (Bhabha 1994:159)). As “one of the most widely employed and most disputed terms in post-colonial theory” (Ashcroft et al. 1998:118), hybridity explicates the effect of the mixture of cultures; that of the colonizer and the colonized. Hybridity is a result of cultural imperialism and “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (Ashcroft et al. 1998:118). Specifically, in this context, hybridity is the result of the mingling of precolonial Nigerian cultures with western values. The hybrid is neither fully Nigerian or western. These cultural changes include gender roles and expectations of those roles. So that, gender roles according to the precolonial era have been influenced by the changes that came with the colonial era. For the Nigerians who are adherent traditionalists, this hybrid is not a blend, rather, a jumble work or patchwork.

Different arguments and theories have been propounded as far as gender is concerned. Gender is often argued to be socially constructed rather than biological determined or innate. West and Zimmerman affirm that gender is not innate in humans, rather, “that which is constructed through psychological, cultural, and social means” and focuses on behavioural aspects of being a woman or a man as opposed, for example, to biological differences between the two (1987:125). Likewise, Celik, et al. argue that gender does not exists in a vacuum, rather, it is framed in a socio-political and cultural context (2011:143). Sex, therefore, which is the biological identity of persons, differs from gender even though these two terms are sometimes used interchangeably. The notion of gender is nurtured in humans rather than natural by distinguishing between “‘feminism’ as a political position, ‘femaleness’ as a matter of biology and ‘femininity’ as a set of culturally defined characteristics” (Moore and Belsey 1989:117). In order words, femaleness is how a woman is identified by her body features while femininity, which characterises the woman and embodies her gender roles and expectations, are not inherent in her but socially and politically determined.

On the other hand, these arguments are opposed by J. Richard Udry’s “Biosocial theory” (1994). Udry rejects the notion that gender is a human social invention. First, he defines gender as the “relationship between biological sex and behaviour”, claiming that “a gendered behaviour is one that differs by sex” (1994:561). Afterwards, he proves his argument with data from a research based on “163 white 27 to-30-year-old women” (Kennelly et al. 2001:598). Part of Udry’s conclusion is that “males and females respond
differently to the same socialization” (1994:572). Despite the several controversies, gender roles will be treated as sets of behavioural patterns associated with the perception of femininity and masculinity, for the purpose of this study.

*Half of a Yellow Sun* exposes in detail what it means to be a man and a woman in postcolonial Nigeria, especially during the Nigerian civil war. Each of the sexes have their gender roles and expectations; for instance, strength and control for a man, and weakness and submission for a woman. However, there is a strong shift of power and control from one sex to the other. The author attempts to prove in a realistic way that gender roles are fluid in nature and that everyone has the ability to possess any of the overall gender behavioural patterns regardless of their sex. Such is typical of feminists; politically trying to break down patriarchal structures.

### 2.8. Femininity and Masculinity

Having discussed the theory of gender, there is as well the necessity to discuss the concepts of femininity and masculinity. As mentioned earlier, *Half of a Yellow Sun* portrays the cultural demands of the society from women and men in Nigeria and how men and women either meet up with these expectations, flout them, as well as the effects of societal vicissitudes on these gender roles and expectations. It is important to consider the ideas that define gender roles in precolonial and postcolonial Nigeria since the narrative *Half of a Yellow Sun* is based on these eras.

Feminism, largely, concerns itself with the notion that men are principally superior and women are inherently subordinate to men. “Men, it seemed, were by nature more variable and this variability created more male geniuses” (Fausto-Sterling 1992:15), while women are intellectually not gifted and as such are innately disqualified (Fausto-Sterling 1992:15). These gendered distinctions created between the male and the female, especially in terms of intellectuality and strength, produced feminist theories. Some feminists disagree that men and women have different hormones that account for intelligence and creativity (Tedx Talks 2013). Feminist theories query gender inequality. They are “not satisfied with the
explanation that it is natural, God-given” (Lorber 2005:8). “The problem of how to conceive of the body without reducing its materiality to a fixed biological essence has been one of the key issues for feminist theory” (Armstrong). There is no one single approach to feminism as different theories and opinions abound. Feminists generally agree on one thing regardless of their theoretical disparities; their battle is with the male. Being that this thesis entails a great deal of post-colonialism, postcolonial feminism approach will suffice.

Postcolonial feminism focusses and analyses the impact of colonialism and Western values on already existing gender structures in decolonized nations. Young points out that “postcolonial feminism involves any challenge to dominant patriarchal ideologies by women of the third world” (2003:109). As such, the problems of the feminists of the third world must differ from the problems of the feminists of the first world; women of the imperialists. This is because “postcolonial feminism has never operated as a separate entity from postcolonialism; rather it has directly inspired the forms and the force of postcolonial politics” (Young 2003:116). One difference between the feminists of the first world and the third world is the problem of “double colonization”, used by Petersen and Rutherford (1986) to refer to “the fact that women are twice colonised – by colonialisit realities and representations, and by patriarchal ones too” (McLeod 2000:175). After a lengthy historical discussion, Oyeronke Oyewumi, an African feminist, concludes that “the colonizer differentiated between male and female bodies” and “the colonial process was sex-differentiated insofar as the colonizers were male and used gender identity to determine policy” (1997:122). As such, patriarchy has similar dominion over third world women as much as western colonization; as though patriarchy was some sought of consolation from the colonisers to the colonised men, so that they too have an object of colonisation.

Differences in feminism perspectives do not only exist among first and third world feminists, similarly among Black feminists, feminism differs for different groups. For instance, despite Adichie’s foreign involvements, her feminist approach may not be the same as other black feminisms. Adichie reveals that her feminism is different from Beyonce’s feminism, even though Beyonce has featured Adichie’s contents in one of her songs. After commending Beyonce’s involvement in political and social issues as regards feminism, the author however refuses to categorised under Beyonce’s type of feminism accordingly:

Still, her type of feminism is not mine, as it is the kind that, at the same time, gives quite a lot of space to the necessity of men. I think men are lovely, but I don’t think
that women should relate everything they do to men: did he hurt me, do I forgive him, did he put a ring on my finger? We women are so conditioned to relate everything to men. Put a group of women together and the conversation will eventually be about men. Put a group of men together and they will not talk about women at all, they will just talk about their own stuff. We women should spend about 20 per cent of our time on men, because it's fun, but otherwise we should also be talking about our own stuff.

(Kiene 2016)

One of the reasons for such disparity is the differences between the various categories of feminism, or better put, women empowerment programs. Firstly, the difference western feminism and third world feminism. Oyewumi makes this explicit when she argues that “the term ‘gender’ carries a Western bias. It tends to be myopic, inventive, and can obscure other differences. Because it is Western, it reveals white Western middle-class biases and obscures other differences based on race, class, ethnicity, religion, sexuality” (2005:319). Western feminism does not take into account how colonialism and race affects non-western women. Oyewumi proceeds to rebuke western feminism when she mentions that Western feminism tends to over-focus on male privilege and the subordination of women (2005:99). While western feminists may concern themselves with issues of sex equality and others, third world feminists are most likely concerned with other issues such as race, decolonisation and other cultural complexities, asides sex equality. In the case of Adichie and Beyonce, the difference may specifically be between Black feminism and African feminism. African-American women mostly constitute the black feminism category. Black feminism originates from “the historical reality of Afro-American women’s continuous life-and-death struggle for survival and liberation” from racial and sexual oppression majorly in the United States of America. (Combahee River Collective [CRC] 1983:273). The cultures that constitute black feminism and African feminism are definitely different, as cultures differ from place to place. There is therefore little or no wonder why Adichie refutes Beyonce’s sort of feminism. Unlike Beyonce, Adichie is a third world feminist, which inevitably causes them to have different perspectives as a result of their historical variances and cultural values. Although a feminist like Beyonce may also have issues of racism to deal with, her sort of racism plights will differ from that of a third world feminist.

Even among the African feminists, feminism is not all the same. Not all African feminists will agree with Adichie’s statement wherein she refuses Beyonce’s type of
feminism: “Still, her type of feminism is not mine, as it is the kind that, at the same time, gives quite a lot of space to the necessity of men. I think men are lovely, but I don't think that women should relate everything they do to men” (Kiene 2016). Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi advocates for the importance of men in the lives of African women. She refers to it as partnership and prefers the term Womanism, introduced by Alice Walker, an African-American feminist, instead of Feminism. Womanism describes

  a woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women’s strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health.

  (Walker 1984:xi)

Womanism does not consider itself a warrior against men. This does not necessarily mean that Womanism has also concerned itself with the empowerment of men. Womanism seeks means by which the African woman is uplifted and empowered, giving more value to the culture of women. Womanism, Ogunyemi claims, “addresses the otherwise separatist nature of feminism by recognizing men as partners rather than foes” (Mekgwe 2008:19). Buchi Emecheta, a Nigerian feminist and author, also refuses to be referred to as a feminist (Mekgwe 2008:17). Even though she does not appreciate being named by outsiders, even by her American sisters, she nevertheless advocates for womanism. For Buchi, feminism is a western term and being defined by such appears to be a form of external control; another foreign control similar to imperialism (Mekgwe 2008:17).

In precolonial Nigeria, in spite of the several cultures resulting from different ethnic groups, women in precolonial Nigeria were not as powerless politically and economically as they were during the colonial era. The upsurge of the patriarchal system during the colonial era largely led to the relegation of women in Nigeria (Oyewumi 1997:123-124). Patriarchy is a term used by mostly feminists to describe the oppression and subjugation of women by men (Walby 1990:19). The mere fact that women are females was a flaw and excluded them from politics during the colonial era (Oyewumi 1997:124). Oyewumi agrees with Helen Callaway that the colonial regime was patriarchy for so many reasons. Callaway, cited in Oyewumi, states that the colonial government was
a male institution in all its aspects: its "masculine" ideology, its military organisation and processes, its rituals of power and hierarchy, its strong boundaries between the sexes. It would have been "unthinkable" in the belief system of the time even to consider the part women might play, other than as nursing sisters, who had earlier become recognised for their important "feminine" work.

(Oyewumi 1997:124)

Oyewumi proceeds to affirm Callaway’s claim, providing account of the political structure of the precolonial Yoruba society. In the precolonial Yoruba society political power was not determined by gender, rather, by seniority; the elderly indigenes held power regardless of their sex (Oyewumi 1997:135). Furthermore, Raji et al. give account of the Ilorin women’s active involvement in several production processes that contributed to the development and welfare of the Ilorin economy in precolonial Nigeria (2013:45). Oyewumi claims that “the system of indirect rule introduced by the British colonial government recognized the male chiefs…but did not acknowledge the existence of the female chiefs. Therefore, women were effectively excluded from all colonial state structures” (1997:124). This patriarchal system has become the realities of postcolonial Nigerian women. Furthermore, Falola narrates how the multi-ethnic women’s war of 1929 in colonial Nigeria was as a result of their disempowerment which also proves the active role of women in political and economic matters in precolonial Nigeria (2009:109). Stripped of their former positions, colonial women had to become “other things”, even postcolonial women. The duty of the woman then becomes to stay home and mind the family; rearing of children, domestic house chores and powerless remain in a “protected house” while the man leaves home to explore the economic and political world (Azodo and Eke 2007:3).

Additionally, Okonjo reviews the role Igbo women played in precolonial era and declares that the colonial past is the reason for Nigerian women’s lack of interest of politics (Hafkin and Bay 1976:46). She notes that majority of the west African traditional societies had “dual-sex systems” wherein each sex managed its own affairs and women’s interest were equally represented as against the “single-sex system” in the western world (Hafkin and Bay 1976:45). Also, Agara-Houessou-Adin, cited in Uchem (2001), has dug into the history of the Igbo traditional system where she confirms the active involvement of Igbo women in politics prior to British imperialism. She verifies that
The dual-sex political system … allowed women and men to carry out their responsibility without infringing on each other’s territory. It was a highly developed form of democracy that existed, in that decisions were reached only after lengthy debates and persuasion either in the respective milieu or as a whole community.

(Uchem 2001:43)

This is hardly the case in postcolonial Nigeria. Women are subject to men in various ways. The patriarchal system left behind by British imperialism very much exists.

Masculinity is defined by what it is not: femininity; therefore, characterised by ‘muscularity’, ‘strength’, ‘toughness’, ‘bravery’ and ‘authority’ as against ‘weakness’, ‘softness’, and ‘emotions’ (Reeser 2010:1). In other words, masculinity entails practices present in a precise cultural and socio-political settings, usually associated with males and are socially distinct as not feminine (Itulua-Abumere 2013:42). Raewyn Connell (2005:76-81) distinguishes between four types of masculinity: hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization. Hegemonic masculinity is a dominant form of masculinity within a society, such that within a society, upper-class and/or middle-class men, heterosexual men, and fantasy figures, such as film characters, qualify to possess hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005:77). Within races, white men tend to be more hegemonic in masculinity than black men. Hegemonic masculinity performs a default function and is regarded as ideal and all men in a given society are usually expected to follow suit. Ironically, most men are unable to attain such masculinity (Kahn 2009:34). Hegemonic masculinity derives its characteristics from the opposite of societal acceptable femininity referred to as ‘emphasized’ femininity which “reflects stereotypical female qualities, such as passivity, dependence, and fragility, and is considered as complimentary to the aggressive domination embodied in interactions that reflect hegemonic masculinity” (Morash 2006:90).

On the other hand, marginalized masculinity is unable to conform to or benefit from the qualities of hegemonic masculinity. Marginalized masculinity could mean being non-white or lower-class. Factors such as race, religion, ethnicity, and social class are employed to marginalise masculinity, so that even if these men are muscular, strong and emotional inexpressive, their masculinities would yet be marginalised (Kahn 2009:36). Subordinate masculinity is the very opposite of hegemonic masculinity; lacking numerous qualities of hegemonic masculinity. Subordinate masculinity as well expresses qualities opposite to
hegemonic masculinity such as excessively emotional, feminine-like, homosexual, or asexual (Harrison 2009:24). Complicit masculinity neither tallies with all the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity nor challenges it. However, complicit masculinity supports hegemonic masculinity, strives to attain hegemonic masculinity and to receive the benefits of being male in the society even though it will never primarily be in the dominant atmosphere (Kahn 2009:35).

The work of Fanon on racism and colonialism is critical to the concept of masculinity in colonial and postcolonial African. In Black Skin, White Masks, Fanon attempts “to liberate the black man from the arsenal of complexes that germinated in the colonial situation” (2008:14). Françoise Vergès re-echoes the words of Fanon as she states that “the body of the black man is (...) a humiliated, mocked, beaten, raped, assaulted, tortured, murdered body” (1997:582). Fanon strives to redeem the identity and self-worth of the black man which has been ruined by imperialism. As far as the white man is concerned, “the Other”, which is the black man, “is perceived as a bodily image, absolutely as the non ego, i.e., the unidentifiable, the unassimilable” (Fanon 2008:139). Fanon (2008:166) further describes how the black man has been made to equate with sin. “In Europe, the black man, whether physically or symbolically, represents the dark side of the personality” (Fanon 2008:166). And the white man obviously represents the bright and pure side of the personality. Eventually, all the black man aims to achieve is ‘whiteness’.

In addition to the review of masculinity in precolonial and postcolonial Nigerian, it is important to understand the white man’s perspective of the black man’s sexuality and gender. Fanon argues that “a black man is not a man” (2008:xii). “It has been estimated that the transatlantic deportation of Africans to the Americas between 1450 and 1870 comprised about 11.5 million people (...) and several of these African slaves were castrated” (Nieschlag et al. 2012:3). Hooks theoretically emphasizes this by arguing that “the blackness/darkness of the colonized body that marks it as other to the white coloniser is always framed within a gendered context wherein the metaphors of emasculation and castration symbolically articulate the psychic wounds of the colonized” (1996:82). Castrating the black man strips him of his ‘humanity’, at least in a way that makes him even more unequal to the white man. Fanon claims that the white man’s emasculation of the black man is prompted by sexual inferiority (2008:137). If otherwise, how else should this issue of castration be explained? If virility is taken to be the absolute idealism of manhood, is the genital mutilation of the black
man not a sexual revenge? (Fanon 2008:137). Another reason why a white man would delight in the emasculation of a black man is because “a white woman who has had sex with a black man is reluctant to take a white lover” (Fanon 2008:149). This would most likely be interpreted to mean that black men deliver higher sexual satisfaction compare to white men, hence, the castration. Fanon questions the reality of the black man’s sexual superiority and concludes that it is unreal, however, the ante-logical thought of the phobia for the black man has made it so (2008:137).

Afterwards, the black man assumes a feminine position since he has been stripped of his virility. Gwen Bergner buttresses Fanon’s stance, and argues that seemingly for the black man, his inferior identity, fashioned as a result of the “mirroring relation between white men and black men” is damaging to his masculinity especially because he has been made the recipient of the mutilating gaze that is non-empirically the male privilege (1995:80). Bergner draws this conclusion from Fanon’s experience with some white women. Fanon himself had become a sexual object of gaze of those white women which seems quite ironical since women are normatively the object of gaze by men at large (Bergner 1995:80). As such, the black man is placed in the “feminine” position (Bergner 1995:80). The black man is therefore, “an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor” (Fanon 1967:41). The colonised man has lived an oppressed life and must find a way to exonerate himself and gain his masculinity once more.

For him there is only one way out, and it leads to the white world. Hence his constant preoccupation with attracting the white world, his concern with being as powerful as the white man, and his determination to acquire the properties of a coating: i.e., the part of being or having that constitutes an ego.

(Fanon 2008:33).

If the black man must prove that he too can be white and gain his ego, he most likely will achieve it by utilising the same method as the coloniser: oppression. The question is, who is there for the black man to oppress? Who else to exert his new found dominion on, other than the black woman?

The second chapter of Black Skin, White Masks contains Fanon’s analysis of the works of Mayotte Capécia (1997): I Am a Martinican Woman and The White Negress.
“Mayotte loves a white man unconditionally. He is her lord. She asks for nothing, demands nothing, except for a little whiteness in her life” (Fanon 2008:25). In the novel, *I Am a Martinican Woman*, which is an autobiography of Mayotte Capécia (Fanon 2008:25), Mayotte strives hopelessly to find an acceptable and permanent definition of her identity. She is caught up between who she is and what she needs in life. She is a black woman, however, because of the presence of racial discrimination, she needs a little whiteness in her life, perhaps, she will be accepted by the world. Mayotte’s novel degrades black people and this is what Fanon criticizes and condemns about her works. In the novel, when Mayotte learns that her grandmother was white, she expresses how pleased she is and still goes on to wonder why her white grandmother stooped so low to marry a black man. She evidently sees the blacks as inferior. Fanon laments that Mayotte, in *The White Negress*, “belittle(s) the black man. Every black man she describes is either a scumbag or a grinning *Y a bon Banania*” (2008:35). Fanon concludes that Mayotte “has turned her back on her island. In both books only one course is left for her heroine, i.e., leave. This island of Blacks is decidedly cursed” (2008:35). Mayotte clearly idolizes the white man and sees his identity and values as the only way of salvation, thereby, forsaking her identity as a black woman.

Lola Young (1996) rejects Fanon’s criticism of Mayotte. Young describes Fanon’s analysis of Mayotte Capécia as a censure. Young argues that “Fanon is keen to develop a sense of Capécia’s unconscious, even without access to her dreams (…) Fanon only refers to black women’s experiences in terms which mark her as the betrayer” (1996:91-92). Mayotte, here, symbolises the setback of the black people’s freedom. Unfortunately, Mayotte is a woman, and feminists such as Young and Bergner do not welcome Fanon’s critics of the black woman. Terry Goldie (1999:78) carries out an analysis of Fanon’s search for a new man, a black masculinity, devoid of colonialism and agrees with Vergès who argues that Fanon reclaims his identity through the construction of his own history, “free from the chains of both alienation and desire. Man must seize his freedom and be free to act, to choose. This freedom demands mastering one’s life, one’s desire, one’s position in society” (Vergès 1996:49). In order for the black man to obtain his liberty and frame his identity, he must learn and discover ways to master his own life, develop and give into his own desires. Goldie therefore concludes that “Fanon finds this mastery in homosocial relations and tends to elide female participation” (1999:79). Homosocial relations refer to social interaction among members of the same sex, particularly men, and this context, between white men and black man of which black women have been omitted by Fanon. Perhaps, the black woman does not
need mastering of any sort; such that the freedom and self-definition of the black man is a covering for her.

In support of Goldie’s argument, Bergner claims that “this omission (of the black woman) confirms women’s roles as objects of exchange in the homosocial, heterosexual colonial economy” (1995:85). In other words, in the process of mastering his own life, the black man accepts the values of the white man, of which the objectification of women is one of those values. Bergner gives an account of Fanon’s acknowledgement of females as object of gaze and relates this to ways in which gender and race are mutual allies (1995:85). That is to say, the black woman is the reason why the oppression of the black man is worthy since the woman is decidedly supposed to be under the authority of the man. Thus, the black woman can longer find solace in the black man and must look up to the colonizer for salvation. The black man must then build his self-worth and identity by also positioning the black woman as an object of weakness. Only then, will the black man gain the respect of the white man. Bergner concludes that this homosocial and heterosexual colonial economy “reveals that racial identity is always differentiated by gender and suggests some of the specific constraints faced by black women” (1995:85). African masculinity, through the perspective and underlying ideas of Fanon, disregards black women’s desires in the course of mastering their own lives. This is because for men such as Fanon, “who aspire to patriarchal power, the black woman represents an encumbrance” (Young 1996:97-100). Mayotte is an example of such encumbrance because she desires the white man in order to define and present herself as acceptable. If the black woman is then accepted by the white man, of what use will the black man? The black man must then objectify the black woman. Fanon criticises Mayotte’s attempt to have a little whiteness, meanwhile, that same attempt made by Mayotte, it can be argued, represents Fanon’s homosocial relations with the white man, and perhaps, repressed homosexual desires (Goldie 1999:77-78). Fanon’s criticism of Mayotte has caused a number of feminists to label him a misogynist (Sharpley-Whiting 1999:61), thus, the precolonial and postcolonial African masculinity feminism battles with.

Olawoye argues that postcolonial Nigerian men are sovereigns and lords of virtually every economic, political and cultural aspect of policy creation. As such, they wield greater responsibilities. Male children in Nigeria acquire early orientation about their gender role and responsibility. Their choices, academically, career wise and whatsoever, are shaped by their gender role.
Men were most frequently described as the ‘head’, either of a family or a community. The concept of headship embraces other attributes such as dominance and decision-making capability, as well as the ability to provide for the family and protect its members (…) Male children are actually shown, by direct instruction and devolution of authority and responsibilities, how to act, think and behave as a man.

(Olawoye et al. 2005:10)

Manhood in the Nigerian society is an embodiment of great responsibility characterised by strength, lordship, provision, discipline, protection and even more. The inability to leave up to expectations may strip of his manhood whereby he is then referred to as a woman. For instance, in Northern Nigeria, Salamone notes that the Muslim Hausa organization is highly hierarchical and selection is based on seniority and gender among other criteria (2005:80). Salamone also records that men serve as household heads as well partake in major external activities while women assume household responsibilities and less external activities (2005:78). However, prior to the colonial era, Salomone also points out that “the status of women in early Hausa society was high (…) they were “not confined”” (2005:80). Similarly, Uchem draws attention to the high placement accorded to men in Igbo culture (2001:63). She gives an instance of how women are excepted from the Kolanut ritual. The Kolanut ritual in Igbo culture symbolises ‘life’. That is to say, whosoever brings the Kolanut, brings life (Uchem 2001:63). Yet, women are excluded from the ritual and only men are allowed participation.

Finally, it is important to note the irony in the aforementioned gender structures and frameworks in relations to African and western values. It has been stated how gender in the precolonial era was not characterised by inequality and subordination and how women were not oppressed by the current system that elevates men and place men in socio-political positions that elevates them at the expense of women in the society. The western values, which came with colonialization, created these unequal gender order and structure in Nigeria, altering the preceding structures. Feminists and other activists who fight against gender inequality in Nigeria are referred to as being “western”. Not to be westerly in Nigeria as far as gender is concerned, is to acknowledge the subordination of a woman to a man and not oppose it, whereas, it was the same western values that influenced Nigerian cultures with the supremacy of males over females. Therefore, what is referred to as traditional in colonial and postcolonial Nigeria is actually western, and what traditionalists refer to as western is, in the
real sense, traditional. Such that, the balance of power between both sexes, as it was in precolonial Nigeria, is part of what African feminists are fighting for as discussed earlier. It is significant to note that these conflicting ideas of western and traditional gender views originated from the colonial period.

2.9. Identity

The concept of identity is significant to the framework of this thesis because *Half of a Yellow Sun* deals with the perception of self, and the formation and alterations of behavioural patterns which contribute to the overall identities of characters. Identity is “a phenomenological sense of oneself as a separate individual being with a distinctive personality and a ‘true self’ persisting over time; a self-image” (Chandler and Munday 2016b). In other words, identity is the means by which people distinguish themselves from others with regards to personal experiences and preferences. Regardless of the personal preferences of individuals, Bennet and Royle argue that the formation of identity is not devoid of external interferences as explained below.

The authors argue that ‘I’ is not sovereign and does not exist in a sort of vacuum. “An ‘I’ or ‘me’ is always subject to forces and effects both outside itself (environmental, social, cultural, economic, educational, etc.) and ‘within’ itself (in particular in terms of what is called the unconscious or, in more recent philosophical terms, otherness)” (Bennett and Royle 2016:151). That is to say, various factors affect the formation of an individual’s identity no matter the dynamism of such person. So that even though if such person is of a higher echelon and of tremendous authority, s/he’s identity is defined and affected by such privileges and vice-versa. The authors further explain that the subjection or nonautonomous state of an identity begins from the conception of a child and into the surrounding environmental structures.

Not only are we radically dependent on the father who sires us and the mother who bears us (or on their various surrogates), but also on the environment (ecological,
economic, familial, social, etc.) into which we are born, as well as on the multiple forms of authority and government which condition our upbringing.

(Bennett and Royle 2016:151-152)

As such, factors such as language, region, culture, gender and race can be significant in the formation of identity as people tend to identify one another employing the listed factors.

Having cited a case study, John Joseph explains the relationship between language and identity. He notes that the notion of a ‘true identity’ may not exist, but that there is the “instinctive capacity to construct identities” based on language (2004:2-3). In other words, the language spoken by a person may describe his/her culture and region, and even among people of the same language/dialect, choice of words and mannerism of speaking distinguish people from each other, depicting factors such as social status and even gender.

Gender identity is “the subjective perception a person has of his or her own gender. It occurs as a result of a complex interaction between the person and others, and results in the internalization of masculine and feminine traits” (Kent 2006). Thus, gender identity involves the recognition of people as either masculine or feminine and the mastery, or perhaps, rejection of the roles and peculiarities of being male or female; reflecting in outward appearances and mode of conduct. As mentioned earlier, gender as it is in Nigeria is, to a large extent, constructed by the ideals of colonialism (section 2.8.), which implies that colonialism is as well expedient to the identity of the postcolonial Nigerian.

Bennett and Royle’s assertion that the concept of “‘I’ or ‘me’ is in fact historically determined” (2016:155) further proves the significance of colonialism to the distinctiveness of the Nigerian. Kelly Oliver, in his elaboration of Fanon’s analysis of the black man, states that “the black man’s alienation is neither merely ontological nor generated from his own existence. Within racist colonial culture, his existence is always only relative to the white man’s (2004:17). Accordingly, since colonialism is a significant aspect of the Nigerian history, it seems unlikely that the identity of the postcolonial Nigerian will be devoid of the consequences of colonialism as far as Nigeria is a colonial construct that is yet to fully achieve decolonization.
3. Femininity in Pre- and Post-Biafran War

This chapter will carry out an analysis of female characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The analysis of female characters will include behavioural patterns of characters and how these behavioural patterns conform and/or contradict the gender roles and expectations of the postcolonial Nigerian woman. This chapter will also investigate the modifications and alterations that occur in the behavioural patterns of these female characters in the advent of political and sociocultural revolution, to discover if these altered or unaltered behavioural patterns also conform to, or contradict the gender roles and expectations of the postcolonial Nigerian woman. These female characters include: Olanna Ozobia and Kainene Ozobia.

3.1. Olanna Ozobia

Olanna Ozobia is one of the novel’s main central character; an Igbo woman, twin sister to Kainene Ozobia, and Chief Ozobia’s daughter. She was raised in Nigeria before moving on to attend university in the United Kingdom and acquire a master’s degree in Sociology, after which she moved back to Nigeria. Despite her parents’ superficiality and avariciousness, Olanna remains a character with a sense of self-worth and morals. Once she had a Hausa boyfriend named Mohammed, however, she left him for her revolutionary lover, Odenigbo, whom she is intensely in love with and eventually marries. Olanna relocates from Lagos, where her parents reside, to Nsukka where she resumes a lecturing job in the University. Although Olanna is well educated, her literacy is undermined and treated as subsequent to her beauty.

It is expedient to not only discuss Olanna’s beauty because it is a contrast to her intellectuality, but also because it is a major factor that enhances traditional femininity; identifying a woman only for her sexuality and homely values, excluding her intellectuality. Olanna is described as beautiful in the novel. Several imageries and metaphors are employed in the description of Olanna’s pulchritude. The name itself, Olanna, means God’s Gold. Ugwu, a house boy to Odenigbo and Olanna, describes Olanna as a ‘shapely spirit who
emerged from the sea’ when he initially meets her because he assumes only a spirit can garner such exquisiteness. Olanna first appears as a sexual object in the sight of Ugwu; something to nourish the eyes and admire, and Ugwu describes Olanna as follows:

Her oval face was smooth like an egg, the lush color of rain-drenched earth, and her eyes were large and slanted and she looked like she was not supposed to be walking and talking like everyone else; she should be in a glass case like the one in Master’s study, where people could admire her curvy, fleshy body, where she would be preserved untainted. Her hair was long; each of the braids that hung down to her neck ended in a soft fuzz. She smiled easily; her teeth were the same bright white of her eyes. He did not know how long he stood staring at her.

(Adichie 2006:23)

Ugwu’s adoration for Olanna even leads him to suck on Olanna’s leftover, chicken bones. He builds a sexual imagery of her as he sucks on the bones, as though he exchanged saliva with her, their lips pressed against each other. What Ugwu feels for Olanna is concupiscence. It is however not just the uneducated Ugwu who finds Olanna attractive, but the educated Richard.

The first time Richard, a British expatriate in Nigeria and Kainene’s lover, sets eyes on Olanna, he experiences a sexual attraction. He observes the softness of her face, the smiling graciousness of her face and her fleshy, curvy body (Adichie 2006:60). This would imply that Olanna’s beauty is ‘unquestionable’, a flawless beauty, conforming to ideal beauty standards; because she appeals to both the uneducated, lower-class houseboy and to the educated and western Richard. Furthermore, Odenigbo’s friend, Okeoma, is unable to hide his adoration for Olanna (Adichie 2006:51). Even though she is his friend’s lover, he writes a poem of endearment that describes his fondness for her. Words never fail Kainene to mention the obvious distinguishing factor between herself and Olanna – ugliness (Adichie 2006:35). Kainene is the ugly one and unless it is mentioned, the two women certainly do not pass for twins. Olanna’s beauty, of course, has its demerits. The sexualisation of Olanna is not only realised by outsiders, but even her parents value her mostly for her beauty.

Olanna’s parents offer her as a sex bait to business partners despite her literacy status in order to secure their wealth; offers which she declines regardless of the fortune it may cost her father. Olanna is offered to Chief Okonji, the minister of finance, in exchange for a contract Olanna’s father bids for (Adichie 2006:30-36). This sexual objectification is
problematic and has denied Olanna of confidence in her identity. Olanna is running the risk of being reduced to a beauty that conforms to something that she is not willing to be seen as. She desires not to disappoint her parents, however, she chooses not to succumb to Chief Okonji even though she is continually pressured by her parents’ shallowness. The reduction of Olanna to a mere ‘sexualised traditional female’, continues to recur in various aspects of Olanna’s life as will be seen in succeeding sections.

3.1.1. Femininity and Literacy Prior to the Biafran War

As stated earlier, Olanna is a master degree holder which implies that she is immensely educated for a postcolonial Nigerian woman in the early years of Nigeria’s independence. As at that time, only a few Nigerian women could afford or were auspicious enough to acquire a bachelor degree, how much more be a master holder. Oguniyi and Dosunmu note that “education acquired by the women initially was to meet the expectation of domestic needs” (2014:189), and not to produce scholars but traditional women. Adichie shows the contrast, and at times, conflict between the traditionally primed woman and the new intellectual woman. For instance, in the novel, there is a case of Anulika’s mum scolding Anulika (Ugwu’s sister) to bend her waist properly and sweep like a woman, as though such house chores are specifically for women or perhaps, women are to carry out such chores in a more rigorous way than men should. Similarly, Makokha pinpoints that “education was considered as a man’s dominion” in postcolonial Nigeria (2014:114). Stereotypically, women are expected to be carers and readymade wives, submissive unto their husbands. As such, she should not acquire as much knowledge as her husband, otherwise, she will emerge as an unsubmitive spouse. In the words of Adichie, “we say to girls: You can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful but not too successful, otherwise you will threaten the man” (Tedx Talks 2013). An educated black man and an educated black woman under the same roof will produce two imperialists in endless dissension. This means that society recognises the power that comes with education, yet, society does not mean for all its members to acquire such power. Only the men should, and further dominate women as a continuation of the just concluded colonialism. Considering the above, it is only perspicuous for a traditionalist to consider Olanna recalcitrant and therefore not wifely in a traditional sense.
Olanna’s lover, Odenigbo, is a lecturer in the University of Nigeria in Nsukka, being well educated also. Olanna leaves Lagos for Nsukka so she can be close to Odenigbo. She applies for a teaching job in the university, is granted it and cohabits with Odenigbo. It is not just Olanna that is untraditional, it is also the whole environment that she is now a part of. The novel does not begin in a traditional setting, but a new kind of intellectual setting. Even though Olanna is an attractive female partner to Odenigbo and that setting, she becomes sudden un-wifely with the presence of the traditional mother of Odenigbo and would have to navigate these very conflicting worlds of traditional and intellectual ideals of femininity.

Conflict develops for Olanna when mama, Odenigbo’s mother, reproves of Odenigbo’s relationship with Olanna. This conflict is a ‘man against society’ kind, an external conflict; the sort of narrative that opposes the character against the beliefs and ideals of a society (Holman & Harmon 1992:105). Mama’s reasons for disapproving of their relationship are rather societal than personal. Mama fears Olanna will become a wife who cannot be controlled because she is educated. During one of the times mama visits Odenigbo’s home, she explains to Ugwu that she has come because she heard that her son is being controlled by a woman.

‘I heard that all the time she was growing up, it was servants who wiped her ike when she finished shitting. And on top of it, her parents sent her to university. Why? Too much schooling ruins a woman; everyone knows that. It gives a woman a big head and she will start to insult her husband. What kind of wife will that be?’ Master’s mother raised one edge of her wrapper to wipe the sweat from her brow. “These girls that go to university follow men around until their bodies are useless. Nobody knows if she can have children. Do you know? Does anyone know?”

(Adichie 2006:98)

Olanna evades mama’s perception of an appropriate wife. Mama’s uncertainty of an educated Olanna is better understood by James’ observation of the educated African woman: “most educated men look for simple and unsophisticated women as wives. ‘Acada’ women are uncontrollable, as Nigerian men say of graduate women. The ‘acada’ women, on their part, have learnt to take care of themselves. Preferring their profession to marriage” (1990:3). Mama herself is not educated. In addition to the fear of Odenigbo not deriving due respect, what is the fate of an uneducated mama? Olanna will enshroud her son from her and deny her access to her son’s philosophical life. Olanna’s education has elevated her to a state of all-
knowingness and mama’s opinion in matters will become irrelevant. Olanna’s education even propels mama to underestimate Olanna’s domestic abilities. On her arrival to Odenigbo’s home, she announces to Ugwu that she “‘wants to cook a proper soup’” for her son (Adichie 2006:96). As far as mama is concerned, a woman cannot be both scholarly and domestic/homely. Olanna must have been too busy developing her scholarly self and never had time to involve herself in domestic works. As a result of her being scholarly, Olanna will be unable to keep a man since scholarly equals defiant, and will therefore become licentious. Her promiscuity must have led her to share the same bed with numerous men and probably carried out several abortions and eventually lost fertility. Mama concludes that Olanna is a witch, for only a witch is capable of holding unto a man with whom she has no already made plans to have kids, yet, be domineering and defiant. She has to be educated to possess these qualities. Therefore, Olanna is ensnared between her own ideals and the traditional ideals of the Nigerian woman, and in this case, the enforcement of the ideals of traditional femininity is physically present and not just a theoretical construct; accentuating all the time these conflicts of ideal of feminism.

Olanna is unable to condole mama’s crude reasoning and hostility towards her and hopes that Odenigbo will build a bridge that will end mama’s crudity. Odenigbo is, however, unable to understand Olanna’s anger towards his mother. Mama is uneducated, Olanna should understand that. Odenigbo expects Olanna to treat mama’s words as unserious and ignorant. “‘Nkem (a special name Odenigbo calls Olanna), my mother’s entire life is in Abba. Do you know what a small bush village that is? Of course she will feel threatened by an educated woman living with her son. Of course you have to be a witch. That is the only way she can understand it’” (Adichie 2006:101). Olanna is after all high-minded and the words of a village, illiterate woman should carry no importance and have no effect on an intellectual woman. Illiterate women, therefore, have liberty to exhibit behaviours that will be unacceptable from an educated woman. Olanna is offended that Odenigbo does not defend her but rather excuses his mother. Olanna does not fail to mention to Odenigbo that there are village women she knows of that do not have such unrefined behaviours. Olanna soon realizes that this is the first time conflict, or argument has ensued between herself and Odenigbo even though Odenigbo argues nearly every night with his friends and colleagues who visit him (Adichie 2006:102). She begins to wonder, perhaps, Odenigbo perceives her in the same light as her parents; as a woman with a pretty face whose education and ideas are repudiable, except for her alluring face for which she deserves adoration and laudation. In
spite of her family’s bourgeoisie status, Olanna desires to be perceived and respected for her opinions and ideology, rather than her affluence and exquisiteness. This has left Olanna weak and voiceless in many circumstances. Unfortunately, there are very few peoples who are likely to understand her quandary and struggle to be heard.

What Odenigbo fails to comprehend is that Olanna is able to create a boundary amid her intellectual life and her love life. Despite Olanna’s literacy, she hardly proves her intellectuality to Odenigbo during the scholarly debates among Odenigbo and his friends. Instead, she reflects and ponders on their previous sexual activities in the midst of intense intellectual deliberations; an interweaving of sexuality and intellectuality (Adichie 2006:49-50). She is too busy loving Odenigbo to remember that she shares the same academic platform with him or that Odenigbo too is human and can be foible. This is one of the reasons why Kainene mentions to Olanna that she has never accepted that Odenigbo is ugly and can be flawed in so many ways (Adichie 2006:388). Olanna’s education does not save her from her need to be emotionally dependent. Olanna wishes she is different just like her sister Kainene, and is not the kind of person who wants to lean on others (Adichie 2006:103). Interestingly, it is Odenigbo’s confidence that got her attracted to him initially (Adichie 2006:28). She marvels at his confidence and masculinity in awe and feels as though she needs nothing else as long as she has Odenigbo. This will be discussed in details below.

For Olanna, education does not equal emotional independence. Mama must assume Olanna will make an independent wife, not in need of a man. Conversely, Olanna wishes she would love Odenigbo without needing him. “Need gave him power without his trying; need was the choicelessness she often felt around him” (Adichie 2006:101). To further explain how emotionally dependent Olanna is on Odenigbo, Olanna desires to postpone her career and move to Kano, where her uncle Mbaezi and his family reside, because Odenigbo cheated on her with Amala, an illiterate, village young girl who assists mama in domestic activities.

Mama’s hatred for Olanna leads her to lure Odenigbo to have sexual intercourse with Amala, a rural dweller and uneducated house girl of mama. Odenigbo claims he was drunk to stupor and was not aware of the time during which he laid with Amala. Olanna, however, feels cheated and would love to move, not out of Odenigbo’s house to her own house in Nsukka, but out of Nsukka to Kano. This shows the extent to which Olanna’s life is entangled with Odenigbo’s. Olanna’s aunty Ifeka advises her: “‘You must never behave as if your life belongs to a man. Do you hear me?’ (…) ‘Your life belongs to you and you alone, soso gi."

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You will go back on Saturday’” (Adichie 2006:226). On Olanna’s way back to Nsukka, she meets a random stranger on the plane who seem to have an attraction for her. Olanna then wishes she could make herself attracted to him so that she can begin a whole new life with this random stranger and put Odenigbo out of her life (Adichie 2006:227). Her intellectuality and high status does not seem to liberate her from the fetters of such dependency. It is amazing the extent to which Olanna’s life is tied to this man, Odenigbo. “‘When I am with him, I feel that I don’t need anything else”’ (Adichie 2006:229).

There is the feasibility to conclude that education alone can liberate a woman from the restraints of male dominance. Olanna, however, emphasises the myth of such conclusion. Women empowerment programmes in Nigeria solicit and campaign for the education of the girl child as a means to end male supremacy and female subjectivity. “Nigerian women are still relegated to the background as they lack the educational, economic and political power necessary to actualize their innate potentials” (Ovute et al. 2015:4). Since the 1980s and the recognition that development did not always improve the lives of women, there has been increasing and well documented attention given to gender issues (…) particularly among women, by improving quality and increasing access to basic education (McCaffrey 2004:159-160). Shu’aibu and Ayuba also argue that “human development can only be achieved through education” and that, “socially, women empowerment can be achieved through education” (2015:25). If an erudite and wealthy Olanna is yet unable to break free from the absolute desire and need of a man, education alone is therefore not the only tool a woman needs to own her identity. Improbable as it may seem, what Olanna lacks is a ‘voice’; a voice that will define her outside the sphere of Odenigbo and liberate her from the need of Odenigbo. Possessing a voice is accompanied with the total awareness of one’s self, and identity and rights.

There is a similarity in the lack of voice of paralleled female characters. Although Olanna and Amala are of differing class echelons and literacy status, they are similar in their perceptions of and deference to Odenigbo. Amala as well lacks a ‘voice’; unable to say no to unpleasant sexual demands from both mama and Odenigbo.

She (Amala) never once looked at Odenigbo. What she must feel for him was an awed fear. Whether or not Mama had told her to go to his room, she had not said no to Odenigbo because she had not even considered that she could say no. Odenigbo made
a drunken pass and she submitted willingly and promptly: He was the master, he spoke English, he had a car. It was the way it should be.

(Adichie 2006:250)

Rather than note the similarity between herself and Amala, and also consider herself as a victim of Odenigbo’s infidelity, Olanna identifies the actual victim in Amala, “who did not have a voice” (Adichie 2006:250), was impuissant and lacks the tools to negotiate the choices placed before her. She is yet unable to define her existence despite her literacy. Equally, Olanna has loved Odenigbo blindly for so long without ever criticizing him. She has never accepted that the man is ugly (Adichie 2006:388); adoring Odenigbo in such a way that the thought of his imperfections elude her. Discussion about Odenigbo’s imperfection will be in section 4.4.1.

Apart from the negative attributions, education, still, possesses positive values for a woman in a Nigerian society. Education is capable of saving a woman from total expiration even in marriage. At a young age, a Nigerian woman is expected to find a husband; if she delays, she may lose her bloom and may never become a wife (Baker 1998:880; Chuku 2013:279). Olanna, however, does not harbour such fears. During a conversation, Olanna tells her cousin, Arize, of her indecision concerning marriage. She is most certain she loves Odenigbo but lacks the desire to marry him. Olanna thinks marriage will convert her relationship with Odenigbo to monotonous and unpremeditated one (Adichie 2006:52). Whereas, Arize, who is uneducated, understands that she cannot decide not to postpone her marital life. Arize will become worthless is she tarries for too long. Only educated women can afford to delay getting marriage. This will mean that women are evaluated as perishable goods, and the preservative capable of saving them from expiration is education. Such that, she still withholds some sort of value after her first flush of youth is gone.

3.1.2. Femininity and Motherhood Prior to the Biafran War

Nancy Chodorow argues that, generally, women make several decisions that influence the sequence of their lives, however, it appears that among these decisions, there is no decision that ultimately defines her as naturally feminine than her choice to become a mother. “Women’s mothering, like other aspects of gender activity, is a product of feminine role
training and role identification. Girls are taught to be mothers, trained for nurturance, and told they ought to mother” (Chodorow 1978:31). The idea of motherhood is so strongly related with female uniqueness that it has become difficult for a woman to define herself without envisioning childbearing. Childbearing is gender expectation of postcolonial Nigerian women. As though, the decision not to have children is a verdict to be unfeminine which eventually, is a choice not to be unwomanly. Leskošek notes that “motherhood was equated with femininity. It was considered the most beautiful and the most natural profession for the woman” (2011:2). And how can one not want to be a woman, especially if such a person is easily driven by the need to resonate with societal values and culture? Olanna is such individual, as will be seen in subsequent paragraphs.

This is what society expects of Olanna, to be married and become a mother. In her analysis of Half of a Yellow Sun, Makokha states that “the woman in the postcolonial Nigerian society was expected to be a mother once she started living with a man, whether legally or traditionally married. A child was what identified a real woman from a ‘spoilt’ one, and lack of children was perceived as a sin” (2014:114). A woman can choose to be educated or not, and may not attract castigation from the society at large. She will, however, carve herself a better woman with the aura of motherhood than she would with her literacy/career. Prior to mama’s arrival, Olanna has never considered childbearing. Once, she told Odenigbo that she did not have that legendary female longing to give birth, and her mother had called her abnormal until Kainene said she did not have it either.

Women who do not desire to have children are usually labelled as self-centred, insensible, and lacking empathy (Denmark et al. 2016:326), and therefore are nonconformists to feminine gender expectations. This is however not Olanna. She is the exact opposite of self-centredness and insensibility. This is apparent in her relationship with Ugwu. As a houseboy, Ugwu is probable to be treated with disdain and humiliation which is a common practice in Nigeria towards his kind. House-helps in Nigeria are commonly regarded as discreditable and disreputable, attracting little or no respect and affection from their masters and mistresses (Chidebell 2013:187-190). Ugwu is an exception. Olanna’s attitude towards Ugwu includes no act of condescension. In fact, her actions towards Ugwu is that of helpfulness and care. Once, Olanna assists Ugwu with the laundry and spread the clothes out to air dry. Another time, Olanna cares for Ugwu’s sick mother in Odenigbo’s house. Olanna, more so, includes Ugwu’s clothing in her shopping expenditures. These are actions that are
not common place between house-helps and mistresses. Olanna’s desire not to bear children is therefore not as a result of her being devoid of compassion.

To further contradict societal standards, Olanna lacks the desire to be married. She, of course desires to be with Odenigbo for as long as time will permit but not to be married to him. Marriage, she believes, will cause her relationship with Odenigbo to become prosaic and lose all forms of romantic spontaneity. Therefore, women such as Olanna who prefer not to be married may be perceived as insubordinate and unhomely because they, as Adichie laments, refuse to “shrink themselves” and be modest in their ambitions (Tedx Talks 2013). This is still not true about Olanna. References about Olanna’s love and confidence in Odenigbo have been made earlier. A woman who loves a man without criticising him cannot be insolent. As far as Olanna-Odenigbo relationship is concerned, Olanna is submissive as well as acquiescent. Having established the above claims, it is deductive and rational to state that Olanna’s indisposition for motherhood is not a consequence of absence of empathy. It is rather a case of individual preference, perhaps, it may be associated with the relationship between herself and her parents. Olanna grew up to realise that her parents are mostly selfish and materialistic and will go a large extent to satisfy their egocentric and materialistic desires. She did not exactly experience parental love as she desired. Her parents love towards her is rather out of necessity and as a result of the expediency of her beauty towards the preservation of their bourgeoisie status. Such experiences are either capable of motivating one to become a better parent or seize from such person the avidity and exhilaration of parenting.

Howbeit, there are other reasons that explain the yearning for motherhood apart from the need to be feminine. Motherhood functions as an agent of security; a seal of union. In this case, children are an emblem of love, a symbol of inseparability between couples. Odenigbo’s mother’s visit has deposited a kind of fear that Olanna has never experienced as far as her relationship with Odenigbo is concerned. His mother’s hostile nature towards her may not necessarily cause Odenigbo to desert her, but their relationship may begin to experience a downturn, especially with the threatening presence of Odenigbo’s mother.

Odenigbo’s mother’s visit had ripped a hole in her safe mesh of feathers, startled her, snatched something away from her. She felt one step away from where she should be. She felt as if she had left her pearls lying loose for too long and it was time to gather
them and guard them more carefully. The thought came to her slowly: She wanted to have Odenigbo’s child. They had never really discussed children.

(Adichie 2006:104)

Perhaps Olanna’s involvement with the western world may have caused her to forget or even make her aware of the vitality of childbearing in a typical Nigerian home and how the absence of a child can mar a relationship. Balen and Bos discuss reports on the stigmatisation and marginalisation of childless married women in African communities, and the difficulties experienced in coping with the reactions and rejections by in-laws, especially mothers-in-law, which may lead to marital instability or even divorce (2009:116-117). Olanna might have assumed that Odenigbo is too educated and refined to jeopardise their relationship because she prefers not to have a child. That is possible. However, she has been too busy, caught up in romance, forgetting that marriage or partnership in a Nigerian setting is not just between the woman and the man involves all relatives on both sides of the marriage (Emechete 2007:93-94). It therefore matters little how refined the mind of the man is, a Nigerian marital or erotic relationship is prone to external interference nevertheless.

Nwosu and Friday explain that motherhood is a major, or even the only way for a woman to stabilize her position with her husband’s family and community in Nigeria (2015:40). Even though legal and official, marriage is usually not enough solid-ground for the Nigerian woman traditionally, there has to be some sort of seal, how much more when the couples are only cohabitees. Child bearing, then, functions as a form of validation for the Nigerian woman. This aspect of culture dawns on Olanna with the appearance of mama, as such, Olanna develops a sudden longing to bear Odenigbo’s child. “She had never seriously thought of having a child until now; the longing in the lower part of her belly was sudden and searing and new. She wanted the solid weight of a child, his child, in her body” (Adichie 2006:104). At this point, Olanna forsakes her preference and decides to conform to the feminine gender expectation of motherhood in order to be accepted in the society.

Olanna’s desire to enter into motherhood signifies the hurdle and problematic presence of traditional expectations, symbolised by mama, that Olanna cannot contend with. Her decision to have a child is a means to keep mama and traditional expectations at bay. Olanna wants the scent of mama’s visit to diffuse before she voices her desire to have a child to Odenigbo. Odenigbo, however, voices her desires as though he was in her mind and understands the trials that surround them. He suggests to Olanna that they have a child if she
will not marry him. Odenigbo, of course, understands that childbirth is one major way with which he can keep his mother at arm’s length from their relationship. Odenigbo says, “‘let’s have a child,’ (...) ‘A little girl just like you, and we will call her Obianuju because she will complete us’” (Adichie 2006:106). The birth of a child will complete them, secure their relationship, unite them as one and obstruct divisibility especially from family members. After a few attempts at sex, Olanna is fully aware that she did not conceive a child. The fear that something might be wrong with her envelopes her.

Typically, when a wife is unable to conceive, family members, or even the husband, sometimes, sort for other means – another wife or a mistress. Nwosu and Friday describe in their article, the approach of in-laws towards their infertile daughters-in-law in Nigeria as thus:

The attitude of in-laws is relatively unfavourable towards the childless woman and in the long-run; they do support her dehumanization because they believe that the childless woman is aiding the termination of their lineage. As such, in-laws encourage the marriage of a second wife in attempt to ensure the continuation of their lineages. (2015:43)

Such is the case of Olanna who is yet to conceive a child. Odenigbo’s mother’s doubt of Olanna’s fertility is revealed when she says “‘these girls that go to university follow men around until their bodies are useless. Nobody knows if she can have children. Do you know? Does anyone know?’” (Adichie 2006:98). It is no surprise then that mama orchestrates Odenigbo’s unfaithfulness towards Olanna. After mama’s initial visit, she returns again to Odenigbo’s house with Amala while Olanna is away in Lagos. According to Odenigbo, mama intentionally gets him drunk and sends Amala into his room during which he has sexual intercourse with her. Mama understands that the probability of Odenigbo accepting her advice to find another woman, is very low. Devising to get another woman pregnant for him without his conscious awareness is therefore a viable option. Afterwards, mama sends news to Odenigbo that Amala is pregnant.

One can hardly imagine Olanna’s devastation. Odenigbo has had sex with Amala just once and she is pregnant already. Meanwhile, Olanna has been attempting to conceive Odenigbo’s child and has failed yet. Not only has Odenigbo proven his vulnerability and infidelity, but has also proven the extent to which she is next to being infertile. “In the bathroom, she stood in front of the mirror and savagely squeezed her belly with both hands.
The pain reminded her of how useless she was; reminded her that a child nestled now in a stranger’s body instead of in hers” (Adichie 2006:232).

As Adichie rightly laments, “we say to girls: you can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful but not too successful, otherwise you will threaten the man (…) we raise girls to see each other as competitors—not for jobs or accomplishments, (…)—but for the attention of men” (Tedx Talks 2013). Adichie’s observation is true about Olanna – a master degree holder and a lecturer of Sociology – who feels ‘useless’, not because she is incapable of accomplishing intellectual goals, but because she is yet unable to fulfil a core traditional expectation of a Nigerian woman, becoming a mother, which she never wanted to be from the onset but suddenly feels compelled to in order to appeal to family and society, and successfully secure her relationship. This is a typical expectation of traditional femininity in Nigeria.

In as much as postcolonial Nigerian women define their femininity by the capability to procreate, having a male child is deemed more momentous than bearing a female child. Amala delivers her baby but refuses to touch the child because it is a female child. Had it been a male child, her reaction would have been the reverse. Similarly, Anulika, who has only recently begun puberty, already understands the significance of bearing a male child. “‘I want to have a baby boy first, because it will place my feet firmly in Onyeka’s house’” (Adichie 2006:119). In the same manner, a young woman named Onunna gives birth to a girl child, and her husband’s relatives decide to visit a spiritual consultant to find out why the sex of the child is not male. As a result of Amala’s rejection, the new born is made to feed on a wet nurse. The next ideal action is for mama to keep the child but mama also has refused to keep the child. She wanted a male child. Mama’s refusal to keep Amala’s baby reveals the extent to which even women uphold and reinforce patriarchal structures. Odenigbo and mama then arrange to send the child to Amala’s family. Odenigbo will provide the resources necessary for them to care for the child while Amala leaves for the western part of Nigeria to be married off to a Timber worker.

With a firm desire, Olanna surprisingly opts to keep the child as though she has nurtured the thought for a long time already and has always wanted to do this (Adichie 2006:251). Odenigbo reminds and reassures her that their relationship is the most important thing to him and they are to make the right decision not one that will endanger their relationship. In actuality, keeping that child appears to be an important choice for Olanna as
far as her relationship with Odenigbo is concerned. Olanna’s becoming a mother, even though through surrogacy, will finally afford her the opportunity to somehow appease the traditional world of Odenigbo’s mother. Olanna’s mother, Mrs. Ozobia attempts to discourage Olanna from weaning a child that is not hers (Adichie 2006:251). Olanna has however made her choice, and she becomes more confident about her choice when Kainene commends her stance as brave (Adichie 2006:252). Kainene approves after all. Kainene hardly approves of Olanna’s choices. She will finally be able to commence motherhood, and in fair means, secure their relationship with the feeling of completeness which the child brings. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is as well a book about surrogacy parenting necessitated by the pressure for motherhood.

3.1.3. Femininity, Culture and Identity Crisis Prior to the Biafran War

In this framework, identity refers to the means by which Olanna identifies and recognises her being including the primary factors that determine her self-definition. Cultural identity in this analysis stems from the conflict between European and traditional Nigerian values and ideologies. Such that Olanna is a woman with experiences of both cultures and deciding to live her life according to one or both or even a mixture of both cultures has no doubt brought about contradictions and battles of the mind in defining who she really is, even to herself.

The ultimate Identity for Olanna as seen in the novel, appears to be a male counterpart – Odenigbo. Olanna’s education and career determine only a minute part of the eventualities in her life. She does not let her literacy outline and lead her life on. Olanna is defined by Odenigbo in such a way that a large part of her life is dictated and controlled by Odenigbo’s actions and inactions. Prior to Olanna’s relocation to Nsukka, Kainene explains to her parents and a guest during a dinner in their home in Lagos, that she will be putting her newly acquired degree to use; managing her father’s oil establishments in Portharcourt. On the other hand, Olanna claims to be moving to Nsukka to start a lecturing job in the university, nevertheless, it is clear that she is moving to Nsukka not necessarily because of the lecturing job but because she wants to be closer to Odenigbo (Adichie 2006:41). Olanna confesses to an American friend: “‘when I am with him, I feel that I don’t need anything else’” (Adichie 2006:229). ‘Anything else’ may include her education and career. Odenigbo becomes the indispensable element in Olanna’s life such that she suddenly desires to have his child,
something she has always not wanted to do, so that she can remain in his life without external threats. More so, even when her love is betrayed by Odenigbo’s infidelity, Olanna appears to be the one pleading for the resolution of their relationship. She decides to become a surrogate mother – to mother Amala’s child; still because she has to enter into motherhood in order to seal her union with Odenigbo keep Odenigbo’s mother away. In deciding to become a surrogate mother, Olanna does not contemplate for a long time or struggle to make the decision. The decision is well grounded in her – a conformation to the traditional femininity – and is made with ease as though her subconscious is already aware that Odenigbo is her life anyway, so she might as well accept his child. Olanna’s relationship with Odenigbo is a catalyst that marks off her departure from her individual identity to a conformation of the Nigerian culturally defined concept of identity.

3.1.3.1. *From an Individual Identity to a Cultural Identity*

Foremost, it is not exactly clear why Olanna takes on this revolutionary sense of identity – embracing socialism and the idea of a future Biafra which Odenigbo vehemently argues for. It is of course understandable that she hopes for the existence of Biafra since she is Igbo, however, her decision seems more grounded in Odenigbo than in herself – believing and trusting nearly everything propounded by Odenigbo. Kainene talks about how much Olanna adores Odenigbo’s political opinions (Adichie 2006:69). Perhaps, if Odenigbo was not a revolutionary and ardent believer of a future Biafran, Olanna may not invest so much effort at being Nigerian or be as hopeful as she is about the Biafran cause. Olanna’s enthusiasm and trust in Odenigbo’s ideologies enable her to conform to the feminine gender expectation of ‘man as the basis of a woman’s identity.

Throughout the novel, Olanna appears to be trying so hard to fit into the Nigerian culture and seeking acceptance. Olanna is seen making conscious efforts to be Nigerian. During the period of her initial arrival in Odenigbo’s house, Olanna chooses to assist Ugwu to do the laundry. It is difficult to conclude that Olanna’s assistance towards Ugwu is entirely natural and involuntary. This is not say that Olanna is hostile, she is far from being unreceptive, but there is a probability that she makes a conscious effort at being meek and modest in the Nigerian way. It is a commonplace that a typical Nigerian girlfriend or wife-to-be displays her homely and domestic qualities so that she reveals how much of a wife
material she is. Odenigbo does not seem to care about such, especially not from Olanna. He understands that Olanna has spent a large part of her life in Europe. Olanna, however, feels the need to be Nigerian in any way she can, not necessarily because she wants to please Odenigbo but because she is always making efforts to please people. Kainene emphasises this when she questions Olanna’s keenness to always please their parents (Adichie 2006:389).

Being frugal and less profligate, even when it costs little or nothing is one of Olanna’s means of society integration. During a trip to Lagos from Nsukka, the ticket seller at the airport recognises Olanna as Chief Ozobia’s daughter and offers Olanna a sit at the VIP lounge while she waits for her flight to begin boarding. Olanna refuses. She does not want to be in the VIP lounge (Adichie 2006:27). This is a woman who has flown several international flights and has never known poverty. Majority of the Nigerian people are working class citizens who will not be able to afford a sit in a VIP lounge and Olanna has chosen to identify with them and experience certain aspects of life from their point of view. Additionally, Olanna prefers to travel with trains instead of aeroplane during her journeys to the North (Adichie 2006:37). This is another means through which she attempts to connect with the Nigerian culture and conform to the feminine gender expectation of selflessness and altruistic.

Ironically, in the course of one of Olanna’s visit to her uncle Mbaezi and aunty Ifeka in northern Nigeria, Olanna contradicts her attempts to be typically Nigerian. The neighbours’ children in uncle Mbaezi’s house appear to be dirty and unkempt. They are children of lower class citizens. Baby, Amala’s child whom Olanna is parent to, wishes to play with the dirty and unkempt children. Olanna finds herself trying to please people and if she has to be nice to the dirty and unkempt children, she has to let baby play with them but she did not want baby touching them and it shame her that she feels that way (Adichie 2006:128). The only reason why Olanna feels ashamed about restricting baby from mingling with the dirty children is because she is always making conscious efforts at being typically Nigerian and to be integrated into the community of the ordinary Nigerians, something she may not always be capable of achieving as in this scenario. At another time, when Olanna visits her uncle Mbaezi and family in the north, she sits with aunty Ifeka and Arize as they cook in their local kitchen, an environment very much degrading and uncomfortable for Olanna. As they sit in the kitchen discussing, the smoke from the burning firewood used to cook by aunty Ifeka and her neighbour irritates Olanna’s eyes and throat, and the sight of cockroach eggs nauseates her too. She has never used firewood to cook. Firewood is used by
poor people who cannot afford petrol for their stoves. Yet, Olanna pretends as though she is experiencing no discomfort. “She wanted to seem used to it all, to this life” (Adichie 2006:42). There is a struggle between what Olanna really is and her struggles to conform to gender expectations; to be like traditionally Nigerian, and not western.

Olanna constantly fights off being perceived as western. Mohammed, her former boyfriend, makes a remark about how Olanna gawks at everyday things just as Europeans do. She admires everyday things, which she has seen so many times in the past, as though she has only just seen them for the first time. Surprisingly, Olanna reacts to the statement Mohammed made about her being European several minutes after he said it. She did not react immediately he made the remark. She has obviously processed the information in her head and found there to be elements of truth in it. And after she and Mohammed have discussed other matters, she replies Mohammed, “‘I am not like white people’” (Adichie 2006:46). She realises that she may truly be western in so many ways, however, she refutes being labelled western as she seeks after Africanism.

Even though she desires to be typically Nigerian in numerous ways, she is unable to accept some of the beliefs that come with being traditionally Nigerian. During the conflict between Olanna and Odenigbo which is as a result of Odenigbo’s infidelity, Ugwu narrates to Olanna how he saw a black cat in the environs of Odenigbo’s house after mama has said that she will visit the Dibia (a native and spiritual doctor). He makes her realise that a black cat means evil which is symbolic for mama’s effort to separate Olanna and Odenigbo. Olanna, however, rebukes Ugwu’s claim. “Odenigbo’s mother’s medicine from the dibia —indeed, all supernatural fetishes— meant nothing to her” (Adichie 2006:105). Only logical events can explain a couple’s separation to Olanna, not spiritual and fetish reasons. At this point, two cultures, western and Nigerian, struggle for placement within Olanna.

Language is another means through which Olanna attempts to fully integrate with the ordinary Nigerians. Olanna’s spoken English is a proper British accent, crisp and clear. Ugwu admires the perfection of Olanna’s spoken English and acknowledges that none of the intellectuals who come to Odenigbo’s house at night, speak English as well as Olanna does. Olanna, nevertheless, prefers to converse, especially with working class citizens in local Nigerian languages. She speaks Igbo which is her mother tongue, nevertheless, she desires to speak other Nigerian languages especially Yoruba and Hausa because it will allow her associate more with Nigerians. She does not mind trading her ability to speak French and
Latin for Hausa and Yoruba (Adichie 2006:40-41). There is a clash of language desire and interest between Ugwu and Olanna. Ugwu prefers to communicate using English language in order to practise his spoken English but Olanna will rather speak Igbo with him (Adichie 2006:47). Olanna assumes Ugwu will perceive her as more friendly and down to earth if she converses with him using Igbo since Ugwu himself is unable to speak proper English. Eventually, during the conflict between Olanna and Odenigbo, Olanna ceases to speak Igbo with Ugwu. The anger she feels for Odenigbo suddenly causes her to speak more English to Ugwu in a way that sounds cold and distancing (Adichie 2006:241). By so doing, Olanna activates her intellectuality, distances herself from the traditional femininity she has been attempting to adopt and sets herself apart. Deductively, Nigerian languages serve as a means by which Olanna immerses herself in the Nigerian culture while English language functions as a means of self-reclamation; her dominant identity which she conceals in her effort to commingle.

Furthermore, Olanna’s decision to be western or Nigerian is largely determined by her relationship with Odenigbo. Before conflict rises between Olanna and Odenigbo, Olanna’s clothing and appearance are most often simple. She ties wrapper around her chest in the house which is a common mode of indoor dressing among typical Nigerian women. Her outing dresses are not glamorous or conspicuous. She wears her hair in cornrows using threads as extensions as against artificial hair. Her previous boyfriend, Mohammed, disapproves of her local weaves and recommends artificial hair. “‘What did you do to your hair?’ he asked. ‘It doesn’t suit you at all. Is this how your lecturer wants you to look, like a bush woman?’ Olanna touched her hair, newly plaited with black thread. ‘My aunty did it. I quite like it.’ ‘I don’t. I prefer your wigs’” (Adichie 2006:44). Accordingly, Olanna wore wigs while she was in a relationship with Mohammed but prefers to have her hair the local style now that she is with Odenigbo. Odenigbo appears to be a vital element that determines the culture she embraces. He is her life constantly (Adichie 2006:322) and she will tailor her life in the way that pleases him and since Odenigbo is a revolutionary, a pan African, yearning for an Africa that is truly Africa and not Eurocentric, Olanna will lead her lifestyle along the patterns of the true African culture.

This explains the obvious change in Olanna’s spoken language to Ugwu and in her physical appearance when conflict sets in between herself and Odenigbo. She no longer ties a wrapper around her chest. Instead, Olanna wears fitted dresses even within the house. “It was incongruous to see her there in her black shoes and her knee-length dress. She, who was
always in a wrapper or a housedress in the garden…she was different; her skin and clothes were crisper” (Adiche 2006:241-242). Olanna now wears wigs, no longer cornrows woven with threads. It is as though, she lost something so vital and is trying to gain back. She has lost herself to traditional femininity and has become powerless – wearing local cornrows on her head and wrapper around her chest has made her the same as every other woman who has not achieved as much as she has achieved, including Amala. Olanna has now become like Amala – they dress the same way and sadly, have shared the same man. The only thing that distinguishes them from one another is literacy. Unfortunately for Olanna, her literacy means little to her compared to what Odenigbo means to her. She will therefore have to ensure that she is control of her life, hence, the need to reject the traditional femininity and appear European in her looks.

Olanna’s alteration of her lifestyle can be better comprehended applying Fanon’s criticism of Mayotte Capécia, who seeks a little whiteness in her life, thereby idolizing the white man and deeming the white man’s identity as salvation from her blackness and further gender oppression from the black man (Fanon 2008:25). In the same way, Olanna employs the white man’s culture as a means of salvation and a tool of retaliation against Odenigbo’s superciliousness and domination. Ironically, even in her attempt to be in charge of her life, it is obvious that Odenigbo is still the controlling factor of her behavioural patterns and lifestyle. A favourable relationship with Odenigbo affords her to be Nigerian in most possible ways while an unfavourable relationship with Odenigbo forces her to return to being western. Odenigbo, her revolutionary lover, is the reason for her revolutionary change from being western to traditional.

Powerless is how Olanna feels when she learns of Odenigbo’s infidelity. Olanna realizes that she and Odenigbo have never had any reason to quarrel before the case of Odenigbo’s infidelity. She wonders if Odenigbo actually values her opinions or has just been humouring her. The latter is likely the case. In order to regain her power and self-assurance, she has sexual intercourse with Richard. As soon as she sleeps with Richard, she regains her confidence and finds it easier to forgive Odenigbo. If his infidelity towards her makes her powerless, her infidelity should do the same to him and place them on an equal level of strength. The need to grasp a total mastery of her life transforms this apparent iniquity into an identity-confirming moment for Olanna. Of no doubt, Odenigbo is the controlling force and superseding identity in Olanna’s life.
Olanna, at the beginning of the novel, is one of the many women for whose course feminist movements are established – to liberate their minds from the supreme need of men. Education is power and as stated in the theoretical background, literacy amounts to progress and success. One major means by which women are kept powerless and subordinate is deprivation of education. However, education in the case of Olanna is not a liberation tool. In spite of the degree of Olanna’s education, her progress, success, power and identity points at one major direction – Odenigbo. This means that highly educated and independently wealthy women are not immune to patriarchy even within structures as small as the home. Patriarchy and education are both tools of colonialism and attempting to resolve patriarchy via education in Nigeria only perpetuates the evolution of patriarchy.

3.2. Kainene Ozobia

Kainene Ozobia is another central character in the novel; an Igbo woman, the ugly twin sister to Olanna Ozobia, and Chief Ozobia’s daughter. She was raised in Nigeria before moving on to attend university in the United Kingdom and acquire a master’s degree, after which she moved back to Nigeria. Kainene is the ugly daughter and less popular of the twins.

The first impression Kainene gives the reader is ‘sarcasm’ and emotional ‘independence’; as in when she mockingly informs Olanna that the “‘the benefit of being the ugly daughter is that nobody uses you as sex bait’” (Adichie 2006:35), and the manner in which she appears to have no interest in Richard when she actual does (Adichie 2006:36) respectively. Kainene manages her father’s businesses in Port Harcourt and proves to be successful and effective. Richard falls deeply in love with Kainene when they meet. Kainene returns Richard’s love but builds up emotional defences and rarely displays open affection. Kainene is objectified just like Olanna. She describes herself and her twin sister, Olanna, as ‘meat’ to be presented unto eligible bachelors. Kainene, however, possesses an aura and poise that affords her to voice her opinions, even views regarded as discourteous.
3.2.1. Femininity, Literacy, Motherhood and Identity Prior to the Biafran War

Kainene, although female, is described as possessing masculine qualities. Richard thinks of Kainene as ‘androgynous’; being partly male and partly female in appearance, of an indeterminate sex. Kainene’s laughter is husky in nature which is usually described as masculine, as against the shrill voice of a female’s laughter. She does not conform to the feminine gender expectation of beauty and curviness like in the case of Olanna. After observing the competence and reliability of Kainene’s managerial skills in her father’s businesses, Chief Okonji makes a remark, during a family dinner, that whoever said Chief Ozobia lost out by having twin daughters is a liar (Adichie 2006:31). This would mean that, males are generally regarded as the intelligent and dependable sex while females are the weak and unintelligible sex which labels women as liabilities, and having no male child at all means that such parents lack asset. Chief Ozobia quickly endorses Chief Okonji’s compliment by proudly stating that “‘Kainene is not just like a son, she is like two’” (Adichie 2006:31). Kainene embodies the fortitude and intelligence of more than one man. Kainene’s ugliness leads her father to augment her physicality. As a woman who is not beautiful enough and androgynous in nature, only a few men may desire to consider her for marriage. As such, Chief Ozobia purchases a house for Kainene. This house is intended to attract men to Kainene and symbolise a dowry payment. So that if Kainene’s physicality does not appeal to a prospective suitor, her affluence will. This implies that Kainene’s parents acknowledge Kainene’s nonconformity to feminine gender expectations.

Kainene is a woman of staunch confidence – too confident to be feminine. Kainene is the only one who can reprove her father of his ill behaviours with an unaltering boldness and unwavering words. She is easily respected and heeded to by people who surround her. She is a woman of only essential and firm words. Kainene is not the sort of woman to offer adoration, give credence or randomly give approval, as such, her words are rarely undermined. Kainene’s confidence is revealed when Chief Okonji enquires about her next line of action since she has acquired a master’s degree.

Kainene looked Chief Okonji right in the eyes, with that stare that was so expressionless, so blank, that it was almost hostile. ‘What about me indeed?’ She raised her eyebrows. ‘I too will be putting my newly acquired degree to good use. I’m moving to Port Harcourt to manage Daddy’s businesses there.’
Adichie’s choice of words create a clear imagery of Kainene’s nature in the mind of the reader – ‘expressionless’, ‘blank’, ‘hostile’, ‘raised eyebrows’ among many others. These words connote fearlessness; of a woman whose mind-set is shielded against instability and weakness – not the type of woman to lower her eye as she speaks to a man, which is commonly regarded as a sign of respect and humility in the Nigerian context. Kainene, therefore, does not conform to the feminine gender expectations of the postcolonial Nigerian woman.

The stereotypical outcome of women such as Kainene is that they never find a man who loves them or wants to be with them. They scare off men because they appear to be independent and therefore in need of no one. Generally, women are perceived as weaker vessels, and therefore, need men to depend on. Kainene is not only confident and appear to be complete in herself, she also runs her father’s businesses which means that she is not in need of a man for financial motives. To further escalate issues, Kainene has no interest in motherhood just like Olanna did prior to conflict that rose with the arrival of mama (Adichie 2006:104). Kainene’s demanding schedule is indeed ample reason to befuddle her from the cogitation of child bearing. Once again, women such as Kainene are likely to be regarded as self-obsessed and egocentric; eager to sacrifice nothing for others. She resists nearly every gender expectation of femininity, nonetheless, Richard has great affection for Kainene and is, in actuality, afraid of losing her (Adichie 2006:258).

In addition to her unfeminine nature, Kainene is tremendously emotionally defensive. She expresses little or no emotions, even towards her lover, Richard. Kainene undoubtedly loves Richard but never expresses fear of losing Richard even when there are reasons to be. Richard is usually unable to perform during sexual intercourse with Kainene; he experiences difficulty in being aroused and when he does, he immediately climaxes (Adichie 2006:64). This bothers Richard too a great extent as he is afraid Kainene may find herself another man who is capable of satisfying her sexually. Kainene on the other hand seems unperturbed. It does not bother her that Richard is unable to get an erection with her and that it may as a result of her unrelenting confidence; too confident that it intimidates Richard. She effortlessly goes on to discuss other matters with Richard, sometimes ignoring his apology.

Another fascinating situation is the moment Olanna discovers that Kainene is aware of her sexual escapade with Richard. Kainene calls Olanna on the telephone and surprisingly
sounds calm as she rebukes Olanna. Kainene’s calmness frightens Olanna (Adichie 2006:254). Olanna cannot fathom how anyone can be so calm and composed about an issue of this magnitude. This infidelity is double sided; betrayed by two of Kainene’s loved ones – her sister and her lover. Olanna remembers how she almost lost herself when she discovered Odenigbo’s infidelity, and her sister is being calm about a similar issue. This is also an issue of rivalry between the sisters – ‘beauty versus ugliness’. It is somewhat natural for Richard to get sexually attracted to the beautiful sister – Olanna, and even perform satisfactorily compare to the several sexual failures he has had with the ugly Kainene. Olanna’s beauty and attractiveness is a tool that overrides Kainene’s confidence and Kainene seems threatened by it. ‘You’re the good one and the favourite and the beauty and the Africanist revolutionary who doesn’t like white men, and you simply did not need to fuck him. So why did you?’” (Adichie 2006:254). The physical appearance of the sisters is not only a differentiating factor but may also be a factor that has kept Kainene distant from Olanna since their undergraduate days (Adichie 2006:36-37). Perhaps, Kainene assumed her closeness to Olanna will mostly foreground her ugliness and thought it was best to be distant from Olanna.

Kainene’s reaction to this double infidelity is astonishingly sangfroid even towards Richard. Kainene makes Richard understand that if it was not her sister he laid with, his disloyalty will be forgivable (Adichie 2006:256). In other words, Kainene is not despaired as a result of Richard’s infidelity, it does not bother her. What bothers her is the person with whom he has sexual relations. Kainene is unable to imagine sharing the same man with her sister. Whereas, Olanna almost loses her mind because of Odenigbo’s infidelity, even though the woman Odenigbo laid with is of no substance and deluxe compare to Olanna. The morning after Kainene finds out about Richard and Olanna’s infidelity, she greets Richard with a stoic face – face of a person who can endure pain or hardship without showing their feelings or complaining (Adichie 2006:257). Kainene out of anger for Richard burns Richard’s manuscript, manuscript which is proof of Richard’s expatriate as a writer in Nigeria. Afterwards, she carries on with her usually daily activities, unbothered.

Kainene possesses an identity that is fixed and perpetual regardless of the consequences of her sexual relationship. Her lifestyle exemplifies a woman whose activities and choices are neither tied to the functionality or failure of a man, nor to the pressure of motherhood placed upon women. Kainene nurtures no interest in motherhood and seems to be devoid of that “fabled female longing to give birth” (Adichie 2006:104). Her disinterest in motherhood appears to be a significant separation between her behavioural patterns and the
gender expectations of femininity. Kainene is a woman with a working vision and ambition. Her life appears to be already planned out and not in need of anyone else to complete it. Richard cannot help but be amazed at such completeness and needlessness.

Richard was bewildered by Kainene’s busy life. Seeing her in Lagos, in brief meetings at the hotel, he had not realized that hers was a life that ran fully and would run fully even if he was not in it. It was strangely disturbing to think that he was not the only occupant of her world, but stranger still was how her routines were already in place, after only a few weeks in Port Harcourt. Her work came first; she was determined to make her father’s factories grow, to do better than he had done. In the evenings, visitors—company people negotiating deals, government people negotiating bribes, factory people negotiating jobs—dropped by, parking their cars near the entrance to the orchard.

(Adiche 2006:77-78)

Kainene’s literacy to a large extent contributes to her identity. Even without a formal education, Kainene most likely will thrive as an independent woman. Her resilience is present in every aspect of her life. Kainene’s independence is not neither in equation with superciliousness, nor ‘an exaggerated sense of self-worth’. In other words, Kainene does not give an impression that she is no need of affection. Her life, however, will not cease to function in the advent of emotional crisis.

Unlike Olanna, Kainene’s cultural identity does not change as a result of Richard’s infidelity. She does not quit wearing wigs or tightly fitted dresses as she has always done. Kainene does not leave Port Harcourt where she is based in search of someone to confide in and help her heal in the manner in which Olanna leaves for Kano to confide in aunty Ifeka about Odenigbo’s infidelity. As a matter of fact, Kainene does not leave the house for Richard because she is unable to stand him, she sits drinking a cup of tea and reading a newspaper the morning after the discovery of Richard’s infidelity with an eerie calmness. She informs Richard that the chef is making breakfast as though Richard does not deserve to be totally ignored. And when Richard pleads to speak with her, in order to proper apologise, she refuses and says to him that they will discuss the issue at hand when she wishes too, as though his apology will make no difference. Kainene does not conform to the gender expectation of ‘a foregrounded identity in the man’.
Most significantly, Kainene finds no reason to pay Richard back in his own coins. If she does, it will mean that she is seeking to get her power back as she feels trampled upon. Fortunately for her, she has made nothing or anyone else the element that completes her, neither has she granted anyone power and dominion over her. The thought of ending their relationship does not occur to her. She is aware that ‘the action’ is the problem not the carrier of the action, and that the carrier of the action can be anybody else. Human beings are flawed. Actions are bound to transpire, positive or negative. Kainene will therefore not allow one negative action, even though so personal, ruin or control her life. She is who she is regardless of occurring conflicts.

3.3. Femininity in the New World

The new world in *Half of a Yellow Sun* begins with the creation of Biafra; a symbol of hope for the massacred and battered Igbo people which is quickly annealed and ruined by the declaration of the Nigerian civil war (Biafran war). The hardship, starvation and destruction resulting from the Nigerian civil war occurs in the southeast of Nigeria, specifically the Biafran region, excluding the northern and western region (Adichie 2006:423). Details about the war have been discussed in the theoretical background chapter. In the new world, structures and patterns of lifestyles change. There is a drastic increase in the number of death tolls and injured. The social class structure: upper-class, middle-class, lower-class, becomes disrupted and the boundaries between them turn out to be reedy and nearly invisible. The recently created Biafra begins to undergo loss of economic resources, destruction of environment and loss of productivity. Institutions of different kinds, including educational institutions, are demolished. Weapons of warfare cause the soil to become infertile and unable to yield. Importation of products into Biafra as well becomes a mission impossible, except for a few occasions when relief planes are not shot down from the sky. Starvation sets in and feeding reasonably is barely possible. It is vital to note that this new world consists of only Biafran territories. Other regions in Nigeria are not partakers of the suffering and massacre of the Nigerian civil war.

War generally affects people socially, emotionally, physically and psychologically. The effects of war on people can be extremely negative ranging from loss of identity, change
in personality, loss of social life, sudden depression, malnutrition. The Biafran war changed
the lives and expectations of Biafran women. Did the Biafran war affect already existing
gender roles and expectations? What were the contributions of women during the war? How
did attitudes towards women change during the war? How did the Biafran war alter the
identity of women? Answers to these questions will be provided through an analysis of
selected female characters in the primary text of this thesis.

3.3.1. Olanna Ozobia in the New World

The Biafran war has rendered Olanna traumatised. Olanna who has been somewhat secured
from ethnic feud in the opulence of the safety of her residency and bourgeoisie lifestyle, is
abruptly exposed to the reality of the Nigerian quandary; of war and violence. During one of
her visits to northern Nigeria, Olanna insists on stopping by her uncle Mbaezi and aunty
Ifeka’s house, just after Mohammed announces to her, in his home, that Igbo bodies are lying
lifeless on the roads in the city. Mohammed’s effort to convince Olanna to leave the north
without any other action proves to be futile. Olanna insists that she must leave with her
relatives. They arrive the village to discover that everything has been burned and ruined.
Olanna steps out of the car and sees the massacred bodies of her Uncle Mbaezi and Aunty
Ifeka. Arize’s body is not in the scene but Olanna is sure that Arize, who has been pregnant,
must also be dead (Adichie 2006:147-148). Olanna is staggered to see uncle Mbaezi’s close
friend, Abdulmalik, who is oblivious of Olanna’s presence, holding a machete and boldly
proclaiming to his companions that he has massacred the whole family of uncle Mbaezi and
that it is Allah’s will to do so. Olanna is even more traumatised by Abdulmalik’s actions
because this Abdulmalik had previously invited Olanna for dinner in his home and had given
Olanna gifts during one of her many trips to the north. More so, Abdulmalik and her uncle
Mabezi used to spend time together; eating, discussing in Hausa and laughing. It should be
noted that Olanna was, indeed, a close kin to her murdered relatives.

More trauma abounds for Olanna as she witnesses more horrific scenes on the train
during her trip back to Nsukka from the north. On the train, Olanna is surrounded by
casualties and weeping people. A grieving mother opens a calabash and reveals the pale and
severed head of her daughter to Olanna and other passengers (Adichie 2006:149). This
scenario of an unnervingly calm mother carrying and revealing the detached head of her
daughter is one of the most evocative and tormenting moments for Olanna. While many of the observers express vehement reactions of disgust to the child's head, Olanna is transfixed in morose fascination with the girl and her meticulously weaved hair. The mother of the girl explains how much time and effort was consumed in the making of the hair which signifies a mother-to-child attachment; an attachment Olanna can relate to, being a mother to Baby (Chiamaka). This experience exposes Olanna to the horrifying aspect of motherhood. She has accepted this traditional femininity that requires her to be a mother and now that she is deeply involved in it, she sees the possibility of losing that aspect of her life that traditionally defines her as acceptable – motherhood.

Even more, Olanna’s menstrual blood has lost colour and become sparse. Olanna’s health deteriorates to such an extent that she loses her voice. “She wanted him to stop being ridiculous, but her lips were heavy. Speaking was a labour. When her parents and Kainene visited, she did not say much; it was Odenigbo who told them what she had seen” (Adichie, 2006:157). Not only does Olanna lose her voice, she as well loses her ability to walk, and has recurring nightmares about the horrible war massacres she witnessed (Adichie 2006:156-158). Olanna is not spared from the agonizing and psychosomatic consequence of the Biafran war.

The ideals and attitudes towards literacy fundamentally changes. The formal British education and white collar jobs that formerly existed in the old world has dissolved in this present world. Olanna, therefore, has no place in this new world. This new world belongs to the lower-class citizens, the locals who can till the ground to produce crops, those who can go to war, and untrustworthy fellows who are dubiously skilled to acquire assets and food that they did not struggle for. The majority of the middle-class and upper-class inhabitants, and educated have no place in this new Biafra. Olanna has lost her job at the university and now must live from hand to mouth because even Odenigbo too is affected by the war and is completely different.

There are, of course, no jobs except for few available ones that involves war management logistics, one of which Odenigbo manages to get with an insignificant pay. With the frequent bombings, Olanna, Odenigbo, Ugwu and Chiamaka frequently move from city to city. They are Abba when Olanna’s mother, Mrs. Ozobia, comes to convince Olanna to come with herself and her father to London. “‘We paid for four places (...) ‘your father has gone to Port Harcourt to tell Kainene’” (Adichie 2006:188-189). Such opportunity to escape violence
and hardship is a once in a blue moon event and one would expect Olanna to accept the offer with all delectation. Olanna, however, rejects the offer. “You know I won’t go,” she said gently, wanting to reach out and touch her mother’s perfect skin. “But you and Dad should go, if it will make you feel safer. I’ll stay with Odenigbo and Baby. We’ll be fine” (Adichie 2006:189). Peradventure, Olanna resolves to abandon the Biafran hardship for London, her affluent and literate life will be recovered. At this point in time, Olanna’s ability to adapt to unusual situations that contradict the affluent and secured circumstances of her previous life is revealed.

Rather than mourn and live in retrospect of her preceding prosperous life, Olanna seeks new methods of survival, even new methods of literacy. Mrs. Muokelu appears in Olanna’s house on a certain day offering to teach Olanna how to make soap since the price of soap has become outrageous. Olanna does not object but gladly accepts. Certain that Olanna has largely lived a luxurious and noble life, Odenigbo doubts Olanna’s ability to make soap. “She didn’t need to teach you how to make soap. I don’t see you making soap anyway” (Adichie 2006:273). Eventually, against all odds, Olanna made and even surprises herself by how easily she has adapted to this new world. From making food with stoves and gas cookers, she conveniently prepares meals using firewood despite the fumes that bother the eyes; a traditional lifestyle mostly local and rural dwellers, such as mama, are accustomed to. Olanna also goes ahead to join the men and women to construct ridges. She amazes herself at how effortlessly she holds a hoe and utilises it, not that she has had past experiences (Adichie 2006:389). Olanna finds herself utilising completely different skills and techniques, aspects of her own being than she ever imagined she would – a departure from her supposed ‘feeble’ femininity, and the gender expectation of a woman’s dependence upon a man.

Schooling as a means of education is not entirely wiped out. Olanna, together with Ugwu and Mrs. Muokelu ensure that Biafran children are guided into a sense of self-worth and patriotism.

‘We will teach mathematics, English, and civics every day,’ Olanna said to Ugwu and Mrs. Muokelu a day before the classes began. ‘We have to make sure that when the war is over, they will all fit back easily into regular school. We will teach them to speak perfect English and perfect Igbo, like His Excellency. We will teach them pride in our great nation.’

(Adichie 2006:291)
Not only do the pupils learn mainstream school subjects, but Olanna proudly teaches them to be compatriots, and enlightens them about the symbolism of the Biafran flag (Adichie 2006:281). Olanna, whose identity has been nurtured rather than innate, and who has been told how to think by family members, beauty admirers, and Odenigbo her whole life, is ecstatic to discover something to sincerely believe in, Biafra, something whose birth she is a part of. As a result of frequent bombing, the venue for schooling has moved from actual buildings to tree-shades, to backyards, yet they pushed forward. On this note, Odenigbo boastful declares to Special Julius, a new found friend in the new world, “‘My wife and Ugwu are changing the face of the next generation of Biafrans with their Socratic pedagogy!’” (Adichie 2006:293). Prior to the war, Olanna did rather little with her literacy. Her literacy status was second to her love for Odenigbo. Astoundingly, not only is she able to utilise her literacy in this new world, she is even opened to menial literacies as seen in her ability to produce soap and utilise a hoe. Olanna clearly thrives in this new world and her new confidence continues to show itself as she sets up an improvised means of learning and constantly acclimatizes to recurrent environmental changes. This behavioural pattern of Olanna resists the feminine gender expectation of low-intellectuality. In the former world, educational setups would have been orchestrated by men, but the contextual changes of this new world dissolves such expectations.

Femininity and motherhood as well transforms in the new world for Olanna and many other female characters in the novel. Throughout the time of the war, women are left with the responsibility of feeding the family. Christie Achebe, in her article about the role of women in Nigerian-Biafran war, confirms that “Biafran women took the most risky excursions into the heart of Nigeria itself, where “survival items” such as food and other necessities were in abundance and accessible (… during which) some of the women made it safely back to Biafra, whereas a number perished in their attempt” (2010:795). Biafran women queue up at relief centres and orphanage homes, jostling and hustling to secure food supplies for their families regardless of the bustling crowd and paramilitaries who whip random people in the name of maintaining order. Ezeogueri-Oyewole’s research also proves that Biafran women not only contributed food items and helped to cook for the Biafran soldiers, but also manned the maintenance of most war refugees and served as first aid personnel (2016:20). Likewise, she notes that some Biafran soldiers raided farm lands, seizing crops, and that most of these farm lands belonged to Biafran women. Despite the war, Biafran women were audaciously willing to keep Biafra and its people thriving regardless of the dangers therein.
As the demands of motherhood changes during the war, Olanna adapts to these changes despite how weak and fragile she has earlier been portrayed to be. Olanna takes up the responsibility of being an only parent to Chiamaka, Ugwu and even Odenigbo. Olanna ensures that Chiamaka never leaves her sight or Ugwu’s in order to keep Chiamaka from being abducted by Biafran soldiers who force children to grind cassava. Olanna also makes Chiamaka practice running to the bunker and taking cover in case of air raids. As a result of the war, Chiamaka has grown lean and has kwashiorkor. Lice and ringworms infest her hair and her hair begins to fall out gradually (Adichie 2006:277). Olanna, who is not even a biological parent to Chiamaka, is the only one constantly on the search for food to curb Chiamaka’s malnutrition. The role of the breadwinner, or family head which is a masculine gender expectation, shifts to the female. Olanna in the midst of turbulence, and not once does Olanna complain of being heavily tasked with the responsibility of solely caring for Chiamaka. She relentlessly carries out her motherly responsibilities.

Like majority of the Biafran women, Olanna queues up daily at the relief centre for food. She ignores the angry crowd and stampedes and struggles to secure egg-yolk for Chiamaka’s recuperation, resisting the gender expectation of fragility, especially because she has never been used to this sort of life. On a certain day, a group of Biafran soldiers snatch a tin corned-beef from Olanna on her way home from the relief centre. Olanna cries, for she considered the tin as food for her family back home, only for soldiers, who should have sympathized with her, to snatch it. Olanna weeps as she considers the tin of corned-beef as food for her family and the soldiers who should identify with her hardship and defend her are the ones who have deprived her and her family of food (Adichie 2006:272). Similarly, there is an instance of a woman who sells domestic goods such as pepper with her child fastened to her back, and is always vigilant because vandals often attack the market, seizing the goods of the market women (Adichie 2006:289).

Even in times of unavailability of food supplies, Biafran women discover new ways of securing food for their families regardless of the inherent dangers. At a certain point, news reaches the relief centre, where Olanna, Mrs. Muokelu and other women are gathered, that lorries carrying relief foods have been hijacked. These women become so disturbed, saddened and desperate, for their families back home wait upon them for food. This desperation leads Mrs. Muokelu to quit her voluntary teaching in search for food across Biafran borders.
‘I have twelve people to feed,’ she said. ‘And that is not counting my husband’s relatives who have just come from Abakaliki. My husband has returned from the war front with one leg. What can he do? I am going to start *afia attack* and see if I can buy salt. I can no longer teach.’

(Adichie 2006:293)

*Afia attack* refers to the numerous dangerous trips out of Biafra into the Nigerian territorial frontiers by Biafrans in order to procure food and other sustenance products for the Biafran people (Achebe 2010:794). Mrs. Muokelu, despite all odds, is determined to go into the enemy’s territory to secure food for a large family that is entirely dependent on her. Postcolonial Nigerian women resist the feminine gender expectation of frailty, occupying masculine roles.

In the same manner, Olanna not only functions as a provider for her family but also for members of her yard which is the word Adichie uses to describe a cluster of several one or two rooms apartment in a single building. The welfare of other families become Olanna’s responsibility as well. Olanna receives a surprise gift from Professor Ezeka, Odenigbo’s friend and former colleague at the university, which contains food items and toiletries. This causes Olanna and Ugwu to become excited as the quantity of the food items appear to be luxury. Regardless of the impounding starvation and the need to preserve food for future times, Olanna takes some quantity of salt, ignoring Ugwu’s disapproving look, and gives to Alice, a neighbour, who has been complaining of scarcity of salt in their yard (Adichie 2006:333-334). Not only does Olanna offer food to Alice, but friendship as well. Furthermore, Olanna gives a bowl of soup and garri, each at different times, to mama Adanna who pleads with Olanna to share. At another time, Olanna notices that mama Adanna’s daughter, Adanna, is suffering from kwashiorkor and offers some dried milk and sardines from her newly arrived supplies to help Adanna convalesce (Adichie 2006:339). Even more, Olanna shares bars of soap with mama Oji, Alice and Mrs. Muokelu. This is not a new development of Olanna’s character; she has always been compassionate. However, her ability to share the little she has, of which she is unsure when the next supply will incidentally arrive, is a strong trait a rare motherhood.

In addition to femininity and motherhood, Biafran women are pressured with responsibilities in such a way that indolent women are not tolerated. Many of Biafran women either farm to produce food or go an *afia attack* journey. Mama Adanna does none of the
aforementioned. She gathers food for herself and her daughter by pleading with other women who have little. During one of those times when mama Adanna pleads with Olanna to give food to her, mama Oji stridently rebukes Olanna’s support to mama Adanna. “‘She should go and farm cassava and feed her family and stop disturbing people! After all, she is an indigene of Umuahia! She is not a refugee like us! How can she be begging a refugee for food?’” (Adichie 2006:327). Provision for the family had formerly been a masculine role, however, women are now expected to occupy such role. Regardless of mama Adanna’s strength and state of health, it is her responsibility to fend for her family and society expects no one else, not even her husband, to carry out such duty.

Motherhood during the war requires women to become caretakers who not only provide food for their families, but also sort out ways to make financial provision. Even though Odenigbo works at manpower directorate, it makes little or no impact financially because his salary either arrives late or he squanders it. As a result of Odenigbo’s irresponsibility, Olanna also bears the financial burden. Olanna’s thoughts are so preoccupied with the need for financial provision in such a way that, “while he was murmuring in her ear (as Odenigbo and Olanna have sexual intercourse), she was mourning her money in the bank in Lagos” (Adichie 2006:262). The need to provide for the family has overtaken Olanna such that there is a decline in Olanna’s desire for sexual pleasure. Odenigbo’s financial irresponsibility forces Olanna to change what is left of her British pounds in order to procure petrol so that they are not stranded if the need to move away from their current location arises (Adichie 2006:381). Olanna switches gender roles with Odenigbo, taking over the duties of traditional masculinity – provider.

Besides food supplies and finance, Olanna’s motherhood extends itself into the lives of Ugwu and Odenigbo. In order to avoid Ugwu from being forced into army, since Biafran soldiers are fond of picking up boys randomly for recruitment, Olanna warns him not to linger outside unnecessarily. Any soldier on a conscripting mission may see him. Unfortunately, Biafran soldiers find Ugwu one afternoon when Ugwu gets bored and decides to ignore Olanna’s warning. The soldiers line Ugwu up with a group of boys, matching them to the barracks. Fortunately for Ugwu, Olanna spots Ugwu on her way back from Orlu, and uses all her money to bribe the commander for Ugwu’s freedom (Adichie 2006:352). Notwithstanding, Ugwu’s conscription becomes inevitable as he is rallied up with other boys on another day when Olanna is unavailable to buy his freedom. Similarly, Olanna stands in the gap as a spokesperson for Odenigbo. Odenigbo ignores Olanna’s plea with him to talk to
professor Ezeka about a transfer to a better directorate where Odenigbo’s intellect can be maximally utilised (Adichie 2006:336). Odenigbo’s ego and principles restricts him from requesting for favours from his highly placed friends. Olanna therefore resolves to plead with professor herself on behalf of Odenigbo. In all these, Olanna basically aims to build an improved and secured life for them all, still assuming traditional masculine roles – protection and provision.

Despite the sufferings and starvation in Biafra, some Biafrans still manage to remain wealthy, and yet, be inconsiderate about the welfare of other Biafrans. Olanna is astonished to witness the extravagant and pleasant life of professor Ezeka and his family when she visits Ezeka’s house to speak to him about Odenigbo. The sitting room is spacious and ably furnished. A steward serves fervently in the house with varied and opulent options of edibles. Olanna describes professor Ezeka’s house as surreal because of the strangeness and unusualness of such luxury for such a time as this. Mrs. Ezeka’s countenance and appearance reveal that they are indeed comfortable with a gold pendant hanging on a chain around her neck and the fruity fragrance of her perfume. As though ungrateful, Mrs. Ezeka whinges about how unfair life has been to them, in such a way that it baffles Olanna, because they are still yet to travel out of Nigeria. Olanna refuses lunch with them because she teaches children in the yard and has asked them to gather in an hour’s time. “Oh, how lovely,” Mrs Ezeka said, walking her to the door. ‘If only I wasn’t going overseas so soon, we would have done something together, too, for the win-the-war effort.’ Olanna forced her lips to form a smile” (Adichie 2006:342). Mrs. Ezeka further beckons on Olanna to see the concrete and sturdy bunker her husband has built for them. “Imagine what these vandals have reduced us to. Pamela and I sometimes sleep here when they bomb us,’ Mrs Ezeka said. ‘But we shall survive.’ ‘Yes,’ Olanna said and stared at the smooth floor and two beds, a furnished underground room” (Adichie 2006:342). Whereas a large number of Biafrans build bunkers by only digging, no concrete or even compartments, only soil and clay, yet Mrs. Ezeka shows off her husband’s wealth as though it is poverty; as if she is oblivious of the sufferings and tribulations of most Biafrans. Yet Olanna, who had been used to sure luxurious life before the war, is not envious of Mrs. Ezeka, neither does she castigate Odenigbo for not living up to his gender expectations. After all, Professor Ezeka is a man like Odenigbo and is able to fulfil his gender roles of providing and protecting his family.

In all these tempestuous situations, Olanna’s identity eventually undergoes modification. In contrast with the period before the war, Olanna’s perception of life and
others’ perception of Olanna changes in an unexpected way. Olanna has become more stern and irascible. She raises her voice and speaks harshly to Ugwu for using the stove instead of firewood (Adichie 2006:299), and she will slap Ugwu if he tries to mocking about her hilarious safety measures (Adichie 2006:276-277). Also, it is incredible to reason that, Olanna who was born and bred in a bourgeois home and has lived a pampered and luxurious life, will at some point become malleable, tougher and fervent in violent and perilous times. She who believed her life can only revolve around Odenigbo is one of those changing the face of the next generation, impacting positively into the lives of Biafran children and developing in them a sense of self-worth. Enthralled by Olanna’s perseverance, Alice admirably comments, ‘I don’t know how you do it, keeping everything together and teaching children and all that. I wish I were like you’’’ (Adichie 2006:335). Olanna who has been presumed to be feeble, and whose gender role expects her to be frail, is not weak after all.

Drifting away from the norm, Olanna refuses to worry over Odenigbo anymore. Even when Olanna discovers that Odenigbo has sexual intercourse with Alice, Olanna does not fret or become emotionally imbalanced like she was when Odenigbo mated with Amala. Rather, Olanna becomes strengthened and disgusted by Odenigbo and further sees why her life belongs to no one else but herself. At a certain time, Olanna and her immediate family relocate from Umuahia to Orlu to reside with Kainene and Richard since Umuahia has been ruined by air raids. Odenigbo, due to his ego, declares to Kainene, who is bothered by their presence in her house, that their time in her home is very temporal as he intends to find a place of their own. Kainene is surprised when Olanna disses Odenigbo’s declaration and says, “Are you listening to him? We didn’t decide anything. If he wants to find a place he can go ahead and live there alone” (Adichie 2006:387). In fact, Olanna and Kainene, who have been inharmonious and have had infidelity issues to deal with, are the ones with the most cordial and enviable relationship as though they created their own world wherein Odenigbo and Richard cannot quite enter (Adichie 2006:399). The awareness that Olanna has survived the war without depending on Odenigbo provides an affirmation that Odenigbo’s action or inaction bear little or no impact in her life. Even Odenigbo is awed by Olanna’s persistence that he says to her, “You’re so strong, nkem” (Adichie 2006:392). “Those were words she had never heard from him” (Adichie 2006:392). In the new world, Olanna has become the pillar of the man who she always thought was her fortitude.
Despite the degree to which Olanna has always struggled to be traditionally Nigerian and not western in her methods, she has always had her reservations. Prior to the war, Olanna refused to believe in superstitious and traditional beliefs even when such beliefs threatened to dissolve her relationship with Odenigbo. However, when Kainene journeys to Ninth Mile in search of food and does not return after a long time and series of checks, Olanna decides to seek help through the means she has always disbelieved; superstitious traditional means. She consults a dibia (a native doctor) and carries out the necessary spiritual rituals required to find Kainene (Adichie 2006:433), and when that proves unsuccessful, she acknowledges the traditional Igbo belief of reincarnation. “‘Our people say that we reincarnate, don’t they? (…) ‘When I come back in my next life, Kainene will be my sister’” (Adichie 2006:433). The Biafran war has undeniably transformed Olanna.

Olanna’s desire for her sex counterpart no longer consumes her which has enabled her to reconceive herself as a woman, mother, and sexual partner. Olanna defiantly resists patriarchy to become the matriarch. Consequently, in her portrayal of Olanna, Adichie offers an archetypal of the feminine identity that resists and challenges the status quo of gender roles, expectations and behavioural patterns.

3.3.2. Kainene Ozobia in the New World

As envisaged, Kainene is as well affected by the ordeals of the war and alterations to her being occur in an unforeseen way. Comparably with Olanna, Kainene shares in the Biafran war tribulations, except that the victim of war, whose death traumatises Kainene, is not a relative of hers. Ikejide was Kainene’s steward prior to his demise and was never an important character but was always in the background of Kainene’s life.

Then came the cold whistle of a mortar in the air and the crash as it landed and the boom as it exploded. Richard pressed Kainene to him. A piece of shrapnel, the size of a fist, wheezed past. Ikejide was still running and, in the moment that Richard glanced away and back, Ikejide’s head was gone. The body was running, arched slightly forward, arms flying around, but there was no head. There was only a bloodied neck. Kainene screamed. The body crashed down near her long American car, the planes receded and disappeared into the distance, and they all lay still for long minutes, until Harrison got up and said, ‘I am getting bag.’
Ikejide’s death happens swiftly and Kainene had not imagined that such tragic event would occur in an immediate environment. The fact that Ikejide’s death occurred before her very eyes suggests that the victim of shrapnel could have been any other person in the scene of the accident including Kainene herself and she is not insensible of such possibility. Ikejide’s death brings the horror of the war home to Kainene and provokes an expressive emotion – an “eerie blankness” that Richard has never seen before; to the extent that Richard fears that Kainene may have suddenly become insentient and makes attempts at reviving her (Adichie 2006:317).

The depth of the Biafran war and its tragic consequences are gradually unveiled to Kainene’s consciousness. Even though Kainene had been aware of Olanna’s trauma and petrifying descriptions of war massacres, she remained sangfroid and unperturbed. However, Ikejide’s death brings the horrors of the war home to her. Ikejide’s death affects Kainene in such a way that she suddenly makes reference to Ikejide’s death in the middle of a wholly disparate conversation as she does during a price bargain with a carpenter. Kainene totally ignores the carpenter’s suggestion for a means of payment and sporadically briefs Richard about one among Olanna’s traumatizing experiences. “‘You know Olanna saw a mother carrying her child’s head,’ Kainene said. ‘Yes,’ Richard said, although he did not know. She had never told him about Olanna’s experience during the massacres. ‘I want to see her’” (Adichie 2006:318). Evidently, Kainene’s mind is occupied with imageries of Ikejide’s death and she is eventually able to identify with Olanna’s trauma. She finally understands the horrors of the war and wishes to make peace with her sister. Unable to absorb the horror of Ikejide’s demise, Kainene raises an unanswerable and rhetorical question.

‘How could shrapnel cut off Ikejide’s head so completely?’ Kainene asked, as if she wanted him to tell her that she was mistaken about the whole thing. He wished he could. At nights, she cried. She told him she wanted to dream of Ikejide but she woke up every morning and remembered his running headless body clearly while, in the safer blurred territory of her dreams, she saw herself smoking a cigarette in an elegant gold holder.

(Adichie 2006:318)

Not only is Kainene horrified by Ikejide’s death, but she suffers guilt for the period wherein she felt safe and immovable about the tragedy of the war. Kainene intentionally desires to see
Ikejide’s death in her dreams. The desire to dream about Ikejide’s death explains how that Kainene desires to feel more human; as a Biafran, fully mindful of struggle, tragedy and imageries of the war. Kainene even randomly raises the matter at an unanticipated moment to Olanna. “There were evenings when Kainene was distant, immersed in herself. Once she said, ‘‘I never really noticed Ikejide,‘ and Olanna placed an arm on her sister’s shoulder and said nothing” (Adichie 2006:390). Ikejide’s death is the catharsis that propels Kainene to finally pardon Olanna of her infidelity. Proverbially, Kainene tells Olanna that “‘there are some things that are so unforgivable that they make other things easily forgivable’” (Adichie 2006:347). The Biafran war has unleashed tragic memories that deserve resentment. There are more pressing issues to be angry at, rather than Olanna and Richard’s infidelity. Olanna at once fathoms this and is aware that Kainene has truly forgiven her. Ikejide’s death overwhelms Kainene in a manner that awakens her to the theme of love, the value of people so distant, yet so close, and vice-versa. Altruistically, she contributes to the struggle for Biafra by engaging in activities that improve the lives of displaced Biafrans. Kainene’s experience of Ikejide’s death provokes her emotionally in a way that conforms her behavioural pattern to the feminine gender expectation of immense emotional expression.

Childbearing is certainly not the singular means of motherhood as against traditional expectations. Women, as Kandiyoti claims, “bear the burden of being ‘mothers of the nation’” (1994:376). In contribution to the win-the-war-effort, Kainene functions as a mother to Biafra. Firstly, Kainene commences the importation of stock fish and also turns herself into an army contractor in Port Harcourt; previously a male’s occupation (Adichie 2006:343). After the fall of Port Harcourt, she relocates to Orlu with Richard and creates a refugee camp managed by two priests: Father Marcel and Father Jude. Majority of the refugee camps depend on the Biafran government for relief contributions. However, Kainene refuses that her refugee camp relies on relief supplies or donations from the government except for manure which she requests for from the Agricultural Research Centre. She establishes a farm for the feeding maintenance of the refugee camp and grows protein, soya beans and akidi (Adichie 2006:318). Furthermore, Kainene hires a man from Enugu to instruct the refugees on how to make baskets and lamps. “‘We can create income here. We can make a difference!’” (Adichie 2006:318). This guileless scheme aims to impart survival skills and generate revenue for suffering Biafrans. With the persistent health risk of most refugees, Kainene requests for a doctor to examine the patients at the camp every week (Adichie 2006:318). There is a parallel here between the twin sisters – they both take up huge responsibilities of providing for
Biafran people except on different levels. While Olanna provides in her yard, Kainene provides for her community. Motherhood, as a corollary, is not attained as a consequence of childbearing alone; for even actual Biafran mothers, Kainene and Olanna are overriding mother. As far as the context of Biafra is concerned, Kainene’s behavioural pattern conforms to the feminine gender role of motherhood.

Asides nutriment and health provision, Kainene’s motherhood extends into the delicate and psychological aspects of agonized Biafrans. Magnanimously, she defends an 18 years old boy, who is being beaten and accused of stealing from the farm, and provides food for him. “‘He is not a thief,’ Kainene said. ‘Did you hear me? He is not a thief. He is a hungry soldier’” (Adichie 2006:404). Kainene understands the degree of famine and famishment in the land and identifies with starving Biafrans who are left with no other option but theft. In the same manner, she weeps bitterly and punishes the priest, Father Marcel who takes advantage of starving girls by trading food for sex with the girls (Adichie 2006:398). Not only does Kainene ardently resolve these doleful situations, but she certainly becomes emotionally affected by these unfortunate circumstances. This is very unlike the supercilious and egocentric Kainene who never cared about anything or anyone except for herself. The feminine gender expectation of sensitivity and emotional expressiveness, is awaken in Kainene. The war enables the reader to see her in unpredictable behavioural patterns.

The mannerism of Kainene’s character throughout the war is particularly compelling considering her impassive, frigid and dispassionate persona peculiar to her prior to the war. Earlier than the war, Kainene has been depicted as emotionally defensive and unexpressive, even in her relationships with families and loved ones such as Olanna and Richard. At the onset of the war, Kainene did not weep when an uncertain news of the likely death of a close friend, Madu, and a definite news of the death of another close friend, Udodi, reached her. “Kainene was muted but never tearful” (Adichie 2006:138). To therefore witness her shed tears as a result of the death of her steward, Ikejide, with whom she shares no propinquity, is startling. This is however not such a wonder as Hunt has pointed out, “war experiences can fundamentally change one’s sense of self or identity” (Hunt 2010:10). As far as the issue of identity is concerned, Kainene’s impassiveness has reached its maximum hold and has revealed the capability to change in an unusual or unexpected way.

However, the psychic changes that occur in Kainene’s life, Kainene has yet remained confident and unrelenting. Her grief has not caused her to become someone else or
unrecognizable in her ultimate identity and self-worth. Kainene is convinced that regardless of the unfortunate circumstances that befalls her, no one except her can dictate what she becomes. In the midst of horrendous situations, Kainene still finds reasons to laugh and create a better relationship with the people that surround her (Adichie 2006:374). She remains diligent and optimistic. More so, even though Kainene did not campaign for the secession of Biafra, and often antagonised Odenigbo’s views of politics and revolution, she nonetheless, fights and struggles towards the success of Biafra. The Biafran war awaken the traditional feminine expectations in Kainene.

3.3.2.1. Kainene’s Symbolism

For Olanna, Richard and even the refugees, Kainene symbolises the anticipated victory of Biafra. Her fearlessness, staunch confidence and assiduousness signifies to the people a beaming victory at the end of the tunnel. “The world will turn around soon, and Nigeria will stop this,’ Kainene said quietly. ‘We’ll win.’ ‘Yes.’ Olanna believed it more because Kainene said it’ (Adichie 2006:390). Even Olanna has deviated from Odenigbo’s confidence as the source of her hope in Biafra to Kainene. Kainene symbolises for Olanna, optimism even in the midst of persistent hardship. It is therefore no wonder that the timing of the downfall of Biafra is simultaneous with the disappearance of Kainene. Kainene’s disappearance occurs when she journeys to Ninth Mile in search of food and does not return. Olanna and Richard embark on several journeys and explore several attempts to find Kainene, but all to no avail.

Kainene’s disappearance is of major importance in the plot and development of the novel given that she is one of the strongest and vulnerable characters. She never seemed to face the same struggles as the rest of the characters and even though by the end she has a greater amount of contact with the people affected by war, she had never encountered it directly. Kainene’s hunt for food becomes a metaphor for a search for harmony and unison in a dystopian Nigeria. By causing the toughest character to disappear, Adichie emphasises the notion anyone can be a victim of war, regardless of their personality, class or economic ranking. At the end of the novel, there is no information on the whereabouts of Kainene. The power to decide Kainene’s fate; whether she is dead or alive, is left to the preference of the reader.
4. Masculinity in Pre- and Post-Biafran War

This chapter will carry out an analysis of male characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The analysis of these male characters will include behavioural patterns of characters and how these behavioural patterns conform and/or contradict the gender roles and expectations of the postcolonial Nigerian man. This chapter will also investigate the modifications and alterations that occur in the behavioural patterns of these male characters in the advent of political and sociocultural revolution, to discover if these altered or unaltered behavioural patterns also conform to, or contradict the gender roles and expectations of the postcolonial Nigerian man. These male characters include: Odenigbo, Ugwu and Richard Churchill.

4.1. Odenigbo

Odenigbo is one of the novel’s key character; an Igbo man, a professor of mathematics at the university of NSSUKA, lover and eventually husband to Olanna, Master to Ugwu, and son to mama. Odenigbo is undoubtedly intelligent and as a university professor, he is unquestionably erudite. Inspired by the end of colonialism, Odenigbo is politically passionate about tribalism as against nationalism, and the reformation of the Nigerian government into a socialist system of government. Another intriguing aspect of Odenigbo is his aphrodisiac confidence, a similarity he shares with Kainene; confidence which Olanna falls in love with. Odenigbo is not particularly attractive facially just like Kainene, however, his machoism produces that poise and erotic image that depicts him as typically masculine and therefore, handsome. He spends part of his leisure with his friends most evenings, debating political issues and drinking.
4.1.1. Masculinity, Literacy and Identity Prior to the Biafran War

In this context, identity refers to the means by which Odenigbo perceives himself, his construction of his masculinity along the precepts of gender expectations, and the factors that shape his masculinity and enable his conformity to gender expectations before the Biafran war. In addition, this section will investigate the factors that challenge Odenigbo’s masculinity as well as the counteractions and sturdiness to withstand such challenges. Formal education has been discriminatory and gender-oriented in practice. Education in colonial and postcolonial Nigeria is perceived as a male’s domain as observed by Makokha (2014:114). Odenigbo’s literacy complements his machoism and therefore his masculinity. As a macho male, a fluent and articulate speaker of English, a literate, and a staunchly confident male, Odenigbo qualifies for an eligible male. Odenigbo’s masculinity coincides with what has been described as ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell 2005:77) within the Nigerian context. Odenigbo has spent “too many years reading books overseas” (Adichie 2006:3), and now possesses the tools necessary to comprehend this postcolonial world and thereby produces an equipped and imperial head of family.

_Half of a Yellow Sun_ is to a large extent a book on precolonial, colonial and postcolonial Nigeria, and these aspects are mainly revealed through the stimulating discussions and arguments centred on politics among Odenigbo and his scholarly colleagues and friends. Odenigbo’s literacy and intellectual abilities are revealed through these regular political discussions and deliberations. The essential thing Odenigbo’s discussions with his friends reveal, is his identity. Literacy, is the foundation from which other aspects of Odenigbo’s life stem from.

Contrary to Olanna, Odenigbo’s identity is not rooted in his gender counterpart. His perception of himself is rather engrained in the Biafran course and literacy as explained in section 4.1.1. As a revolutionary and ardent devotee of the Biafran course, Odenigbo is vast and theoretically knowledgeable about the necessity for Biafra, and the canons of socialism which he trusts will be the system of the future Biafran government. Odenigbo vehemently contends against the comprehensive ‘Nigerian’ identity foisted upon distinct ethnic groups that resided autonomously in a particular province of Africa for centuries.

‘Of course, of course, but my point is that the only authentic identity for the African is the tribe,’ Master said. ‘I am Nigerian because a white man created Nigeria and gave
me that identity. I am black because the white man constructed black to be as different as possible from his white. But I was Igbo before the white man came.’

(Adichie 2006:20)

Odenigbo recognizes himself as a tribalist; sees himself as ‘Igbo’ rather than ‘Nigerian’. He pinpoints that Nigerians identify themselves as black solely because the colonialists labelled them so, and that they live in a state referred to as ‘Nigeria’ because the colonialists decided that some particular regions were to be congregated as one nation. Odenigbo firmly opposes these notions and regards them as extraneous impositions that depreciate the significance and distinctiveness of all individual Africans, and more so, the Igbo ethnic group, which he and his ancestors have been a part of for as long as they can recollect. In his pursuit to emancipate his people from the imperial formation of Nigeria, Odenigbo foremost categorises himself as a member of his ancient Igbo tribe before depicting himself as black and Nigerian. Throughout the novel until the times of war and despair, Odenigbo passionately argues about Nigerian politics, flaunting his wide intellect, thereby asserting his literate persona and his readiness for the subversive anticipated years.

Odenigbo’s opinions on political matters is what prompts Kainene to label him as a revolutionary. Revolutionary because Odenigbo’s political ideas reject the current state of politics and proposes a rather insurgent and radical political theory. This radicalism and overzealousness causes Kainene to disapprove of Odenigbo and perceive him as ostentatious. Similarly, Mr. and Mrs. Ozobia passively disapprove of Odenigbo describing him as “one of those hot-headed university people who talked and talked until everybody had a headache and nobody understood what had been said” (Adichie 2006:33). Disparately, Ugwu and mama adore and take pride in Odenigbo for his scholarliness and parade of literacy. Unfortunately, Amala succumbs to Odenigbo and distinguishes him as Lord because of his literacy status. Above all, all of Odenigbo’s characteristics for which he is loathed, are what entices Olanna to fall in love with him.

The concept of patriarchy, that positions the male as superior and above errors and inaccuracy, is very evident in Odenigbo’s life. This sort of manliness compulsorily sorts a justification for every misconduct perpetrated by the male since the nature of the man is supposedly contrasting to weakness. Women are of course liable to making errors which is explainable by their gendered-nature to be weak. As patriarchy considers it appropriate, men however, must constantly be right and uncompromising in their domineering nature and their
depravities are to be acceptable and unquestionable in the view of the female. A case study of an indisputable masculine vice is Odenigbo’s infidelity to Olanna. Rather than own to his mistakes, Odenigbo constantly blames others factors for his sexual relationship with Amala except himself.

She sat sipping some water while he told her that he had been drunk, that Amala had forced herself on him, that it had been a brief rash lust. Afterward, she told him to get out. It was grating that he remained self-assured enough to call what he had done a *brief rash lust*. She hated that expression and she hated the firmness of his tone the next time he came and said, ‘It meant nothing, *nkem*, nothing.’

(Adichie 2006:225)

Even in his infidelity, Odenigbo ensures he remains blameless and superior; a man must always be a man regardless. His apology is not altogether remorseful. Sincere apologies are sieved of defence. Odenigbo’s apology however, bears subtle tones that characterise him as ‘choiceless’ in the advent of his immoral deeds. As expected of a patriarchal male, the blame for own his own weakness must be cast upon a woman, just as Adam blamed Eve for eating the fruit of the forbidden tree in the Bible (Genesis 3:12, The New King James Version). Even if Amala truly forced herself on Odenigbo, just as Eve gave Adam the fruit, the choice to say ‘no’ laid with both Odenigbo and Adam. This idea of blaming women for the weakness of men might be one reason why women perceive each other as competitors in the sexual world; and rather than deal with their own partners directly, these women accuse their fellow women of seducing their partners. Unfortunately for Odenigbo, Olanna’s accusing fingers are directed to him instead of the ‘expected’ Amala. However, Odenigbo’s dominating and unyielding attitude can be better fathomed from the perspective of Fanon’s analysis of the black male.

The body of the black man has been “humiliated, mocked, beaten, raped, assaulted, tortured, (and) murdered” (Vergès 1997:582), and for the black man,

There is only one way out, and it leads to the white world. Hence his constant preoccupation with attracting the white world, his concern with being as powerful as the white man, and his determination to acquire the properties of a coating: i.e., the part of being or having that constitutes an ego.

(Fanon 2008:33).
This ‘ego’ that the black man acquires may deprive him of the ability to be apologetic and even express remorsefulness. This explains why Odenigbo is still unable to accept full responsibility for his action. He blames his mother as well for his infidelity. “‘Mama planned this from the beginning. I see now how she made sure I was dead drunk before sending Amala to me. I feel as if I’ve been dropped into something I don’t entirely understand’” (Adichie 2006:231-232). Regardless of the fact or fallacy of mama’s orchestration of Odenigbo’s unfaithfulness, Odenigbo is no child and can therefore make sovereign choices. Drunkenness does not equate blindness. Odenigbo must have been able to tell that it was Amala’s face he saw not Olanna; Olanna was after all away from Nsukka as at that time. Where does it state that the superiority of the male is unable to decline sexual decadence? Nonetheless, it is necessary for Odenigbo to maintain his patriarchal role; superior and blameless. Odenigbo’s literacy is a factor that enables him to conform to the masculine gender expectation of emotionless and confidence.

It is significant to note that, unlike Olanna whose life activities are altered when Odenigbo becomes unfaithful, Odenigbo remains dauntless and unperturbed. Unbothered by the fear of Olanna’s exit from their relationship, his daily routines seem to remain uninterrupted to the marvel of Olanna. Olanna, who has been depressed as a result of Odenigbo’s infidelity, had expected that Odenigbo would as well be miserable and unhappy. Ironically, Odenigbo still entertains guests in the evenings, plays tennis and goes to the staff club. Olanna “had wanted to hear that Odenigbo could no longer bear to live the life that had been theirs” (Adichie 2006:228). Odenigbo’s dauntless attitude positions him as a ‘god’, who is God’s gift to a woman, without which is no completeness found in the woman. This claim is supported by the feminist’s argument that patriarchy is Biblical (Biale 1997:11), as well as Stone’s assertion that male domination is deeply rooted in the Bible and patriarchy is elucidated and justified as the divine and natural condition of human species (1976:217-218). Even if an argument erupts that Odenigbo’s attempt at apologies is enough justification for his remorsefulness, the voidance of a little panic or fear of losing Olanna since she moved out of his apartment proves his unflinching and egoistic assured self. When Ugwu politely enquires about Olanna’s return, Odenigbo snaps at Ugwu as though Olanna was the guilty one and the sound of her name irritated him (Adichie 2006:242).

In spite of how defined Odenigbo’s construction of himself appears to be, there are elements of conflict in his identity. Inferring from his arguments and conversations with friends, Odenigbo harbours a stern disdain for colonialism as well the British government.
The amalgamation of formerly sovereign protectorates that form Nigeria was after all effectuated by the British government. To counteract the effects of colonialism, the revolutionary imagines himself a freedom fighter, spending all his time “writing newspaper articles about his own brand of mishmash African socialism” (Adichie 2006:69), and arguing about the necessity for the emancipation of ethnic groups in Nigeria. Ironically, Odenigbo who ridicules the British government, appears to imbibe western values.

In a conversation with his friends, Odenigbo reveals his aversion for Rex Lawson’s style of music. Rex Lawson is a High Life musician from Kalabari, Nigeria. Miss Adebayo, on the other hand, adores Rex Lawson and appreciates him as a true Nigerian who does not cleave to his Kalabari tribe but sings in all major Nigerian languages. “‘That’s original – and certainly reason enough to like him,’ Miss Adebayo said” (Adichie 2006:109). Odenigbo disagrees with Miss Adebayo. “‘That’s reason not to like him’” Odenigbo argues. “‘This nationalism that means we should aspire to indifference about our own individual cultures is stupid’” (Adichie 2006:109). Odenigbo’s disdain for Rex’s style of music emphasises his proclivity for the identity of Nigerians according to their tribes rather than the nation as a whole. Sardonically, Olanna reveals Odenigbo’s inability to comprehend High Life Music which is typically African. “‘He’s a classical music person but loath to admit it in public because it’s such a Western taste’” (Adichie 2006:109). To underscore Odenigbo’s conflict of identity, Okeoma, a poet, ridicules Odenigbo’s cultural instability. “‘But surely it (music) is grounded in culture, and cultures are specific?’ Okeoma asked. ‘Couldn’t Odenigbo then be said to adore the Western culture that produced classical music?’” (Adichie 2006:110).

Apparently Odenigbo adores western culture even though he detests its place and government of origin. The relationship between Odenigbo and western culture is what Fanon has described as “old acquaintances” (1967:28), who will always need each other to preserve their esteems. Such that even though Odenigbo campaigns for his identity as Igbo and not Biafra, the basis of his identity is ironically embedded in western culture – his literacy values.

Regardless of Odenigbo’s obdurate advocacy for socialism, the ability to implement the principles of socialism occasionally eludes him. Socialism fundamentally focuses on the eradication of the inequalities of wealth and power which is why it requires that the control of wealth and property, as well as economic activities are regulated by the community as a whole (Newman 2005:17). One of the principles of socialism avers that the antagonism of interests, which manifests itself as a class struggle, can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, and the democratic control by
the whole people (Buick 1973). In other words, pioneers of socialism must avoid class segregation and domination over the minority groups and employ equality as their principal bedrock. When news of Amala’s pregnancy reaches Kainene, Kainene satirically questions Odenigbo’s staunchness as a socialist. “Isn’t it against the tenets of socialism, though, impregnating people of the lower classes?” Kainene asked” (Adichie 2006:247). Odenigbo surely must have been aware that minority citizens, and in this context, lower class females such as Amala, are voiceless and stripped of their liberty. He has carried out ample research as a socialist, and written numerous articles to be fully aware of the despotism over minority groups. Here again, Odenigbo has botched to actualise the expectations of his own belief, thereby contradicting his own political identity.

On a lighter note, although noteworthy, is the issue of cutlery utility during meal times. Deductively, table forks and spoons were invented outside of Africa and its usage in Nigeria began with the advent of colonialism in Nigeria. Typically, Nigerians eat rice using a spoon rather than a fork. Forks are left for hard meals made from tubers crops such as yam and potato. Eating rice with a fork in Nigeria depicts such person as ‘western cultured’ and ‘un-Nigerian’. Once more, Odenigbo, who ridicules the British government and yearns for a non-Eurocentric Africa, prefers to eat his rice with a fork. During a feast with his friends, Odenigbo’s “plate was always the most rice-strewn, as if he ate distractedly so that the grains eluded his fork” (Adichie 2006:83). In order to foreground Odenigbo’s westernised style of feeding, Adichie generates an oxymoron by disclosing that “Okeoma ate everything with a spoon, his fork and knife pushed aside” (Adichie 2006:83) which is typically Nigerian. Adichie creates this subtle contrast in order to emphasise the mediocrity of scholars and politicians who even though are fanatics of a non-Eurocentric Africa, imbibe western culture in most aspects of their lives.

4.1.2. Masculinity and Fatherhood Prior to the Biafran War

The conceptualization of fatherhood, in a patriarchal postcolonial Nigeria, as one with unparalleled supremacy and responsibility is fundamental to the establishment of the role of men in a Nigerian family, even society. Men are motivated for fatherhood for various reasons. Some of such reasons are ‘natural affection for children’ and ‘the feeling of a mature readiness that sparks the desire for fatherhood’ (Goldberg 2014:28). However, none of these
reasons corresponds with Odenigbo’s desire for fatherhood. In fact, the pressure or desire for fatherhood does not seem to befall Odenigbo as he never pressured Olanna for a child. Usually, mainstream Nigerian men desire that their initial offspring be a male child. Conversely, the only reason Odenigbo requests of a child from Olanna, which happens only once, is to complete their union and seal it from external remarks from families and society. And this request is not enunciated until the surge of conflict instigated by the kerfuffle of Odenigbo’s mother towards Olanna. This of course, is not to claim that Odenigbo lacks the yearning for fatherhood, but for a man of his calibre and achievement, he does not seem pressured by it. Most surprisingly, Odenigbo’s request for a child is not male. “‘Let’s have a child,’ he said again. ‘A little girl just like you, and we will call her Obianuju because she will complete us’” (Adichie 2006:106). This is contradicting to the status quo of the desire for an initial male offspring.

Notwithstanding, Odenigbo nurtures a passive hankering for fatherhood, regardless of his mindfulness of such craving. Another reason, according to Goldberg, why men crave fatherhood, is “the desire to pass along to a next generation their values and life lessons” (2014:28). Inferring from the confident and conspicuously erudite disposition of Odenigbo as a hegemonic male who feels fulfilled and content about his achievements, Odenigbo’s desire for fatherhood is ultimately to duplicate himself. Once he laments that “‘the real tragedy of our postcolonial world is not that the majority of people had no say in whether or not they wanted this new world; rather, it is that the majority have not been given the tools to negotiate this new world’” (Adichie 2006:101). For Odenigbo, literacy acquisition is the tool necessary for every Nigerian to overcome all forms of colonial and postcolonial consequence. As a radical and profoundly opinionated savant, Odenigbo desires to transmit the knowledge he has acquired to available minds in preparation for the battle against subtle imperialism. This is what Odenigbo does with Ugwu, his house help, coaching him with knowledge required to remodel and survive in this postcolonial world. This is the fundamental technique through which Odenigbo is able to express fatherhood.

Foremost, the relationship between house helps and their masters in Nigeria is usually more hostile than friendly, similar to the typical relationship between slaves and masters. Chidebell explains that “the typical house help is denied a right to personal decisions and that the use of house helps serve as a symbol of status (2013:187-190). In other words, owners of house-helps demonstrate their worth and high societal echelon by their use of house helps whom they most often, ill-treat. Contrarily, the relationship between Odenigbo and Ugwu
differs from this established norm. Adichie foregrounds this contrast by depicting the lives of other house helps in Odenigbo’s neighbourhood, such as Dr. Okeke’s house boy, who sleeps on the kitchen floor unlike Ugwu who sleeps on a bed, and another house boy who cooks only what he is ordered to compare to Ugwu who decides what food will be prepared, at least, before the arrival of Olanna (Adichie 2006:17). Furthermore, Odenigbo cautions Ugwu against the use of words expressing social stratum to address him. “‘Odenigbo. Call me Odenigbo.’ Ugwu stared at him doubtfully. ‘Sah?’ ‘My name is not Sah. Call me Odenigbo.’ ‘Yes, sah.’ “Odenigbo will always be my name. Sir is arbitrary. You could be the sir tomorrow”’ (Adichie 2006:13). Odenigbo insists that Ugwu addresses him as an equal man. The use of ‘sir’ often typifies the addressee as a man in a position of authority. Such use of language, in the case of Odenigbo and his ideology, is a memorial for colonialism and inequality; reflecting the relationship between Frantz Fanon’s (1967) theory of the ‘Other’ in connection to the ‘Self’, and Edward Said’s (1978) analysis of the ‘Occident’ and the ‘Orient’. To avoid any form of social imbalance or ‘colonialism’, even in seemingly trivial scenarios, Odenigbo razes the hierarchy wall between himself and Ugwu.

To further emphasise the socially unclassified relationship between Odenigbo and Ugwu, Odenigbo sometimes introduces Ugwu to his friends, relieving Ugwu of his lower class stratum. Rather than say ‘Ugwu is my house boy’, Odenigbo will say to his friends, “‘Ugwu helps me around the house. Very clever boy’” (Adichie 2006:18). Ugwu soon realises he is not a normal houseboy to the extent that “did not want (…) any woman (…) coming in to intrude and disrupt their lives” (Adichie 2006:21). Ugwu’s desire for an undisrupted life with Odenigbo reveals, to a large extent, that Ugwu is comfortable and does not perceive himself as enslaved.

Accordingly, the relationship between Odenigbo and Ugwu is that of ‘father and son’. As such, Odenigbo is liable to demonstrate fatherhood through the means he is capable of, which is literacy indoctrination. Chidebell points out that it is “not unusual for children labouring as house helps to be denied access to formal education” (2013:187). While most owners of house helps deprive their helps of formal education, which a way of labelling them as misfits, Odenigbo expresses an earnest resentment at Ugwu’s discontinuation of tuition.

didn’t your father find somebody to lend him your school fees?’ ‘Sah?’ ‘Your father should have borrowed!’ Master snapped, and then, in English, ‘Education is a priority! How can we resist exploitation if we don’t have the tools to understand exploitation?’

(Adichie 2006:10-11)

Odenigbo’s anger at Ugwu’s cessation of schooling is supported by Odenigbo’s unyielding hankering for a revolution in Nigerian politics, for the culmination of postcolonial effects, and the secession of Biafra from Nigeria. History is to be studied and understood in order to circumvent its repetition. As an indigene of Igbo land, Odenigbo wonders how Ugwu would understand his history and the means through colonialism conquered Africa, without education. To this effect, Odenigbo assumes the responsibility of Ugwu’s education. “I will enrol you in the staff primary school,’ Master said” (Adichie 2006:11). Ugwu’s aunty had previously informed Ugwu that if he served impressively for a few years, Odenigbo would send him to a commercial school where he would learn typing and shorthand. She had mentioned the staff school but it appeared to be some sort of social stratification. Only children of lecturers, who certainly belong to the middle class, attend the staff school.

Securing a formal education for Ugwu is one of two ways Odenigbo instils literacy in Ugwu. Stirred by the desire to pass along his values and life lessons, Odenigbo engages Ugwu in a historical conversation. He educates Ugwu about the hierarchal structure of the world map. “This is our world, although the people who drew this map decided to put their own land on top of ours. There is no top or bottom, you see’” (Adichie 2006:10). Ugwu is unfortunately uninformed of ancient and topographical facts and is unable to contribute to their intellectual conversations. Discontented at Ugwu’s ignorance of historical and geographical subjects, Odenigbo then creates conversations between himself and Ugwu that aim at developing Ugwu’s literacy.

‘There are two answers to the things they will teach you about our land: the real answer and the answer you give in school to pass. You must read books and learn both answers. I will give you books, excellent books.’ Master stopped to sip his tea. ‘They will teach you that a white man called Mungo Park discovered River Niger. That is rubbish. Our people fished in the Niger long before Mungo Park’s grandfather was born. But in your exam, write that it was Mungo Park.’

(Adichie 2006:11)
In the above quotation, Odenigbo expresses dissatisfaction at the module of history subjects in Nigerian schools. Formal education and its components in Nigeria are structured according to western values and precepts. The subject of history is often taught from an angle that defines tribes in Nigeria as ethnic groups without structured identities until the arrival of the colonialists. Odenigbo, however, strongly contends that Nigerian ethnic groups in Nigeria were properly established prior to the emergence of colonialism. If Ugwu must fully realise his history and identity, the knowledge of Nigerian precolonial history must not elude him. Nonetheless, it appears that Odenigbo’s literacy is a factor that enables him to conform to the masculine gender expectation of fatherhood.

In due course, Ugwu garners the adroitness to contribute to intellectual conversations with Odenigbo, as against the regularity of solely listening. They discuss about farming technology as they journey to Ugwu’s village in a car ride, alongside Ugwu’s aunty (Adichie 2006:88). Odenigbo explains to Ugwu that the focus of the government, as far as food production in Nigeria is concerned, should be on the implementation of irrigation technology. With such operation in place, Nigeria can easily overcome colonial dependence on importation. Unfortunately, the ignoramuses in the government are engrossed in effectuating corrupt practices. Odenigbo proceeds to inform Ugwu that some of his students joined the group that went to Lagos to demonstrate that morning. Ugwu questions the purpose for their protest, and Odenigbo explains in great details, as though Ugwu was one of his scholarly friends. Such intellectual discussion, indeed baffles Ugwu’s aunty, who is uneducated. She wonders how a young illiterate boy, who is in fact supposed to perform the role of a misfit house help, manages to understand or even contribute to an intelligent conversation.

Odenigbo’s influence in Ugwu’s life does not stay concealed. For every passing day, the aspiration to attain literacy consumes Ugwu. Even Jomo, Odenigbo’s gardener, recognises Ugwu’s improvement in English proficiency. “‘Dianyi, you now speak English just like the children of the lecturers’” (Adichie 2006:93). Ugwu’s development and continuous interest in literacy evinces Odenigbo’s competence and success as a father.
4.2. Ugwu

Ugwu is another major character in *Half of a Yellow Sun*; a thirteen-year-old Igbo boy, a school drop-out, a lower-class citizen, and house help to Odenigbo. Ugwu is eager to learn fast, as he commences a new life in the civilized and comfortable home of Odenigbo which differs from the rural home his family resides in. Ugwu is a very intelligent character, whose experiences and ordeals afford insights into a number of societal issues represented in the novel. As a boy whose new life in Odenigbo’s home appears to avail him better opportunities and life experiences, this section will investigate Adichie’s portrayal of Ugwu as an absolutely delineated character: devoted, ambitious, courageous, scholarly, and as a masculine character in a patriarchal society. The character of Ugwu is interesting to explore because it entails the life of boy who undergoes different ideals of masculinity including the masculinity that appears to be emasculating.

4.2.1. Masculinity, Literacy and Identity Prior to the Biafran War

Identity varies for different individuals, even of the same sex, especially in a socially classified and postcolonial world. Social class affects the thought patterns of people, determining the manner in which they identify themselves. Identity for Ugwu, has been defined by his status as a lower-class citizen and his rural upbringing. Environmental change and association with people of a different social class shifts identity. In the case where the social class is of a higher stratum, the enthusiasm to achieve and redefine one’s self is possibly inspired. Ugwu’s new life in Odenigbo’s home introduces him to a new self, a new identity which he struggles diligently to fully realise throughout the novel. In the redefinition of Ugwu’s self, literacy, besides his new middle echelon, plays a vital role. Through the perspective of literacy, Ugwu envisions a regenerated him, a reinvigorated self, competent for the elite society and prepared to positively influence the community at large.

Two of Ugwu’s recurring words in the novel are ‘learn’ and ‘fast’. The repetition of these words emphasises Ugwu’s determination at exceptional accomplishments. Ugwu reiterates these words whenever Odenigbo questions his ability or detects an inability. Assuredly, Ugwu often asserts “‘But I learn everything very fast!’” (Adichie 2006:11), “‘No, sah. But I learn fast’” (Adichie 2006:12). Ugwu demonstrates his diligence and readiness to
work through the effective implementation of his job as a house help. He learns the pattern of Odenigbo’s daily activities and masters the chores that need to be done. Indeed, he becomes perfect in his work, leaving no room for complaints about incompetence. Ugwu “wanted to do more, wanted to give Master every reason to keep him” (Adichie 2006:14). This ambitious and industrious attitude is made manifest in his academics; an opportunity given to him by Odenigbo.

A masculine identity can suffer deprecation as a result of a fellow male’s poise as superior. In a postcolonial Nigeria, literacy acquisition undeniably enhances masculinity. The aspiration to acquire literacy can be galvanized in men who experience marginalisation as a result of their illiteracy. Ugwu’s enthusiasm for literacy acquisition is revealed when some men arrive to install shelves in the house, and require a signature of receipt from an occupant of the residence. Since Ugwu is unfortunately unable to sign the document, he beckons on the men, filled with pride as a house help to an intellectual, to wait until Odenigbo returns. Amused by Ugwu’s pride in Odenigbo, the men make mockery of Ugwu’s illiteracy. “‘He’s one of these village houseboys,’ one of the men said dismissively” (Adichie 2006:13). Angered and motivated by the derision, Ugwu “promised himself, stopping short of speaking aloud, that he would learn how to sign forms” (Adichie 2006:13).

This effervescence for literacy acquisition is evident in several of Ugwu’s inclinations and actions. Odenigbo often engages Ugwu in intellectual conversations that supersede Ugwu’s comprehension. Rather than indicate his naivety, Ugwu gives positive feedbacks that suggests that he understands because he prefers that Odenigbo continues talking; affording him the privilege to listen to the mellifluous voice, the musical medley of English words in Odenigbo’s sentences (Adichie 2006:10). In the same manner, Ugwu listen to the conversations between Odenigbo and his friends regardless of his inability to entirely comprehend.

Some evenings, when the visitors left early, he would sit on the floor of the living room and listen to Master talk. Master mostly talked about things Ugwu did not understand, as if the brandy made him forget that Ugwu was not one of his visitors. But it didn’t matter. All Ugwu needed was the deep voice, the melody of the English-inflected Igbo, the glint of the thick eyeglasses.

(Adichie 2006:21)
Similarly, Ugwu yearns to listen to Olanna speak. Olanna’s English, not only sounds more dignified compared to Odenigbo’s, but pulsates like ‘magic’. Olanna’s accent qualifies as “a superior tongue, a luminous language, the kind of English he heard on Master’s radio, rolling out with clipped precision” (Adichie 2006:22). Enthralled by Olanna’s English, Ugwu often becomes oblivious, unaware of his immediate surroundings and replies Olanna’s spoken Igbo to him with English. He too is striving to belong to this group of literates and will not tolerate any form of condescension.

In his aspiration for literacy, Ugwu discovers amity in bibliophilia, the love of books. This ambitious proletarian is not ignorant of his privilege to access books, especially his master’s efforts to recommend excellent books to him (Adichie 2006:11, 17). Despite Ugwu’s inability to comprehend majority of the books, he nevertheless prides himself as a reader before the eyes of others (Adichie 2006:17). The excessive time allotted to him for his schoolwork, affords him more time to voluntarily struggle with and study difficult sentences in Odenigbo’s books (Adichie 2006:83). For Ugwu, every leisure matters and is invested into his literacy development. More so, he decides to ignore the norms and expectation of early marriage even for men, and cleaves to Olanna and Odenigbo’s promise to send him to the university after the completion of his secondary education. “He would not marry until he had become like Master, until he had spent many years reading books” (Adichie 2006:176) which would form the essentials of his identity.

This new life, this literacy development, which is an advantage of his existence with Odenigbo, becomes the pivotal factor of Ugwu’s identity. Odenigbo’s desire to pass along to a next generation his principles and life lessons is reciprocated by Ugwu’s eagerness to receive these values. Ugwu develops optimum veneration for Odenigbo and treasures the bond between them – the bond that developed from their intellectual conversations – some sort of literacy romance (Adichie 2006:85). This respect for his Master is then conveyed upon his master’s mother. Prior to mama’s initial arrival, Ugwu “imagined what she would be like, this woman who had bathed Master as a baby, fed him, wiped his running nose. Ugwu was in awe of her already, for having produced Master” (Adichie 2006:85). His reverence for Odenigbo causes him to despise the manner in which Miss Adebayo raises her voice over Odenigbo’s during their conversations. Infuriated by her contentious arguments with Odenigbo, Ugwu frequently battles the urge to silence Miss Adebayo (Adichie 2006:19-20). Hence, symptoms of envy are detected when Olanna moves into Odenigbo’s house. Odenigbo frequently touches Olanna, roams his eyes about in search of her whenever he...
returns from work, and harkens to her suggestions without a second thought on matters that would have been Ugwu’s decision to make (Adichie 2006:85). As such, Ugwu concludes that Odenigbo has been transformed and fears that the bond between himself and Odenigbo will diminish. This fear is, however, destroyed by Olanna’s display of affection to Ugwu. He, after all, has nothing to fear.

As theorized by Robert K. Merton, individuals construct their identity by emulating models who are exemplify the social roles they aim for (1968:356-357). Research verifies that the concept of modelling proves to be paramount and significant in identity construction (Shapiro et al. 1978:57). Zuo asserts that “the action of choosing a role model signifies in itself an individual’s emerging sense of self because the role model is selected not only for the appealing power at the moment but also for the ability to project one’s future image” (2005:79). Ugwu, in fact, constructs a prospective and holistic picture of himself, employing Odenigbo as a paradigm. Carving himself in Odenigbo’s image, Ugwu imitates Odenigbo’s activities.

Late at night, after Master was in bed, Ugwu would sit on the same chair and imagine himself speaking swift English, talking to rapt imaginary guests, using words like decolonize and pan-African, moulding his voice after Master’s, and he would shift and shift until he too was on the edge of the chair.

(Adichie 2006:20)

Having imbibed, to some degree, qualities of the middle echelon, Ugwu anticipates a parade of his progressive identity to members of his social strata. His revamped identity has finally presented him the opportunity to appear prospective in the eyes of his object of infatuation, Nnesinachi, a native of his village, who is yet to recognize his masculinity as hegemonic. “She would certainly notice him this time, he was sure, and he could not wait to impress Anulika and his cousins and relatives with his English, his new shirt, his knowledge of sandwiches and running tap water, his scented powder” (Adichie 2006:86). Ugwu’s identity and self-definition seems to hinge on Odenigbo, to the extent that, Ugwu feels threatened and insecure at the time when Olanna and Odenigbo quarrel over Odenigbo’s infidelity and Amala’s pregnancy. He wishes that Amala’s pregnancy will be aborted so that “his life would return to what it was before: Olanna and Master securely together” (Adichie 2006:240). For as long as Odenigbo is happy and fulfilled, he too can be happy and satisfied. In
recapitulation, literacy forms the basic factor for identification as Ugwu reconstructs himself in the image and similitude of Odenigbo.

4.2.2. Masculinity as a Houseboy

Discussing ‘masculinity as a houseboy’ is necessary because Ugwu is fore mostly characterised as house help, and some demands of this job are culturally depicted as un-masculine. In order to effectively analyse Ugwu’s masculinity as a house help, it is important to discuss household chores in relation to gender roles and expectations. Traditionally, household tasks are gender specific (Kornrich et al. 2013:26). Generally, more house chores, especially traditionally feminine chores such as cleaning, cooking, and child care, are assigned to women (Rice 2002:417). According to a recent research in America, nearly three quarters of the participants assumed women in heterosexual relationships should be responsible for grocery purchase, cooking, laundry and cleaning even in scenarios where the women earn more money than the man; while 90 percent believed that men should be responsible for outdoor chores and auto mobile maintenance (McCauley 2016). A similar research carried out in Nigeria reveals that, even though some of the male participants in partook in household chores, most of them “maintained that their culture and tradition generally do not support men engaging in domestic roles like cooking, fetching water, doing the dishes and doing the laundry” (Akanle et al. 2016:7840). Such cultural beliefs of domestic chores in relation to gender roles can be alleged to depict the hegemonic Nigerian masculinity. This hegemonic model of masculinity influences and creates discrepancies in the categories of household chores a male house help should perform as will be seen in the following paragraphs.

Household chores comprise of the duties of a house keeper, specifically of a house help as in the case of Ugwu. It seems rational that a house help performs every household task regardless of sex and cultural beliefs. As a house help, Ugwu performs most house chores including those supposed to be feminine. Among many other chores, Ugwu prepares delectable meals. His meals prove to be indeed, sumptuous, as he often receives complements from Odenigbo and his friends (Adichie 2006:86). At some point, even Olanna, while she is away from Odenigbo’s house, salivates and looks forward to consuming Ugwu’s meals.
(Adichie 2006:102). However, cooking is a feminine gender expectation, and Ugwu’s competence in kitchen affairs may culturally depict him as unmanly.

Cooking is assumed to be a female’s duty in Nigeria as discussed in the theoretical chapter (Azodo and Eke 2007:3), and also in the dual preceding paragraphs. Men, it seems, by default, lack the aptitude to comprehend cooking methods, which is why Odenigbo’s mother declares to Ugwu, “I have brought ingredients to make a proper soup for my son. I know you try, but you are only a boy. What does a boy know about real cooking?” (Adichie 2006:94). Then, with the voice of culture, which she represents in the novel, Odenigbo’s mother firmly asserts “A boy does not belong in the kitchen” (Adichie 2006:95). To affirm her cultural belief, Odenigbo’s mother ignores Ugwu’s “perfect jollof rice and chicken” (Adichie 2006:95). Apparently, she presumes by default, that Ugwu’s meals taste bland. Even Odenigbo is initially surprised and disbelieves Ugwu’s cooking skills. Before Ugwu’s arrival, Odenigbo eats mostly at the staff club and realises he has to bring more food home because of Ugwu. Ugwu reveals he is able to cook and with doubt, Odenigbo says to Ugwu, “Well, you can cook your own food then” (Adichie 2006:12). Since the day Odenigbo tastes Ugwu’s food, he eats more often at home than anywhere else. Odenigbo compliments Ugwu as he eats Ugwu’s meal for the first time, “Excellent, my good man” (Adichie 2006:17). Besides the issue of men and incompetent cooking skills, men who cook can be said to be at risk of losing their masculinity, as a result, some characters perceive Ugwu as being at the risk of emasculation.

Emasculation is “often used to mean loss of male physical and emotional characteristics, either as a result of removal of the testes (castration) or of emotional stress” (Reference 5). Likewise, in Nigeria, “men seen performing domestic chores are derogatorily referred to as women wrapper and/or she man” (Akanle et al. 2016:7837), which can appear emasculating. Ugwu’s sister, Anulika, had “told him he spent too much time around women cooking, and he might never grow a beard if he kept doing that” (Adichie 2006:12). ‘Growing a beard’ is a metaphor for hegemonic masculinity. In other words, a man is everything a woman is not, and meddling with tasks designated for women seem as a threat to Ugwu’s masculinity. Presumably, he may never command as much respect as he ought to, especially as a married man in his future home. Adichie highlights this aspect of Nigerian culture through the character of Harrison, a local Igbo man and Richard’s cook.
The manner and enthusiasm with which Harrison cooks for Richard is indisputably joyful and willingly. He boasts of his cooking skills and very much prefers European food to his traditional meals. In his home, however, he leaves the cooking to his wife, who of course, only knows how to prepare traditional meals. “‘You must have difficulty eating native food when you go home then.’ Kainene stressed the word native, and Richard held back his laughter. ‘Yes, madam.’ Harrison bowed again. ‘But I must manage’” (Adichie 2006:255). Harrison will rather ‘manage’ to eat what he prefers not to than cook his preference when his wife is, after all, available. Kainene should have known that traditional Nigerian men are not supposed to cook. It is emasculating for Harrison to cook in a home where he has a wife which explains why “Harrison looked wounded” (Adichie 2006:255) when Kainene enquired if he cooks European meals in his home. Accordingly, Harrison will cook only for educated men and women of higher echelon, who are obviously above him socially and economically. In that way, his masculinity is under any sort of threat. Contrary to Harrison, Ugwu willingly cooks both in his family home and in Odenigbo’s home. His masculinity does not seem wounded, at least, there are no evidences of him being psychologically or emotionally affected as a result of his cooking capability. As the thesis progresses, in later sections, Ugwu’s character development will be discussed and it will be revealed, the extent to which his masculinity appreciates or deteriorates putting into consideration his current character analysis.

4.3. Richard Churchill

Richard Churchill is a British expatriate and journalist who comes to Nigeria because of his love for, and to explore Igbo-Ukwu art, especially the roped pot. At first, he is Susan’s lover, until he becomes attracted to the less beautiful Kainene after meeting both Kainene and Olanna at a party. Richard plans to write a book about Igbo-Ukwu art and therefore moves to Nsukka which affords him more resources for his book writing, and also secures a job at the university of Nsukka. Olanna introduces him to Odenigbo and he becomes the only white Englishman in Odenigbo’s circle of friends.

Richard is characterised as shy, frail and handsome which is similar to Olanna’s fragility and beauty, and contrasting with Kainene’s and Odenigbo’s plain-looks and
confidence. Susan, Richard’s former lover, confesses to him, “I fancied you the minute I saw you and I didn’t think I would, really. I thought how handsome and gentle he is, and I must have resolved there that I would never let you go” (Adichie 2006:67). Also, when Richard discloses to Kainene that he has always been a loner, Kainene admits that she would not have thought him to be a loner because of his handsomeness, and “Beautiful people are not usually loners” (Adichie 2006:62). Even the beautiful Olanna too notices Richard’s handsomeness, coupled with his fair-hair and blue eyes (Adichie 2006:243). And when Olanna visits Richard to request of his secrecy, to not disclose their sexual escapade to Kainene, Olanna notices Richard’s “trembling hands and pale shyness and the vulnerabilities he wore so openly knotted at his throat like a tie” and the manner in which he quickly jerks when frightened (Adichie 2006:243). Kainene as well notices Richard’s shyness when they first meet each other (Adichie 2006:59), and during one of the first times they had sexual intercourse – “he got up and felt shy when she glanced at his naked body (…) he pulled on his underwear and buttoned his shirt hurriedly” (Adichie 2006:69). Richard’s behavioural patterns resist masculine gender roles; conforming to feminine gender roles in numerous ways. Discussing Richard’s frailty and handsomeness is necessary because they are factors that aid the analysis and comprehension of Richard’s masculinity.

4.3.1. Masculinity, Literacy and Identity Prior to the Biafran War

This section deals with the effects of literacy on Richard’s character formation as well as other factors that define his masculinity and identity prior to the Biafran war. Foremost, like Olanna, Richard feels “a wholeness, a certainty that he would never need anything else” as long as he has Kainene (Adichie 2006:69). This is in contrast with Odenigbo’s masculinity and synonymous with Olanna’s femininity. Richard too like Olanna, foregoes his western cultural identity and seeks for traditional Nigerian means to please Kainene. During sexual intercourse with Kainene, Richard fails to satisfy Kainene. It is either an erection eludes him or he reaches climax before they are barely in progress (Adichie 2006:63, 68). This, however, does not appear to be entirely Richard’s fault as he performed well sexually with Susan (Adichie 2006:64), and even with Olanna (Adichie 2006:234). Yet, Richard feels troubled and incompetent while Kainene seems unbothered as though she can never be the cause. Richard seeks for potent herbs – prepared by native Nigerian doctors and traditionally used
by Nigerian men to improve sexual performance (Adichie 2006:74). Gradually, Kainene becomes the tool that shapes Richard’s life, and as well the catalyst for his transition into a Biafran identity.

Before his arrival in Nigeria, Richard’s interest in Nigeria was enthused by the images of Igbo-Ukwu art, especially the roped pot, he saw in Colonies Magazine. The roped pot is a complex metalworking that existed among the Igbo-Ukwu people; excavated in Nigeria dating back to the ninth century (Adichie 2006:62). Richard is keen to mention his interest in Igbo-Ukwu art to most people he comes across. During his journey to Nsukka, he transits at Igbo-Ukwu to see the home of the roped pot before anything else; which is why he has come to Nigeria at the first place (Adichie 2006:70). Besides Igbo-Ukwu art, Richard seems general taken by the Nigerian culture, especially the Igbo culture. Richard requests of Odenigbo to permit Ugwu to accompany him to Ugwu’s village to enable him witness and record the ori-okpa festival where the mmuo (masquerades) parade the village, flogged young men, and chased after young women (Adichie 2006:86). He begins to write about different aspects of colonial and postcolonial Nigeria (Adichie 2006:56, 234). Distinctively, Richard’s interest in Igbo-Ukwu art and his writing about colonial and postcolonial Nigeria is not monetarily induced, but aesthetic (Adichie 2006: 53). It would seem that Richard’s literacy, specifically his life as a writer, and his origin as a British, are the factors that define him. This however proves to be false as will be revealed in succeeding paragraphs.

While Odenigbo’s life is profoundly defined by his literacy, Richard gradually realises that his writings or literacy are not as significant as his relationship with Kainene. Firstly, Richard is determined to keep his sexual escapade with Olanna away from Kainene. The fear of losing Kainene worries him. He “thought of what it would be like if she found out and left him and he never heard that sardonic voice over the phone” (Adichie 2006:235). Comparatively, Odenigbo appears to have the confidence that Olanna would remain with regardless of his unfaithfulness. This contrast between Richard (diffidence) and Odenigbo (confidence) is a marker for the various kinds of masculinity that exist among major male characters in the novel, particularly among men of similar patriarchy systems. According to Connell’s theory of the various kinds of masculinities (2005:76-81), Richard’s masculinity opposes Odenigbo’s hegemonic masculinity. Richard’s masculinity is of a subordinate kind, in the sense that, it is characterised by excess display of emotions and feminine-like. This patriarchy system that dominates the postcolonial Nigerian is not strange to Richard. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, the patriarchy system in postcolonial Nigeria is a product
of colonialism; as well as a system in the western world. Therefore, the difference between the masculinities of Richard and Odenigbo is not a question of culture differentiation, rather, individual difference and uniqueness. Richard’s masculinity appears to be similar to Olanna’s femininity – the sort of masculinity and femininity that worries about the opinion of others and is constantly burdened with the safety and security of his/her relationship.

As Adichie laments (Tedx Talks 2013), women, particularly Nigerian women, are taught to aspire to marriage and are stereotyped as ‘homemakers’. The security and welfare of a marriage therefore becomes the responsibility of the woman; in such a way that if the union fails, regardless of the cause, the woman becomes the unfortunate one, who has no husband and therefore lacks an identity. It is in this same manner that Richard constantly worries over the need to secure his relationship with Kainene. During one of their get-togethers, Kainene introduces Richard to a male friend of hers, Madu Madu, a childhood friend of hers and a major in the army. Madu shares similar characteristics with Odenigbo, even Kainene except for the sex difference. Madu is of a huge physique, a critique of the Great Britain and of an intimidating confidence that causes Richard to feel threatened.

It was too intimate, to hear this mammoth man with the slightly condescending smile on his face say Kainene’s name like that, as if he knew Kainene very well, as if he knew something that Richard did not know, as if whatever Kainene had told him about Richard had been whispered in his ear, amid the silly giggles born of physical intimacy.

(Adichie 2006:78)

In the midst of absorbing Madu’s criticism and attempting to gain back the confidence he (Richard) never had, another male friend of Kainene, Udodi, a blunter critique of the British people, joins them. Udodi, lambasts Kainene for having an affair with a white man in the presence of Richard, Kainene does not worry that Richard may become aggravated, neither does she fret at the thought of losing her relationship; which is what the norms and stereotypes expect of her. Instead, Richard is the one with the worry and becomes apologetic on behalf of Udodi to Kainene. “He was dreadful. I’m sorry he did that” (Adichie 2006:81). Nevertheless, Madu’s close friendship with Kainene remains such a presence that occupied his mind.

He wondered why he could simply not ask if she found Madu attractive and if she had ever been involved with him or, worse yet, was still involved with him. He was afraid.
He moved toward her and put his arms around her and held her tightly, wanting to feel the beat of her heart. It was the first time in his life he felt as if he could belong somewhere.

(Adichie 2006:82)

This encounter with Madu reveals the significance of Kainene in Richard’s life. However, the importance of Kainene in Richard’s life becomes even more apparent when Kainene learns of Richard’s sexual spree with Olanna. Kainene burns the sole manuscript of Richard’s book which was almost near completion as an act of retribution for his infidelity. Richard realises his relief significantly greater than the anger which he feels at the loss of his manuscript. “What mattered was that by burning his manuscript she had shown him that she would not end the relationship; she would not bother to cause him pain if she was not going to stay” (Adichie 2006:258). Seemingly, his life with Kainene seem more important than his identity as a writer. “Perhaps he was not a true writer after all. He had read somewhere that, for true writers, nothing was more important than their art, not even love” (Adichie 2006:258). With all of the above scenarios, there is the need to question Richard’s attachment to Kainene. Richard’s relationship with Kainene appears to be more than a need for love; more like a search for an identity. Gender expectations require the attachment of a woman to a man and not vice-versa. Richard’s behavioural patterns, however, constantly resists his gender expectations. Richard’s past as a child provides more explication on his attachment to Kainene, as will be revealed in subsequent passages.

While Odenigbo yearns to pass along to a next generation his values and life lessons, and therefore hankers for fatherhood, Richard seems to seek sonship; a mentoring that will rejuvenate his identity. Unlike some fortunate children, Richard did not have an exciting childhood. He did not have the privilege of a father figure to teach him life’s values and principles and mould him an identity. His parents died when he was nine and their presence before their death had little or no positive impacts on him. While Richard’s parents were still alive, they left him in the care of a nanny, Molly. His parents were so engrossed with each other to the extent that they forgot his birthdays “and then had Molly make a cake that said happy belated birthday weeks after. They never knew what and when he ate; Molly fed him when she remembered. They had not planned to have him and, because of that, they had raised him as an afterthought” (Adichie 2006:115). He had once hidden from Molly when she called out to him. Instead of responding to Molly’s call, he hid under a hedge. The short
moment he had hiding before Molly found him was of great significance to him. “those short moments had made it all worthwhile, those moments of pure plenary abandon, when he felt as if he, and he alone, were in control of the universe of his childhood” (Adichie 2006:66). After all, he never truly had a life worth living with his parents and Molly, therefore, it did not seem like a plenary abandon will exacerbate the conditions of his life.

As if to escalate matters, Richard had to move into his aunt Elizabeth’s house after the death of his parents, where he felt intimidated and not enough. His aunt Elizabeth was quite grand and his cousins were terribly sophisticated, that the thought of running away often overwhelmed him (Adichie 2006:61). All of his desires to ‘run away’, to ‘stay hidden’ from those who force upon him a life he abhorred, symbolises Richard’s craving to shape his own destiny, to own an identity (Adichie 2006:115). Richard’s search for an identity ends the day he meets Kainene. Richard is searching for in Kainene, what Olanna searches for in Odenigbo – an identity. With Kainene, he discovers a possibility to shape his own destiny.

4.4. Masculinity in the New World

As already discussed in section 3.3., the new world in *Half of a Yellow Sun* begins with the creation of Biafra; a symbol of hope for the massacred and battered Igbo people which is quickly annealed and ruined by the declaration of the Nigerian civil war (Biafran war). This section will analyse the effect of the Biafran war on behavioural patterns, gender roles and expectations of the already analysed male characters; the contributions of men during the war, and the alterations to the identities of the selected male characters. Meanwhile, it should be noted that one major expectation of masculinity during the Biafran war is ‘strength’. As the war intensifies, only women and children are to relocate to the hometowns while men are to remain in the cities. “If the men left it would mean that they were panicking and there was nothing to panic about” (Adichie 2006:176). Masculinity therefore maintained its gender expectations in the new world as it was in the former world; symbolising both physical and emotional strength in the new world.
4.4.1. Odenigbo in the New World

An explicit term that describes the effect of the Biafran war on Odenigbo predominantly, is ‘paradigm shift’ – a change in the fundamental factors that have been crucial to the identity of Odenigbo. As discussed earlier, literacy has been paramount to Odenigbo’s identity. Unfortunately, the literate world that nurtured his ego and confidence prior to the war has ceased to exist. Academic institutions and civil jobs are being deserted (Adichie 2006:165). Vandals are capturing cities including Nsukka, and Odenigbo and his household have been moving from city to city: Nsukka to Abba to Umuahia to Orlu, searching for safety (Adichie 2006: 178, 195-196, 385-386). Opportunely, Odenigbo manages to secure a job with Manpower Directorate (Adichie 2006:185), all in the effort to win the war, and he as well remains optimistic. “No cause for alarm”, Odenigbo often says (Adichie 2006:176). Notwithstanding, his identity is undeniably altered as will be proven in several instances below.

Odenigbo falters in his ability to father Ugwu, which is understandable since the factor that instigates his fatherhood, literacy education, no longer exists in this new world – a shift from the western civilisation to the traditional world. Odenigbo has little or nothing to say to Ugwu. There are no records of intellectual conversations between Odenigbo and Ugwu compare to the period before the war. Parenthood for Ugwu shifts from fatherhood (Odenigbo) to motherhood (Olanna), and instead of the regular conversations, practical intellectual activities ensue between Ugwu and Olanna. In the freelance classes she organises, Olanna selects Ugwu as a teacher alongside Mrs. Muokelu. Ugwu diligently learns from Olanna and Mrs. Muokelu, “to excel at teaching, to show her that he could do it” (Adichie 2006:292), eventually he did excel. He took over Mrs. Muokelu’s class when she departed for affia attack. Ugwu “loved the light of recognition in the older children’s eyes when he explained the meaning of a word, loved the loud way Master said to Special Julius, “my wife and Ugwu are changing the face of the next generation of Biafrans with their Socratic pedagogy!”” (Adichie 2006:293). All of Ugwu’s literacy practices in the new world excluded Odenigbo’s impact, except of course, the theoretical knowledge he had garnered from Odenigbo before the war. The alterations to Odenigbo’s identity aggravates with the advent of his mother’s death, and his behavioural patterns gradually begin to resist the gender expectation of his masculinity.
The death of Odenigbo’s mother begets a significant plot change in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Odenigbo’s loss of fatherhood amounts to triviality in comparison with the depression that subdues him because of the death of mama. Initially, he attempts to wear an unwavering visage as though his mother’s death is incapable of ripping him of his vigour – his self-assurance. As such, he does not seem sad when Ugwu says words of consolation to him, neither does he pause to share an intimate moment of Ugwu’s commiseration; instead, he walks on briskly (Adichie 2006:300). This same reaction reoccurs when Special Julius visits to sympathise with Odenigbo. Odenigbo abruptly leaves for the bedroom after he says “‘Certainly one must expect casualties. Death is the price of our liberty’” (Adichie 2006:300). Odenigbo’s unwavering countenance is, however, no more than a cloak, merely an attempt to conform to the masculine gender expectation of emotional inexpressiveness – enshrouding his frailty.

Adichie employs a ‘darkness and light’ metaphor to emphasise the effect of mama’s death on Odenigbo. When the news of mama’s death is announced and Odenigbo departs for Abba to secure his mother’s corpse, “Ugwu watched the sun fall. Darkness came swiftly, brutally; there was no gradual change from light to dark” (Adichie 2006:301). ‘Light’ symbolises Odenigbo’s confidence and optimism, which ‘brutally’ changes to frailty and pessimism which ‘darkness’ symbolises. Hence, Odenigbo resorts to drinking – drinking away his griefs. ‘Drinking’ as it may seem, is not the problem, after all, Odenigbo drank together with his friends back in Nsukka before the emergence of the war. However,

His drinking in Nsukka—his auburn, finely refined brandy—had sharpened his mind, distilled his ideas and his confidence so that he sat in the living room and talked and talked and everybody listened. This drinking here silenced him. It made him retreat into himself and look out at the world with bleary weary eyes.

(Adichie 2006:380)

The death of Odenigbo’s mother strikes him with a personal taste and experience of the war similar to the experiences Olanna had in northern Nigeria, where she witnessed the death of her aunty Ifeka and uncle Mbaezi. Unlike Olanna who has become more productive during the war, Odenigbo’s drinking habit has caused him to be irresponsible alongside silencing him. The welfare of Odenigbo’s household becomes the least of his worries. Odenigbo no longer contributes financially to the maintenance of his family. “‘He just drinks and drinks cheap *kai-kai* (Alcoholic drink). The few times they pay him, the money goes quickly’”
Odenigbo’s lamentation about the loss of his literate world, emphasises the loss of his identity. He is not ready for this new world even though he argued for its creation – the creation of Biafra. Ironically, Kainene, who did not seem fascinated by the idea of a secession or Odenigbo’s revolutionary propaganda, is more prepared and productive in the new world. Odenigbo’s unpreparedness is explained by a statement he made earlier, before the Biafran war. Attempting to defend his mother’s ill attitude towards Olanna, he stated, “the real tragedy of our postcolonial world is not that the majority of people had no say in whether or not they wanted this new world; rather, it is that the majority have not been given the tools to negotiate this new world” (Adichie 2006:101). In other words, an educated Olanna was a threat to mama because she was just a village woman struggling to deal with the modern, literate world which she was yet to fit into. In the same manner, the tragedy of the seceded nation is not that the majority of the people had no say in whether or not they wanted this new world; rather, it is that the majority have not acquired the tools, or more specifically, calculated the price to acquire and negotiate this new world. Perhaps, Odenigbo presumed that the secession of Biafra would be of no cost to him or require of him a readiness to adapt to a new pattern of life and new literacies like Olanna does; from the western masteries to the traditional patterns. After a while of depression and grief, like a child with suppressed emotions, a sudden surge of snivel escapes Odenigbo. At this point, the obscured feminine aspect of Odenigbo is revealed which resists his gender expectations.

Contrary to his ideal self, the hegemonic masculinity which is assumed to be immune to fallibility and incapable of emotional display, Odenigbo blatantly grieves about his mother’s death.

(Olanna) wanted him to cry and cry until he dislodged the pain that clogged his throat, until he rinsed away his sullen grief. She cradled him, wrapped her arms around him, and slowly he relaxed against her. His arms circled her. His sobs became audible. With each intake of breath, they reminded her of Baby; he cried like his daughter.

(Adichie 2006:330-331)
The concealed traditional feminine expectation in Odenigbo is finally revealed, after all, a ‘man’ too is capable of vulnerability. Adichie upbraids this gender expectation as fallacious. “We teach boys to be afraid of fear, of weakness, of vulnerability. We teach them to mask their true selves, because they have to be, in Nigerian-speak—a hard man” (Adichie 2013). Under this hardship of war, everyone experiences some sort of repression, but this ideal masculinity that insists on the concealment of imperfections has caused Odenigbo to be nescient of his innate tendencies to be defective. Okeoma’s words of encouragement to Olanna as well emphasises Odenigbo’s flawed overconfidence; “‘Odenigbo has never known how to be weak. Be patient with him’” (Adichie 2006:322). With optimistic expectations, Olanna hopes “that whatever it was (that made Odenigbo stay and cry about his mother) would loosen some of the knots that had tightened inside him” (Adichie 2006:332). However, change is a gradual process. Therefore, this upsurge of emotions does not necessarily equal an entire reversal of character. As will be revealed, Odenigbo yet perpetuates some of his egoistic attributes in attempt to uphold his hegemonic masculine identity and still conform to his gender expectations.

After the captivity of Umuahia, Odenigbo and his family move into Kainene’s house in Orlu. Impishly, Kainene utters a subtle joke about Odenigbo’s appearance that appears more figurative than denotative. “‘What an interesting beard,’ she (Kainene) said. ‘Are we trying to copy His Excellency (General Ojukwu, leader of the Biafran nation)?’ ‘I (Odenigbo) never try to copy anyone.’ ‘Of course. I had forgotten how original you are’” (Adichie 2006:386). Kainene’s remark about Odenigbo’s originality is symbolic for Odenigbo’s egotism and obstination, even in this catastrophic era. For instance, Odenigbo refuses to heed to Olanna’s suggestion about speaking to Ezeka in solicitation for a transfer to a better directorate where his intellectuality will be productively utilised. Odenigbo assertively declares, “‘I won’t ask Ezeka.’ She recognized his expression: He was disappointed. She had forgotten that they had high ideals. They were people of principle; they did not ask favours of highly placed friends” (Adichie 2006:336-337). Requesting for a favour from an eminent consociate will emboss an ignoble dent on his masculine identity. Similarly, Odenigbo abruptly announces to Kainene that their (Odenigbo and his family) stay in her house is only temporary. “‘We’re here until we can find a pace to rent,’ Odenigbo said, looking at Kainene” (Adichie 2006:386), as if numerous options abound for him. Whereas, Kainene understands the difficulty of securing an accommodation in this war time, especially with the constant air raids and shelling, and therefore does not expect them to relocate, at least, not
before the end of the war (Adichie 2006:387). He attempts to still conform to his gender expectation of provider and confident, despite the contextual factors that have stripped him of his masculine identity.

Likewise, Odenigbo remains ‘original’ and opinionated in his criticism at the British government. In a lambasting manner, he questions Richard about the tools that measure and account for the white’s man success in Africa (Adichie 2006:402). In other words, African ethnic wars, such as the Nigerian civil war, are part of the tools that account for the success of the white man in Africa. The Biafran war is a success because, surely, the coloniser must have realised beforehand that the amalgamation of distinct ethnic groups into a nation will produce more catastrophe than salvation. Malachy et al. confirm that the formation of Nigeria was forcefully implemented to gratify Britain’s inconsiderate motives, and has created political and regional opposition for who rules and creates policies among the different ethnic groups (2014:149-151). The problem is not Odenigbo’s criticism of colonialism or the British government. Instead, the problem is Odenigbo’s failure to comprehend that, part of his inability to fit into this new world – Biafra, is his unyielding identity, which is foregrounded and rooted in western literacy and ideals. The birth of this new world imposed the traditional pattern of life on Odenigbo, far from the western and literate world that nurtured his confidence. This somewhat explains Odenigbo’s enthusiasm to return to Nsukka when the war is declared over (Adichie 2006:412). However, what he finds, further deprecates his identity.

Back in Nsukka, precisely Odenigbo’s courtyard, the vandals had piled up books and set them on fire. The Nigerian soldiers loathe intellectuals. The intellectuals are believed to have strategized the secession alongside Ojukwu (Adichie 2006:415-416). Odenigbo discovers that his research papers which were supposed to earn him his full professorship have been burned. “After a while, he sat down on the bare earth, his legs stretched in front of him, and Ugwu wished he had not; there was something so undignified, so unmasterly about it” (Adichie 2006:418). Adichie’s use of ‘the bare earth’ symbolises the affirmative loss of Odenigbo’s identity. Every document of his scholarship are gone. Although the traditional world (the new world) held no place for his western self, this current world (western and literate world) displaces him. Odenigbo is likened to the prodigal son who returns home but is rejected by his own family of ‘elite’. To regain his identity, he must begin all over; ‘acquiring books, writing articles’ that will hoist him to his former status. Attempting to recuperate, the first thing Odenigbo does as he arrives home, is the cleaning of his study.
Master found a broom and swept the study himself and left the pile of lizard droppings and dust just outside the door. Ugwu looked inside the study and saw him sitting on the only chair left, with a broken-off leg, so that he propped it against the wall for balance, hunched over half-burnt papers and files.

(Adichie 2006:419)

Several symbols are embedded in the above quotation. Sweeping his room and leaving the lizard droppings by the door of his study instead of waiting upon Ugwu to carry out the work symbolises Odenigbo’s major concern – the loss of his literacy identity. Also, his humped position over half-burnt papers and files symbolises his contemplation and attempt at restoration.

In summary, Odenigbo’s knowledge of a decolonised Africa and a ‘free’ Biafra is all theoretical compare to Olanna and Kainene, who implemented the practical knowledge required to survived in a revolutionised world without gruelling hypothesis. In order to avoid being arrested as a rebel, Olanna burns what is left of her Biafran pounds. As expected of a theoretical Odenigbo, he accuses Olanna of “‘burning memory’” (Adichie 2006:433); ‘memory’ he contributed little or nothing to its success, ‘memory’ that crumpled his confidence. Adichie seems to highlight the reality of action over the transient nature of theoretical knowledge. “He kept his flag (Biafran flag) folded inside the pocket of a pair of trousers” (Adichie 2006:432), assembling more proofs for his theories and revolutionary hypothesis. As soon as books arrived from overseas for Odenigbo, he “spent days poring over them” and joyfully speaks about his previous ownership of some of the books (Adichie 2006:432). His identity gradually returns, and perhaps, his conformation to the postcolonial gender roles and expectations of masculinity.

4.4.3. Ugwu in the New World

*Half of a Yellow Sun* reveals the different ideals of masculinity that exists in the western and traditional world. Literacy education contributed greatly to the ideal masculinity in the era before the war, of which Odenigbo is a typical representation. However, as the new world emerges, a new ideal of masculinity unfolds; a new hegemonic masculinity. Adichie unravels the qualities and expectations of this new masculinity through the evolving character of
Ugwu who is forced into the Biafran army; negotiating between different ideals of masculinity.

Masculinity in the new world no longer requires scholarly quiddities as a major determinant, instead ‘strength’, symbolised by enlisting in the army in the battle for the Biafran cause. Biafran men who refuse to or desert the army without due cause are debased and relegated as subordinate masculinity. Mama Oji ridicules her husband’s masculinity for not conforming to the requisites of the new masculinity. “‘You castrated sheep! You call yourself a man, and yet you deserted the army!’” (Adichie 2006:327-328). Likewise, pastor Ambrose experiences the tirade of mama Oji for not enlisting in the army to further their cause. “‘Stop babbling, Pastor Ambrose, and go and join the army! How is your speaking-in-tongues helping our cause?’ Mama Oji said” (Adichie 2006:337). As much as literacy education appears to be of minute contribution to the Biafran cause, religious activities seem not to prove otherwise, which explains Okeoma’s enlistment into the army. Okeoma’s poetic quiddities are of no use to the Biafran cause except his writings manage to reach the media overseas. His race however may render his writings incredible which is why Madu beckons on Richard to write for the Biafran cause. Richard’s writing will most likely evoke the intervention Biafra requires to further its cause because he is white (Adichie 2006:305). Consequently, Ugwu’s developing literacy identity proves to be insignificant, hence the emergence of his new masculinity. Gender expectations for masculinity become even tougher than before.

Ugwu’s masculinity evolves from marginal to hegemonic, menial to hyper masculine; on the defence for Biafra at warfronts. At the onset, the unknown realities of this new masculinity terrifies Ugwu. “The casual cruelty of this new world in which he had no say grew a hard clot of fear inside him” (Adichie 2006:359). Notwithstanding, Ugwu embraces this new masculinity and proves himself worthy before other soldiers; yet again a testament of his ability to “learn fast”. “He had proved himself to the other men by how well he did at training, how he scaled the obstacles and shimmied up the rough rope” (Adichie 2006:361). More so, Ugwu earns himself a prestigious sobriquet – “Target Destroyer”. His ogbunigwe, high-impact land mines, targeted and destroyed an oppositional army at a warfront (Adichie 2006:362). Ugwu who was feared to be at risk of emasculation, transforms into a prime male while the supposed typically ‘masculine’ Harrison, who saw cooking in his home as an insult to his masculinity, cowardly avoids enlistment into the Biafran army by feigning an injury with beet juice (Adichie 2006:302-303). Harrison is eventually awestricken by Ugwu bravery.
and therefore reveres him (Adichie 2006:399). Adaption to this new masculinity proves to be successful even though Ugwu had considered escaping earlier. He resisted the thought “because a part of him wanted to be here” (Adichie 2006:361). The urge to contribute to the Biafran cause invigorated him and this new world does not fail to leave imprints of new masculinities on Ugwu; transforming him from the naïve and bucolic houseboy to a fierce warrior of revolting vices, and easily conforming to his gender role of being a warrior.

Unfortunately, ‘strength’ is not the only gender expectation of this new masculinity. The ideal masculinity of the new world also requires violent and oppressive capabilities of Biafran soldiers towards ordinary civilians whose lives they ought to guard. The commander of Ugwu’s battalion sequestrates a sickly goat from an idle civilian, who of course, lacks the strength to tussle power against the armoury of the commander (Adichie 2006:366). In the same manner, relief cars that are meant to transport food and supplies to Biafran communities are being commandeered by Okeoma’s commander, a white-man mercenary (Adichie 2006:323). As expected, the soldiers follow suit; subjugating unarmed civilians. A married couple who are on a search for their son fall victim of military oppression. The husband is tortured to stupor before their car is seized by Ugwu’s battalion (Adichie 2006:363-364).

Even worse, this new masculinity employs sexual violence as a determinant of manliness; contributing more revulsions to the war.

Makokha provides an insightful observation of the place of the Biafran woman during the war: “During the Biafran war, girls and women, who were also referred to as ‘food’ (...) were raped both by the white mercenaries and the Biafrans themselves” (2014:115). Okeoma’s commander, the white-man mercenary, “‘throws girls on their backs in the open where the men can see him and does them, all the time holding his bag of money in one hand’” (Adichie 2006:323). Sexual violence against women becomes a tool of oppression for hegemonic men to marginalise other men; displaying their strength and superiority. Ugwu is forced to participate in a gang rape of a bar-girl by boys of his battalion. Zoe Norridge notes that rape is depicted as a bonding male exercise in the practice of war (2012:26). Ugwu would be labelled a weakling and then damagingly dent his masculinity if he refuses. “‘Target Destroyer, aren’t you a man?’” (Adichie 2006:365). “Participating in the raping was what would justify his manhood” (Makokha 2014:115). Masculine gender expectation in this new world appears more damaging than it was in the former world.
Similarly, the two white journalists who Richard chaperones to Biafra also have a venereal perception of Biafran women. said. “‘I hear there’s a lot of free sex here. But the girls have some kind of sexually transmitted disease? The Bonny disease? You guys have to be careful so you don’t take anything back home’” (Adichie 2006:369). The white journalists consider a norm to sexually objectify women during the Biafran war. Women are misused and abandoned with sexually transmitted diseases. Norridge notes that Adichie’s description of sexual violence reveals the objectification of women as disposable, ‘to be thrown away’ (2012:25). Paradoxically, religious leaders as well participate in the sexual objectification of Biafran women. Father Marcel exploits starving girls by trading food for sex with the girls (Adichie 2006:398). These violence and oppressiveness of the new masculinity counteracts the efforts expended into Biafra’s freedom. There is no freedom in civilian oppression and sexual violence. Even though Ugwu has contributed to the horrors of the war, he is neither pretentious about the effects of these depravities, neither does he welcome approbations for his newly attained hegemonic masculinity. He rebukes Harrison’s appraisal of General Ojukwu’s speech as ‘great’.

The corruption and the cruelty of the Biafran armies holds no iota of greatness. Ugwu bluntly says to Harrison, “‘There is no such thing as greatness’” (Adichie 2006:399). This is one of the most overriding quotes in Adichie’s novel. The quote connotes that the different ideals of an entity, masculinity for example, are indeed flawed and are only capable of thriving in particular contexts. Sadly, these flaws are often concealed and converted into strength. For instance, Odenigbo, the paragon of masculinity prior to the war, suffers defeat in the Biafran war because he had deemed his masculinity flawless and was not prepared for the possibilities of an overpowering situation. Also, the ideal masculinity of the new world traumatises more Biafran lives than it salvages. Yet, this masculinity is regarded as ‘greatness’. Furthermore, the corruption of Biafrans during the war is devastating. Several Biafrans struggle to feed. Some die of starvation. Soldiers who are supposedly fighting for the Biafran cause lack appropriate military apparels; “no boots, no uniforms, no half of a yellow sun on their sleeves” (Adichie 2006:359). Yet, corrupt Biafran government officials, such as professor Ezeka, live luxuriously and incongruously as though unaffected by the war (Adichie 2006:340-342). Nothing seems ‘great’ to Ugwu. The horrible war experience leaves him shell-shocked.

The horrible rape scene of the bar-girl constantly haunts Ugwu, snapping in and out of reveries, regretting his actions (Adichie 2006:397). Guilt envelopes Ugwu the more when
Kainene castigates father Marcel for sexually exploiting the vulnerability of young girls in the camp. “Ugwu felt stained and unworthy as he went about his new duties after the priests left (...) he wondered what Kainene would say, what she would do to him, feel about him, if she ever knew about the girl in the bar. She would loathe him. So would Olanna. So would Eberechi” (Adichie 2006:398). The appalling news of sexual violence that befalls his sister, Anulika, stunned him. “‘They forced themselves on her. Five of them’” (Adichie 2006:421). Anulika has experienced a similar doze of Ugwu’s horrible, and causes Ugwu to weep (Adichie 2006:421). Ugwu is a character with a lived experience; from a naïve village houseboy to a seeker of literacy and then to a warrior; from solely observing Odenigbo and his friends drinking alcohol, to smoking and drinking steadily as a warrior (Adichie 2006:363-364). Likewise, his sexuality has evolved. Ugwu’s desires have developed from concupiscence for Nnesinachi, to several casual sex with Chinyere prior to the war (Adichie 2006:121), and finally to devout affection for Eberechi (Adichie 2006:296). He has had to negotiate between different circumstances of life and ideals of masculinity. Ugwu’s horrendous deeds and ordeals can be reckoned as ample reasons for self-deprecation and prolonged despondence. Nevertheless, he extrudes despair and proceeds to contribute to the healing process of the Biafran people now that war is over.

Adichie is not explicit in her narrative of Ugwu’s recovery and status. However, the author leaves subtle evidences for the reader to reconstruct Ugwu’s progression. Ugwu’s progress is basically a resultant of his literacy cognizance. He developed all the while in the midst of war and misery. The scarcity of books during the war saddened him (Adichie 2006:294), and he practised his gained knowledge over the warring years. “He repeated Master’s words to Eberechi that afternoon, with authority, as though they were his” (Adichie 2006:295). He read about the life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave, which he found in his military camp (Adichie 2006:360). Ugwu’s development never ceased. In contrast with his Master, Odenigbo, Ugwu’s literacy identity transmutes from theoretic to practicalities.

Adichie underscores the importance of narratives as a healing and preventive tool against the repetition of wars through Olanna’s desire to be heard and Ugwu’s determination to record the carnages of the Biafran war (Adichie 2006:410). The final pages of the novel records Richard handing over the narrative baton to Ugwu. Adichie employs the literary technique of ‘a novel within a novel’; a nonfictional narrative of the Biafran war, The World Was Silent When We Died, which simultaneously progresses with the primary text and
assumed to be written by Richard. Richard is after all, the one who has been with a writer’s
identity all along. “The war isn’t my story to tell, really”, Richard admits to Ugwu (Adichie
2006:425). Finally, the last page of the novel reveals the irony, “Ugwu writes his dedication
last: For Master, my good man” (Adichie 2006:433). Ugwu is eventually revealed as
possessing the true writer’s identity; both in the sense that he is the writer of the book, and
also because his writing is substantiated by a personalised experience of the misery and
agony of the war which Richard lacks. Through this disclosure, Adichie challenges the
convention of accepting western or European perspectives as the solely credible or authentic
chronicles about Africa. Ugwu never assumes the story is Richard’s to tell (Adichie
2006:425), as such, Adichie awakens Africans to undertake the responsibility of writing
about themselves.

4.4.4. Richard in the New World

Hitherto in the analysis, every other character except Richard has either deprecated in identity
formation or appreciated; experiencing new forms of identity. Richard seems to be the only
character who adheres to his chosen identity before and during the war. As a matter of fact,
he perseveres and seeks to not only to identify with Kainene, but also with Biafra even in the
midst of war. Richard’s identification with Biafra reflects in various ways including
language.

Most cultures have languages peculiar to them, and language can therefore be an
important factor in identity formation. Richard craves to be Biafran in such a way that the
language of Biafra, Igbo, slips out of him without impediments (Adichie 2006:151, 181).
Stuart Hall’s ‘cultural circuit’ cited in Zou (2012:466), explains that in the construction of
identity, language and culture perform indispensable roles. This proves Richard’s
genuineness in the adoption of Biafran identity. He recognises that he can never truly identify
as Nigeria, however, his presence at the creation of Biafra gives a sense of a ‘natural
belonging’.

This was a new start, a new country, their new country. It was not only because
secession was just, considering all that the Igbo had endured, but because of the
possibility Biafra held for him. He would be Biafran in a way he could never have
been Nigerian—he was here at the beginning; he had shared in the birth. He would
belong. He said, *Marry me, Kainene* in his head many times but he did not say it aloud.

(Adichie 2006:168)

Kainene is Richard’s passage into Biafra, and just as the birth of a child would seal Odenigbo and Olanna’s union, Richard believes marriage would seal his identity as Biafran. Richard’s behavioural pattern seems to become even more feminine. However, his identification as Biafran is questioned in a way that projects his fears of rejection from Biafra.

Richard’s subtle identification as Biafran is challenged when Madu requests of him to write about the atrocities of the war. “‘You would not have asked me if I were not white’” (Adichie 2006:305). As an Englishman, Richard has privileges in a postcolonial Nigeria that neither Biafrans nor Nigerians have.

‘Of course I asked because you are white. They will take what you write more seriously because you are white. Look, the truth is that this is not your war. This is not your cause. Your government will evacuate you in a minute if you ask them to. So it is not enough to carry limp branches and shout *power, power* to show can that you support Biafra. If you really want to contribute, this is the way that you can. The world has to know the truth of what is happening, because they simply cannot remain silent while we die’.

(Adichie 2006:305)

For Richard, who has found a home in Biafra in a way that he never did in his homeland, England, Madu's bluntness depresses him to the core. Madu insists that Richard harnesses his white privilege to further the Biafra cause rather than identifying with Biafran in less productive ways. Madu not only threatens Richard’s relationship with Kainene, but as a Biafran. Richard’s perception of Madu as a potential threat intensifies in such a way that the possibility of Madu’s death had appealed to him (Adichie 2006:138). The more Richard desires to be Biafran, the more he loves Kainene, and the more insecurities befalls him.

Richard’s insecurities about his relationship with Kainene reflects in several reflexive and absurd actions. His fervour for Kainene causes him to refer to Kainene as his fiancée even though he has never discussed marriage with Kainene (Adichie 2006:151). More so, this fervour is reflected in Richard’s interest in peripheral and unnecessary matters. For instance, Kainene extensively criticises Ojukwu’s unpreparedness for the Biafran war, and
then she slightly compliments Ojukwu’s physique, especially his beard. Startlingly, Richard gives no feedback or comment on Kainene’s criticism, instead, he seems to be concerned about Kainene’s admiration for Ojukwu than any other point she had made. “Richard said nothing. He wondered, fleetingly, if he should grow a beard” (Adichie 2006:183). This affection and need for Kainene also causes Richard to begrudge Inatimi, an enthusiastic Biafran philanthropist, who Kainene constantly approves of and admires because of his contributions to the Biafran cause. “Richard resented Inatimi. In his mind, Inatimi became perfect, brave and bracing, made intrepid and sensitive by loss” (Adichie 2006:319). However, Richard’s worst fear materialises with the disappearance of Kainene.

Richard’s identity has been fashioned by his relationship with Kainene. Kainene’s disappearance therefore threatens the loss of his identity. Madu becomes for Richard, the cause of Kainene’s disappearance. The possibility of a previous sexual relationship between Madu and Kainene dawns on Richard, especially when Madu professes his love for Kainene to Richard. Supposedly fragile Richard suddenly garners the strength to hit muscular Madu to a point of stagger; proving the risk a man is willingly to encounter in order to preserve and protect his identity. The retaliation from Madu knocks Richard to the floor with a bleeding nose. “Darkness descended on him (Richard), and when it lifted he knew that he would never see Kainene again and that his life would always be like a candlelit room; he would see things only in shadow, only in half glimpses” (Adichie 2006:430). Richard ponders about how entirely different his world would become without Kainene, a symbol of how both she and Biafra have deeply shaped who he is. He had defined his existence around Kainene and Biafra, and now both are vanished. At the end of the novel, Richard’s behavioural patterns have constantly conformed to the feminine gender expectations of femininity.

One recurring mystery about the character of Richard is his choice to abandon his ‘white privileges’ and higher social status, preferring to identify with a third world nation. Although, references to Richard’s childhood have been sighted as a reason, nonetheless, Adichie resolves this conundrum in her article, *African “Authenticity” and the Biafran Experience* (2008), and in her Ted Talk, *The Danger of a Single Story* (TED 2009). In her Ted Talk, Adichie discusses the consequences of a stereotyped perception of an entity, culture or nation. She notes that stories tend to dictate the people’s perception about other people’s cultures and nations. She gives an instance of how the political debates about Mexicans and immigration issues shaped her perception of Mexicans; that they were people constantly sneaking across borders. She revealed that she was surprised to see Mexicans
differently from the immigrants America talked about. They were civilised with a functioning system. Also, in her article, Adichie narrates her surprise to discover the state at which West Philadelphia wallowed in poverty which was contrary to the stereotyped portrayal of the United States in films and books.

I knew there was poverty in the United States, but my conception of it was more like that of people living off the land, in conflict with nature, brave and dignified, even if poor, in worlds like Willa Cather's. But the first time I drove through the inner city of West Philadelphia, I was shocked. It was not mere poverty. It was the sense that these were a people who had been forgotten.

(Adichie 2008:47)

She had a single story of West Philadelphia and had expected the city to be something close to bliss. A single story can divest people of dignity, and at same time deny people of the support they deserve.

Through the character of Richard, Adichie attempts to create a balance of the perceptions and expectations between first world countries and third world countries; deconstructing stereotyped views. “Africa is undoubtedly a continent of considerable migration. Various forms of population movement in response to political, economic, religious, and security situations, and demographic factors, have been recorded from early times” (Adepoju 1995:87). It can be understandable when a Nigerian migrates to Europe as a result of unfavourable living conditions that may exist in Nigeria, however, it can be quite difficult to fathom the reverse. Richard’s character reveals that there are other possible reasons, besides economic and social problems that can cause citizens of the first world nations to migrate to third world countries. Despite Richard’s white privileges and higher social status, Richard felt unfulfilled in his homeland. He sought after a life he was unable to find in Britain. Ironically, he finds that life in a third world country – Biafra. Therefore, the assumption, that a citizen or resident of a first world nation is ‘definitely’ fulfilled or accomplished, is a single story.
5 Conclusion

This thesis has been a study of whether the behavioural patterns of postcolonial Nigerians are able to conform to gender roles and expectations during the Nigerian civil war as portrayed in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006). The objectives of the study were first to investigate the behavioural patterns of male and female characters, the effects of gender roles and expectations on the behavioural patterns of characters, and the transformation of these behavioural patterns of characters during the Nigerian civil war and the conformity or nonconformity of these behavioural patterns to the postcolonial Nigerian gender roles and expectations. The discoveries and analysis of this data have generated an answer to the research question, and the all-inclusive conclusion is that *Half of a Yellow Sun* depicts changing and unstable gender roles and expectations, and nonconformity of behavioural patterns, especially from characters who greatly conformed to these gender expectations before the Nigerian civil war.

The reason for this conclusion is that human beings can be dynamic and to state one thing as the default characteristics of a sex may prove to be wrong and even problematic. In other words, people are different from one another and the fact that a particular set of people are able to conform to the gender roles and expectations of their societies should not validate those gender roles and expectations as fixed or natural. People after all, tend to gravitate towards gender-based roles regardless of their natural tendencies, and this is usually because they are expected by the society to do so.

In chapter three we saw how Olanna struggled for acceptance and identity between two cultures – traditional and western femininity. Initially, Olanna preferred to be unmarried and not bear children. However, when she is threatened by the traditional world which Odenigbo’s mother symbolised, she quickly reconsidered and conformed to the gender expectation of femininity – motherhood. Although, before mama’s arrival, Olanna had been wondering from one ideal of femininity to another. Such that her appearance – clothing and hair – were western when she was with her previous boyfriend, Mohammed, whereas with Odenigbo, she made her hair into local weaves and tied wrappers around her chest in the home which is typical of bucolic women. We also saw how Olanna’s identity revolved around the spheres of Odenigbo, ignoring her literacy, such that Odenigbo’s unfaithfulness
made her weak and powerless, and she needed to retaliate in order to be revived. Her entire life revolved around Odenigbo who was her life constant. However, we eventually saw how Olanna transformed during the Biafran war – assuming traditional masculine roles of protector and provider of the family despite the traumatic ordeals she experienced. She effortlessly adapted to the turbulent situations and even acquired new literacies and developed capacity for skills she never knew she was capable of. The collar of neediness that confined Olanna’s happiness to Odenigbo vanished to a large extent. She was not incapacitated by Odenigbo’s failure and irresponsibility. Olanna’s perseverance during the war exceeded the gender expectation of femininity – weakness – and transcended into the gender expectation of masculinity – strength.

Also in chapter three, we saw how Kainene was the exact opposite of Olanna; ignored gender roles and stuck to her individual preferences and tendencies. Kainene’s behavioural patterns were more traditionally masculine than feminine – emotionless, fearless, independent, and dispassionate about marriage and childbearing. Kainene projected the masculine role in her relationship with Richard. She did not need Richard in order to carve her identity or feel a completeness, neither did she need to retaliate in order to be revived because of Richard’s infidelity. Richard’s unfaithfulness seemed to have caused her to lose nothing. However, during the Biafran war, Kainene transformed in very unexpected ways. She became emotionally expressive as seen in her frequent narrations of Ikejide’s death, in her compassion for the boy accused of stealing, and in her fury with the priest for impregnating the girls. Kainene’s fearlessness carried on into the war. She was not swallowed up in fear. She shouldered the responsibility of motherhood to the community and coordinated a refugee camp; riskily travelling to the enemy’s territory in search of food and health supplies, a responsibility which is traditionally masculine. Even though Kainene disregarded gender roles and expectations, she adapted and functioned in necessary roles, when the need emerged, that even men were unable to function in.

Generally, in chapter three, behavioural patterns of two major female characters, as well as a few minor female characters, were analysed in relation to the gender roles and expectations of the postcolonial Nigerian woman. Some of the gender roles and expectations of the postcolonial Nigerian woman, as observed, includes: beauty and curviness, low intellectuality, fragility, altruistic, men as basis for identity, and motherhood. The transformation or stagnation of these behavioural patterns during the Nigerian civil war were
also investigated which led to the discovery of female characters occupying social and
cultural gender roles of postcolonial Nigerian men.

In chapter four we saw how Odenigbo was initially an example of the ideal traditional
masculinity – confident, emotionally stable, faultless, and intellectual – reasons why Olanna
and Ugwu adored him. He seemed perfect, and his ideas of a liberated Africa and free Biafra
were indeed impressive. Odenigbo fathered Ugwu and inculcated him with literacy ideals. He
proved to be emotionally unperturbed, and even when he was unfaithful to Olanna, he did not
fear that Olanna would leave him. Because his masculinity ideals refuse him to be imperfect,
he blames his mother for his weakness. However, Odenigbo’s perfection and confidence did
not appear peculiar to him – those characteristics were not his natural tendencies, instead,
cultural gender roles and expectations. As such, he was unable to withstand the turmoil of the
war. He had anticipated the Biafran war but was unprepared for the losses that arrived with
the war – his literacy and death of his mother. Odenigbo’s behavioural pattern during the war
negated every behavioural pattern he had before the war and the masculine gender
expectations. He became weak and irresponsible after the death of his mother. There was
nothing great about him anymore.

Also in chapter four, we saw how Ugwu experienced different ideals of masculinity.
As a houseboy, Ugwu diligently performed his duties despite the warnings of emasculation
from others, and at the same time, developed keen interest in literacy. During the Biafran
war, Ugwu’s change was a drastic departure; from a houseboy to a warrior, yet, he adapted
with an outstanding performance, and still developed his literacy during the war. He did not
seem emasculated at all. Ugwu also evolved from being a naïve young boy to a rapist; an
expectation of his masculinity during the war which he terribly regretted. Notwithstanding,
Ugwu extruded despair and emerged unsubdued. As readers, we were surprised by Ugwu’s
evolution and development as a writer; contributing to the healing process of the Biafran
people.

Lastly in chapter four, we encountered Richard, an Englishman, who was the exact
opposite of Odenigbo in terms of masculinity, but synonymous to Olanna. Richard was more
traditionally feminine than masculine. Even though the Igbo-Ukwu art was Richard’s purpose
in Nigeria, his relationship with Kainene took priority over his literacy, and became the basis
of his identity. He performed the gender role of femininity in his relationship with Kainene –
frail, shy, and immensely emotionally expressive. Unlike Odenigbo, Richard worried about
the possibility of losing Kainene when she discovered his infidelity. During the Biafran war, his desire for Kainene did not decline. Instead he sought for ways to identify with Biafra and eventually become Biafran. The disappearance of Kainene therefore destabilised him, bringing forth the loss of his identity.

Generally, in chapter four, behavioural patterns of three major male characters, as well as a few minor male characters, were analysed in comparison with the gender roles and expectations of the postcolonial Nigerian men. Some of the gender roles and expectations of the postcolonial Nigerian man, as observed, are: confidence, emotionless, fearless, perfection, independence, and fatherhood. The alteration or stagnation of these behavioural patterns during the Nigerian civil war were also explored which led to the discovery of the depreciation of masculine identities into feminine roles, as well as the appreciation of male characters during the Biafran war.

It is important to note that the argument of this thesis was never that, these roles and expectations should not exist. People must after all, provide food for their families, and one of two people in a relationship is likely to manifest more frailty and express more emotions than the other, but to culturally designate such roles and expectations to a particular sex is problematic. Therefore, the complications of these postcolonial Nigerian gender roles and expectations as portrayed in Adichie’s novel will be addressed below.

Firstly, gender roles and expectations can cause obliviousness of capabilities and imperfections. The gender expectations of perfection and blamelessness caused Odenigbo not to take responsibility for his errors. He was oblivious of his tendencies to be fragile and emotionally imbalance until the death of his mother. Death was one of the major factors of change in the novel. The plot twisted whenever someone died. One of the major causes of Olanna’s traumatic experience was the death of her dearest uncle Mbaezí, aunty Ifeka and cousin Ifeka. Kainene’s mind was occupied with the shocking imageries of Ikejide’s death. Death should therefore not necessarily be a yard stick for measuring strength and frailty since some of the major characters had similar experiences. Odenigbo’s fragility and irresponsibility that caused him not to conform to gender roles and expectations during the war is as a result of the gender expectation that compulsorily equalled masculinity to strength and forbearance. He abruptly became aware of this traditional feminine side of him. Through the character of Richard, Adichie emphasises that men can as well be confined by the collar of neediness to a woman in the way that traditional gender roles require women to be needy
of men. Similarly, the frail Olanna became aware of her persevering strength and ability to adapt to an entirely different situation that gender roles and expectations had enshrouded all the while. Kainene’s ability to express emotions was enshrouded until Ikejide’s death. Her nonchalant attitude about the welfare of others vanished at the realisation of need of the suffering Biafrans. Although Kainene’s did not conform to gender roles and expectations from the onset, it is still important to note her transformation which was caused by the war. The imperfections and capabilities of these characters are revealed in the event of contextual changes.

Thirdly, stipulating a definite identity for different individuals of a particular sex can be discriminating and impeding. If motherhood is the definite identity of a woman, what then would be the case of a barren woman? There is the possibility that Olanna was barren. She after all attempted to conceive severally but failed. However, Adichie has proven that motherhood is not only tied to childbirth. Assuming the responsibility of providing basic amenities for people in need is as well motherhood compare to some actual mothers like mama Adanna who was actually unwilling to struggle for the welfare of her child. What if Olanna had chosen to stick to the traditional expectations of femininity – solely home duties – during the war, how would she and her family have survived when Odenigbo failed to live up to his responsibility? Therefore, defining a woman by her ability to procreate is a limitation and an underestimation. Also, defining an ideal masculinity as ‘the sole provider’ and ‘emotionally unexpressive’ is restraining. Odenigbo’s upsurge of emotions during the war portrayed him as a weakling, especially because his emotional sensitivity caused him to become irresponsible for his family. In as much as it seems valid to blame Odenigbo for his failures, the great influence that gender roles and expectations had on his behavioural patterns cannot be ignored. Men are humans and not super beings or robots. They should definitely express emotions, and society ought to cease from placing such high demands on them. The stipulated masculine ideal caused Odenigbo to appeared emasculated.

Open-mindedness can evoke versatility in the cause of contextual changes. One of the peculiarities of Ugwu was his unrelenting adaptation abilities which was as a result of his open-mindedness. Despite the advices about cooking being a feminine role, Ugwu performed his kitchen duties, extruding dogmatism. He could not fathom how cooking denied him of his maleness. This open-mindedness instigated his interest in literacy and propelled his adaptation as a warrior. On the other hand, Ugwu’s only societal vice throughout the cause of
the novel was as a result of the pressure to conform to a gender expectation of masculinity during the war – sexual violence, causing more disadvantages than benefits.

Employing the theory of Alice Walker’s ‘Womanism’ (1994), this thesis does not argue for women only, but advocates for the emancipation of the postcolonial Nigerian man and woman, who may be repressed with the burden of conforming to gender roles and humiliated as a result of their failures. Odenigbo’s sudden feminine express is similar to that of Richard’s frailty, except that Odenigbo was ashamed of being weak. What if Olanna was like mama Oji who castigated her husband for not conforming to his masculine gender expectation – being a warrior – what would have been the psychological state of Odenigbo? It is startling that Odenigbo only began to learn how to be weak during the war after several years of existence. Gender roles and expectations can function as an impediment in the discovery of one’s self.

Conclusively, gender roles do not exist in isolation but are actualised in specific contexts. Both male and female can exhibit traditional feminine and masculine traits. Some male characters such as Richard expressed traditional femininity, and Kainene as well mostly expressed traditional masculinity, and of what purpose is it to burden people to act in a certain way that is conditioned to certain factors? If these people decide to forego their individualities and conform to gender roles and expectations, what happens to them when contextual changes occur? It seems more appropriate not to stipulate gender roles and expectations as definite. This is not to say that a woman can do everything a man can do and vice versa. After all, some men are muscular and may possess more strength to perform strenuous tasks as well as some women, such as Mrs. Muokelu, and on the other hand, some other men, such as Richard, may lack the fortitude to perform strenuous tasks as well. Rather than place emphasis on sex, the individuality of people should be paramount. This thesis reflects unstable and changing gender roles and argues for a focus on individuality, the uniqueness of the postcolonial Nigeria, rather than his/her sex.
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