

# Challenging the Status Quo in a Patriarchal World: A Critical Linguistic Appraisal of Masculine Framing in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

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**Abstract**—The concern of this paper is to examine how masculinity is represented and resisted in Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In a patriarchal society, male dominance is more or less a law, while resistance by females becomes a duty. The female gender has been variously constructed and derogatorily represented in male writings, and Adichie in her novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, makes bold to challenge this status quo. She creates female characters who are embodiment of beauty, intelligence, industry and courage. On the contrary, the male characters and their roles in the novel cast aspersion on patriarchal hegemony. Therefore, the characters in the novel suggest that the superiority of one gender over the other is a figment of society. This paper has adopted critical discourse analysis, systemic functional linguistics, and feminist theory in the analysis of the text under study.

**Index Terms**—critical discourse analysis, systemic functional linguistics, feminism, patriarchy, resistance, framing

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language is considered the vehicle for the transmission of cultural beliefs and values. It is also through the instrumentality of language that a social system is either upheld or upturned. The manner in which language is put into use reflects and affects both male and female relations in society. Smit defines language as a subject of cultural rules “enabling a person to engage in behaviours which will be considered meaningful by other members of the same society or societal group” (1977, p.103). Culture is a vital part of any society. In the view of Smit, it is the learned system of rules, which oversees the behaviour of members of a society (1977). Thus is it expected of the people in any given culture to fulfill some roles based on their genders (Ijem, 2021). However, any gender roles considered inimical by any gender group is challenged through language-its mode of transmission. For instance, Ijem and Agbo (2019) have noted that “there is gender profiling which points at gender imbalance, gender inequality, gender bias and gender discrimination and they manifest in literature”. And this ugly trend elicits resistance from the dominated class of gender.

Feminist writers have always advanced their arguments against male dominance in all strata of human society. Feminism as movement or theory is aimed at liberating women from perceived patriarchal enslavement in society that is hostile to women and girls. The relationship between men and women has almost always been unequal and oppressive, and that is why Chimamada Adichie in *Half of Yellow Sun* (2006) comes out very boldly and strongly to challenge the status quo by manipulating her male characters to portray men in varied bad lights. In fact, Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a direct rebellion against patriarchy contrary to Chinua Achebe's portrayal of men and female characters in *Things Fall Apart*.

In view of this, feminist writers such as Adichie has come to emphasize that power relations in society has to be renegotiated, and one way of doing this is to create female characters that are asymmetrically different from chauvinistically created characters of the male writers.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been various stereotypical depictions of the female gender in literary works. Some of these depictions are culturally created, interpreted and reinforced. This can be attested to by the statement in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, where it is stated, “No matter how prosperous a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and children (and especially his women) he was not really a man” (1991, p.53). This kind of portrayal that is common in Igbo culture can be regarded both as hate speech against female gender and negative face depiction of the female gender in a

predominantly masculine society. In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie *Half of a Yellow Sun*, however, she rises against this negative attitude towards women.

Arguably, however, our approach to life and societal issues may be the outcome of our belief system as aptly observed by Nikolas Coupland and Adam Jaworski (1997). Arising from this stance is the assumption that “combined literary and linguistic approach challenges readers to think about culture, language identity, and the importance of language attitudes on the writing process” (Ijem & Agbo, 2019). As we write, our belief about gender manifests in how we construct genders in and literary works. Thus the idea of social construction of gender originated from the school of thought referred to as social constructionism. The idea propagated by Social constructionism is that “everything people ‘know’ or see as ‘reality’ is partly, if not completely, socially positioned” (Ijem, 2021).

Language is the vehicle that conveys gender bias and its subsequent challenge in society. Kira Hall (2003, p. 327, quoted in Ijem & Agbo, 2019, p. 56) argues that “linguistic performance both ‘fits’ the world as well as constitutes it”. Gendered role performance does not only fit the world, constitute it, but polarizes male and female genders in society and awakens gender sensitivity. Smyth et al. (2003) in Ijem and Agbo (2019) have noted “that there are a lot of linguistic resources and embodied performances that express gendered meaning such as pitch, intensity, and loudness (p. 56). These linguistic resources that give meaning to and interpretation of gender in society as a societal creation contribute to the overall attitude of male and female in their socio-cultural, political, religious, and economic relations (Zola, 2010, p. 16). Since gender linguistic performance constitutes “unequal power relations that assign definite entitlements and responsibilities to men only” (Ijem & Agbo, 2019, p. 56), language becomes as well a veritable tool for challenging gender imbalance in a ‘patriarchal world’.

Gender sensitivity arises as a result of gender construction and depiction in literary works. Male writers according to Zola (2020) “are unwilling to portray female characters in their totality and true complexity” and “it seems that females’ own attempts to cope with situations they find themselves in are regarded as a “problem” by men, and a betrayal of traditions which are often confused with women’s roles” in predominantly male society (p. 2). Adeleke (2006) asserts that “African literature is a male – created, male-oriented, chauvinistic art” where the concerns of the male writers are the male characters (pp. 21-26). The superficial treatment of female characters and lack of concern for female characters inspired women writers to challenge the situation. Women writers now create a world of women, where women’s interests and concerns are given due attention. Female writers create female characters in their literary work as women who are in no way subsidiary to male characters.

The aim of Nigerian women writers is primarily to “correct and re-direct attention to their own ideals, world view and to the significance of the female element” (Sylvester, 2005, p. 41). In Zaynab Alkali’s *The Virtuous Woman (1987)*, the right and education of the girl-child are promoted contrary to the ideal traditional female created by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* where the traditional roles of women as mothers and wives are clearly emphasized. In Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the female characters are given voices; they have the right to education and marriage, as expressed in the characters of Olanna and Kainene who are well-educated. They hold Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from universities in the United Kingdom. Olanna’s constant rejection of the men like Igwe Okagbue’s son and Chief Okoro’s Son for marriage contrary to her father’s wishes brings out clearly the fight for the right of women to choose their marriage partners. Olanna’s choice to marry Odenigbo, a university lecturer despite her father’s dislike for Odenigbo is a pointer to Adichie’s linguistic construction that depicts women’s right to education and marriage.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to prosecute this research, we adopted the approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and feminism theory to uncover power interplay and resistance in literary text, *The Half of a Yellow Sun* Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. As a field of discourse, CDA analyzes written and spoken texts to discover how power is encoded, exercised, and resisted in society. It critically evaluates how these discursive sources of power and dominance are maintained and reproduced within specific social, political, and historical contexts (see Van Dijk 1998). Fairclough (1993) has disclosed that critical discourse analysis scientifically reveal the opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events, and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and process; to show how such practices, events, and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by the relations of power and struggles (p.135).

We also adopted Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics (SFL) in the analysis of the language functions as evident in the expressions in the text. Interestingly, both CDA and SFL analytic tools explore the relationship between the structure of language and its function social context. While CDA holds up language show social and power dynamics, SFL makes manifest the meaning encoded in language structures. The chosen text for this study was subjected to systematic analysis which helped to account for the power dominance and power resistance in the various shades they manifested in the text.

Feminist theory wants to analyse the circumstances which form women’s lives and to reveal the condition of women in society as created by culture. Feminism is guided by the political aims of the Women’s Movement targeted at understanding women’s subordination, subjugation, and exclusion from society. Feminists reject inequalities between women and men in society and strongly resist them. This study is designed to show how gender is linguistically constructed and male dominance resisted in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

The study adopts descriptive design to fully account for the socio-linguistic and cultural variables in the texts in order to give meaning to expressions and thought patterns and their ideological underpinnings.

#### IV. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF MASCULINE FRAMING IN HALF OF A YELLOW SUN

At the beginning of the novel, the narrator presents a negative image of Master, Odenigbo. He is linguistically described as one who is crazy on the basis of talking to himself. Mad people are known for talking to themselves. Odenigbo spent too much time reading and this has a direct consequence on his behaviour. Like a raving lunatic, he only talks to himself and never returned people's greetings. He now lives in a world of isolation and loneliness caused by too much reading as shown in the excerpt below: poking.

##### A. Masculine as Lunatic

"Master was a little *crazy*; he had spent too many years reading books overseas, *talked to himself* in his office, did not always return greetings, and had too much hair" (p.1).

It can also be observed that excerpt 48 begins with the indicative mood. The indicative mood is used to make factual statements, ask questions, or express opinions as if they were facts. The indicative mood as used in the extract above serves the function of declaration or assertion and indicates power relations. The expressions, '*Master was a little crazy*', '*he had spent too many years reading books overseas*', '*talked to himself in his office*', '*did not always return greetings*', and '*had too much hair*' arrogate knowledge and authority to the narrator who successfully manipulates other characters to defame and derogate the masculine gender represented by Master. All the statements above are presented so real and not just as mere expression of opinions.

The other catchy passages are captured in the excerpts that follow and which are analyzed to show the implicit gender tussle that manifests in the text. The linguistic negative construction of the male gender is further captured in Excerpt 49 below:

"I used to make it for my master to take there, but I am not making anything again for Mr Odenigbo's house since that time he is shouting on my master. *Shouting like madman... The man's head is not correct*" (p. 313)

Mr Odenigbo is described as being insulting and mad. He is shown as one who is unreasonable and who delights in shouting. Harrison is commended by Kainene for a wonderful native food he prepared. Harrison reveals that he had stopped preparing such delicacy for Odenigbo because he shouts at Richard for sleeping with Olanna like a mad man. He derogatorily and sarcastically concludes that Odenigbo's head is not correct. Only a mad man would shout at Richard the way Odenigbo does. By extension, many men are ill mannered and rude.

We also see role reversal in the excerpt. In the Igbo society, it is the women who cook food for their husband and children. This tradition agrees to the saying (societies MR) that the women belong to the kitchen or that women's education ends in the kitchen. However, Harrison has been assigned that role of cooking food. Adichie creates a distinct language pattern that can be described as Nigerian to project a vivid picture which is in line with the typical Nigerian speech pattern which cannot be described as ungrammatical even though it does not agree with the standard form of presenting the import of one who is mentally deranged.

##### B. Masculine Is Naive

"Ugwu stood for a while before he began to *edge closer and closer to the bookshelf, as though to hide in it, and then, after a while, he sank down to the floor, cradling his raffia bag between his knees*. He looked up at the ceiling, so high up, so piercingly white. He closed his eyes and tried to reimagine this spacious room with the alien furniture, but he couldn't. He opened his eyes, *overcome by a new wonder, and look around to make sure it was all real*". (p. 15)

The narrator also presents an image of a naive and timid boy, who for this first time steps outside his rural home and is overcome by the wonders of his new environment. Represented as a naive and timid boy, a bookshelf, white ceiling and alien furniture beat his imagination. He is so overcome by these wonders that he had to close his eyes to reimagine what he has seen and to reassure himself that they are real. To the village boy, the fascination is superb and his response betrayed him. The narrator carefully packages Ugwu as a village urchin who is naïve and intimidated by the facilities he sees. This linguistic construction of the male character is aimed at reversing the situation where the female gender is typically "depersonalized and socially constructed as secondary and subservient to the generic male gender" (Moreblessings, 2006, p. 116).

The indicative mood is also deployed in the excerpt. The narrator adopts the third person narrative technique to convey her attitude about the state of being which the sentence describes. This omniscient narration reveals every bit of Ugwu's character and disposition. This in turn portrays the feminine gender as all-knowing contrary to the portrayal of female characters in males literary works as naïve, ignorant and uninformed being who depend on the husbands for every piece of information and knowledge she needs. This kind of agenda is further captured in the excerpt below:

"*Ugwu opened the fridge and ate some more bread and chicken, quickly stuffing the food in his mouth while his heart beat as if he were running*; then he dug out extra chunks of meat and pulled out the wings. He slipped the pieces into his shorts' pockets before going to the bedroom. He would keep them until his aunty visited and he would ask her to give them to Anulika". (p. 18)

It appears that Adichie has some negative bias against the male gender and constructs her language to project this bias. The boy is represented as one who lacks table manners. The expression, “Ugwu.... ate some more bread and chicken, quickly stuffing the food in his mouth while his heart beat as if he were running” captures his eating habit. He eats too anxiously and hurriedly too, in a manner that is associated with the timidity of a village boy. Ugwu further slipped pieces of meat into his short’s pockets with a view to keeping them until his aunty visited so that he could send the pieces of meat to his sister in the village. This presents the image of a boy at a crude stage; his pockets have become refrigerator in which items like meat could be stored and preserved. The masculine gender is linguistically constructed in a negative way that shows he is completely unformed, naive and awkward in behaviour. This kind of male gender construction by Adichie is because women are disregarded in the patriarchal African society and the African women have to negotiate their identity through various platforms in order to challenge male dominance through writing.

In the excerpt below, some lexical items such as ‘snorted’ and ‘thin legs’ are utilized by the narrator in the construction and depiction of Professor Ezeka. Though a Professor, Ezeka is represented as an uncultured personality without much evidence to show for his level of education. The masculine gender is thus derogatorily represented.

“He picked up phone many times and put it back when he heard the operator’s voice. He practiced what he would say in front of the mirror, the gestures he would make, *although he was aware that she would not see him if they spoke over the phone.* ..... She sounded two calm, *while his heart hammered in his chest.* ... He hung up, *shaken*” (p. 80-81)

The above excerpt presents a gloomy picture of Mr. Richard, who, even he is a man, lacks the manly ability to express himself and his love for Kainene. Although Mr. Richard is far removed from where Kainene is, he is not sure of the right thing to say to her. He was to practice what to say, the gestures to make in front of a mirror “while his heart hammered” to show how anxious, unease and weak Mr. Richard appear before women. The picture which the narrator paints is that of a man who is intimidated and frightened by the female gender, an evidence to show that the woman is superior to the man irrespective of the popular view that the woman is the weaker vessel. Mr. Richard finally ‘hung up shaken’ after practicing what to say and do while discussing with Kainene over the phone. The words ‘hammered’ and ‘shaken’ suggest Mr. Richard could be seen trembling and jittery while talking with a woman. This is a negative construction of the male gender with the view to subvert traditional views (Member Resources, MR) that mark “women as submissive, illogical, passive, talkative, and emotional, easily given to tears’ and men as “competent, logical and independent...” (Behringer, 2008, pp. 227-228)

The use of the modal *would* in the excerpt is intended to portray Richard negatively as it indicates not only probability but also an unrealized intention. “He practiced what he would say...the gestures he would make” shows an unrealized intention as strengthened by the use of the concession adverb ‘although’ in ‘although he was aware that she would not see him if they spoke over the phone’. The expressions show that Richard is timid, naïve and unstable. Emotional stability is ascribed to Kainene who is absent yet makes Richard uneasy.

### C. Masculine Is Ugly

“Professor Ezeka *snorted* and shook his head, thin legs crossed..... The problem is that Odenigbo is a *hopeless tribalist*, we need to keep him quiet, ‘Miss Adebayo said’. Then she did what startled Ugwu: she got up laughing and went over to Master and pressed his lips close together”. (p. 34)

The thinness of his legs was earlier presented by the narrator when he was described as the “skinny Professor Ezeka, with a voice hoarse he sounded as if he spoke in whispers”. Professor Ezeka’s physique is poorly constructed in order to negatively present the bias of the narrator.

We also see Odenigbo, as a hopeless tribalist whose mouth needs to be stopped by Miss Adebayo. In this linguistic construction, the masculine gender is represented as being tribalistic, loquacious and ugly and other features with contrast with beauty. Achebe has been accused by critics of acute gender bias especially in his earlier novels but we can see that Adichie does the same. As it is therefore, it could be said that the author’s bias towards a given gender depends on the theme he or she is pursuing. Voice is another aspect of language which helps in the realization of the mood system in English in addition to tense and aspect. Voice is made up of active and passive. Active voice shows that the subject is the performer of an action while the passive voice shows who is affected by the action. We observe this technique in excerpt 51 and it is intended to show the interpersonal relations between the masculine and feminine genders. For instance, the expressions ‘*The problem is that Odenigbo is a hopeless tribalist, we need to keep him quiet,* and ‘*Miss Adebayo said*’ show females as active participant in social discourse. Miss Adebayo is the performer of the action while Odenigbo is the passive character affected by the action.

“She was almost asleep when Kainene knocked. ‘*So will you be spreading your legs for that elephant in exchange for daddy’s contract?*’” Kainene asked ... Daddy literally pulled me away from the veranda, so we could leave you alone with the good cabinet minister; Kainene said. “Will he give Daddy the contract then? ... Daddy will still give him ten per cent, after all”. (p. 51)

In the excerpt above, Olanna’s father is represented as a selfish man who uses her beautiful daughter as sex bait in order to secure a contract from Chief Okonji. Olanna’s father is depicted as a selfish man who exploits her daughter for his selfish purpose. This depiction is captured in He is also presented as one who is both morally and materially corrupt. He bribes chief Okonji with his daughter and ten percent of contract awarded to him. He represents male chauvinism and dominance. He is a crony to chief Okonji, who is described with the metaphor ‘elephant’. The metaphor, **elephant**

shows the ugliness of chief Okonji as well as his oversized physique resulting from gluttony. In the excerpts already examined, the male characters are portrayed as uneven characters with unstable emotions that are actually detestable. The statement ‘*So will you be spreading your legs for that elephant in exchange for daddy’s contract?*’ implies that men abuse women sexually.

There is also the use of indicative mood in excerpt 52 for the purpose of interrogation and to indicate probability. The two interrogative statements indicated are used to portray the male gender negatively. ‘So will you be spreading your legs for that elephant in exchange for daddy’s contract?’ ‘Will he give Daddy the contract then?’

“Well done, Abdulmalik said. He opened his bag and brought out a pair of slippers and held them out to her, his *narrow face creased* in smile, his *teeth stained with cola nut and tobacco* and whatever else Olanna did not know, stains of varying shades of *yellow and brown*. He looked as if it were he who was receiving a gift; he had that *expression of people who marvelled at education with the calm certainty that it would never be theirs*” (p. 57).

The man Abdulmalik, a male gender is negatively constructed as both dirty and illiterate. The narrator deploys some lexical items to capture the ugliness of the man’s physical features and the crudity of his life. His teeth are stained with cola nut and tobacco... shades of yellow and brown. Therefore, unlike the female gender that is elaborately described as beautiful, smart and elegant, the narrator linguistically portrays the male gender in a negative manner to show how ugly and dirty he is. The reference made to cola nut and tobacco further shows the kind of rustic life the man lives.

Besides, Abdulmalik is portrayed as one who is not only an illiterate, but one who will never become educated. His wonderment came as a result of observing uncle Mbaezi make the statement “our Olanna has just finished her master’s degree. Master’s degree at London University! It is not easy, then Abdulmalik betrayed the expression of people who marvelled at education with the certainty that it would never be theirs” (p. 57). The lexical item ‘certainty’ makes it obvious and uncontroversial that Abdulmalik, the man will never acquire sound education. It is in fact, beyond his reach but Olanna, the lady not only has her master’s degree, but at London university.

#### D. Masculine as Illiterate

“But *mah*, it is still good. ... But it die, *mah*”

“The other *one don’t* die”. (p. 65)

When Olanna decided to throw away the red and white plastic flowers on the centre table, Ugwu, horrified, began to express his feeling at Olanna’s action. Ugwu is represented as an illiterate who speaks awkwardly. ‘But mah’, but it die, mah”. His expression is ungrammatical and unpolished. His spelling of English words shows his level of illiteracy. The narrator comments that “He, (Ugwu) always responded in English to her (Olanna) Igbo, as if he saw her speaking Igbo to him as an insult that he had to defend himself against by insistently speaking English “(p. 56).

“I am coming from my hometown, *sah*. I am not telling anybody that our hometown is falling.... *But everybody is knowing that the vandals are close*. Even two days ago we are hearing shelling.... Then *I begin coming Port Harcourt because I am not knowing what* happened to Master. ...I am waiting until *the war is ending* so *I am cooking* for Master” (p. 368- 369)

The expressions by Harrison are punctuated by errors of tense and poor spelling. He possesses neither competence nor performance capacity in the English language. This is a common feature associated with most of the male characters in the text. It is a suggestion that men do not acquire formal education while the women and girls speak impeccable grammar because they have gone to the university to acquire knowledge.

“Madu and I were stuck with Ahmed there for a while. He wants to buy Daddy’s warehouse in Ikeja. You daddy will not sell anything to him, Madu declared..... ‘I would sell to him if he stopped *smelling so awfully of garlic*, Kainene said” (p. 170)

Here is another male cast in a dark prime. Kainene is fond of making jest of the male characters by insulting and deriding them. She tells us that the condition upon which Ahmed, a masculine gender would buy her father’s warehouse is that he Ahmed stops smelling awfully, ‘I would sell to him if he stopped smelling so awfully of garlic’. The masculine gender by extension cannot take good care of themselves-always dirty and stinking while the feminine is always elegant, beautiful, and smelling fine. His seems to be the impression which Kainene’s speech creates. These contrasting features of men and women could be illustrated with the elaborate charming description of Olanna. “Olanna sat in front of the crooked mirror. Her hair was held up so that all of her radiant flawlessly smooth face was exposed” (p. 245)

#### E. Masculine Is Dirty

“Pa Anozie had a *dirty-looking cloth* wound round his body and tied behind his neck. ... Emeka laughed before he translated. ‘Pa said he thought you were among the *white people who know something*. .... it is because the white man gave us warrant chiefs that foolish men are calling themselves kings today”. (p. 93-94)

It is obvious so far that the narrator is really biased against the male gender; “Pa Anozie had a dirty-looking cloth wound round his body ...” describes how dirty the male folk is. Through the character of Pa Anozie, males are portrayed as people who cannot take proper care of themselves. Pa Anozie stays in a dirty environment and wears dirty clothes and smells as well. The phrase ‘dirty-looking’ is very powerful in painting the above picture.

Furthermore, Pa Anozie is sarcastic when he says to Richard, that he (Pa Anozie) thought that Richard was among the white people who know something. The expression damages the white man's claim of superiority and knowledge. Richard does not understand the Igbo traditions. So, the male gender is painted as ignorant and unformed irrespective of his claims. Pa Anozie further reveals that men are foolish but call themselves kings. This is quite ironical, too. This kind of portrayal attests to the fact that language is a veritable instrument for the transmission of cultural beliefs, values and societal norms and has the capacity to reflect and affect greatly male and female relations in society (Moreblessings, 2006, p.19).

The narrator in the excerpt below represents the male gender as fit only to be house boys. Young men can only serve as house boys, while the young women are never presented in such manner.

"Ugwu sat up. *I have tired of stories of Onyeka*. I noticed something when he came yesterday. He should bathe more often, *he smells like rotten oil beans*" (p. 152)

Ugwu in the excerpt above is portrayed as an illiterate because of his wrong sentence construction, 'I have tired of stories.... Ugwu tells us that Onyeka does not bathe and even if he ever does, he does not bathe well. Hence, Onyeka smells like 'rotten oil beans'. The use of simile in comparing Onyeka to rotten oil beans is meant to exaggerate the degrees of rottenness associated with the male gender. The use of the modal "**should**" further expresses both an obligation to Onyeka and also the logical necessity for him to bathe more often so as to stop smelling. The portrayal is quite demeaning.

"When Ugwu saw the *hollow-eyed* men with *dirt smeared clothes*, he knew right away that he should take Baby away, shield her" (p. 179).

The lucid description of men in the above extract draws attention to one whose body has emaciated greatly as a result of hunger, thirst, and perhaps, anxiety. The words 'hollow-eyed and dirt-smeared clothes' diminish the worth of the men. The men here are people who escaped the mass killing of Igbos in the north. They are Master's kinsmen. One of them is simply identified as Obiozo.

#### F. Masculine as Drunk

"Udodi was a *smallish, ordinary-looking* man with *nothing* of the knowing charm or subtle arrogance of major Madu. He seemed *drunk*, almost *manic*, in the way he shook Richards's hand, pumping up and down... Major was laughing again. 'Okay, okay, but let me take the whisky. The bottle is almost empty. Let me take the whisky'" (p. 104-105).

In the above excerpt, Udodi is presented without any comeliness, 'a smallish, ordinary-looking man. ... Drunk and almost manic. All the attributes of Udodi are negative. He is portrayed as too short and just ordinary, even when he is a major in the army. His behaviours are irrational and he is in the habit of drinking whisky, a strong alcoholic drink which affects his reasoning. In fact, the words smallish, ordinary-looking, manic and drink' paint a negative picture of the man. Even when cautioned by Madu, Udodi reaches out for the bottle of whisky to ensure that its content is finished and this makes him 'hopelessly drunk'. The linguistic construction is apt to show a man who amounts to nothing in his career and in the society.

"Are you still angry?" he asked. 'Yes'. Get dressed and we'll go back together. I will talk to my mother.' He *smelt of brandy*. He came inside and placed the suya on the table, and in his *bloodshot* eyes she glimpsed the vulnerability that hid itself so well underneath his *voluble* confidence. He could be afraid, after all". (p. 134)

In the excerpt above, Odenigbo asks Olanna if she is still angry over the interference of Odenigbo's mother in the family life of Odenigbo and Olanna. Odenigbo's old mother abuses Olanna and plots to send her away from Odenigbo's flat. When Olanna affirms that she is still angry, Odenigbo promises to talk to his mother, though the promise comes under the influence and false courage he has got from drinking brandy. The expression, "she glimpsed the vulnerability that hid so well underneath his voluble confidence" captures Odenigbo's weakness vividly. He could only promise to talk to her mother because he is drunk, yet Olanna is certain that Odenigbo is vulnerable to his mother's domination and control. "He could be afraid after all", his voluble confidence notwithstanding. The man is described as completely under the control, influence and manipulation of the woman, his claim of manliness notwithstanding. Odenigbo is described as a pretentious individual who could not face reality.

"Ugwu didn't think again of the strange spice or the cat because, while master had dinner, *he sneaked a glass of palm wine from the pot and then another glass, since it was so sweet, and afterwards he felt as if the inside of his head was coated in soft wool. He could hardly walk*" (p. 260-261)

The masculinity of Ugwu is further held up in a negative light in the above extract. Ugwu, a microcosm of the masculine gender exhibits dubious quality out in a pictorial design. He sneaks out to steal his master's palm wine twice but he later becomes intoxicated to the point that his brain and senses are numbed to the point that could hardly walk. Men are projected as both thieves and as people who revel in drunkenness. In the expression, 'He **could** hardly walk', **could** emphasizes a higher degree of uncertainty and impossibility of Ugwu walking after drinking palm wine.

The negative representation of the male folk is further pursued in the extract below:

#### G. Masculine Is Emotional / Fearful

"Mr Ovoko rubbed his hands together. He had the *lugubrious face* of one who simply *refuses* to be *consoled*" (p. 213).

Detrimental and damaging deception of Mr Ovoko is one of the persons in charge of refugee camps. He complained that people are no more donating food for the war refugee. The narrator describes him as one who wears a sad and serious expression and deliberately refused to be consoled. He appears to be emotionally contrary to the popular opinion that women are always emotional while the men are not. This expression opposes the idea of women being emotional since Mr Ovoko is not only sad and serious but has also refused to be consoled.

“Richard turned and stared at her and felt the urge to cry. *He wished he were as calm as she was that his hands would not shake as he washed them*”. (p. 384)

Richard compares himself with Kainene in the above excerpt in the face of a threat to their lives. They heard the ‘boom, boom, boom’ of bombs fired by the Nigerian soldiers. Richard loses courage, strength and is completely overtaken by fear and anxiety. He becomes ashamed of himself and feels like crying because Kainene has demonstrated courage and fearlessness in the face of danger. Richard *confesses* that Kainene is calm while he is not and wishes he were like Kainene. The implication here is that men are cowards contrary to their claim of bravery but we can see that all these passages are crafted by Adichie to achieve her gender predisposition and commitment to that pursuit.

#### H. Masculine as Mischievous and Wicked

“Ugwu was puzzled at first, before he realized that *Harrison does not know what tear gas was* either but would not admit it.... Jomo knew what tear gas was and laughed long when Ugwu told him what he wanted to use it for.... ‘You are a *sheep, aturu,*’ Jomo said finally. Why do you want to use tear gas on a young girl?” (p. 257).

In the above excerpt, Ugwu is clearly represented as mischievous and wicked. ‘Why do you want to use tear gas on a young girl’ is the question Jomo asked Ugwu and the explanation is that: Ugwu wants to use tear gas on Nnesinachi who he has been lusting after. To Ugwu, since Nnesinachi does not yield to his love advances, using tear gas on her will make her ‘pass out’ so that he would rape her. As the liar he is depicted to be, “he would lead her to the grove by the stream and tell her the tear gas was a magic spray that would keep her healthy”. Jomo laughs at Ugwu’s silly idea and metaphorically tells him, “you are a sheep, *aturu*”. That Ugwu is a sheep implies that he is stupid, foolish and unreasonably wicked. He is one of the men who lords it over women and preys on them. In fact, he is portrayed as a rapist. Instead of wooing Nnesinachi and securing her consent, Ugwu employs tear gas to achieve his inordinate desire. The male gender, his activities and characters are clearly played out by Ugwu. “...Harrison does not know what tear gas was either but would not admit it”. The use of but in the excerpt yet paints Harrison’s ignorance and his unwillingness to admit it. It portrays Harrison to be deceptive, insincere and mischievous.

“Her mother held a glass of tonic water in one hand and a handkerchief in the other. She was crying. She was telling Olanna about her father’s mistress. *He has bought her a house in Ikeja,* her mother said. My friend lives on the same street” (p. 265)

Olanna’s mother is shown in the excerpt above as being in pains and having emotional and psychological turbulence caused by her husband. The man is projected as a womanizer who abandons his matrimonial bed to sleep with another woman and this affected the wife’s emotion terribly. He deals a deadly blow to the wife. The man is also described as a tyrant since the wife could not talk to him on infidelity. The wife could only complain to their daughter, Olanna, whom she believes understands her feelings. Olanna’s father has even bought a house for his mistress and cares less about his own family.

At the various social levels, men are constructed negatively. Olanna’s mother’s driver is captured as a thief who is out to steal from his employers in the extract below:

“Does he think we employed him to steal us blind, Maxwell? ‘No, *mah*’, Maxwell said. Her mother turned back to the man kneeling on the floor. ‘So this is what you have been doing since you came here, you useless man? You came here to steal from me?’ ... It’s this wild animal here. We employed him only last month, and he already wants to steal everything in my house.... stupid man!” (p. 268)

The driver employed by Olanna’s mother has turned out to be a thief. In the excerpt above, the expressions, ‘steal us blind’, ‘useless’, ‘steal from me’, ‘wild animal’, ‘steal everything’ and ‘stupid man’ paint a bad picture of the driver and throw more light on his dishonesty. He has just been employed and steals everything in the house. He is described as a useless man, a wild animal and a stupid man. He is a wild animal because he lacks good manners and this in turn makes him useless, a good for nothing man. This shows that men in Adichie’s world are dishonest thieves. A man with a sense of worth and honour would not steal his master’s property. The man does not own a car of his own but drives Olanna’s mother. This is the kind of humiliating job he does, to drive women in their cars. The use of interrogative expressions in the excerpt is more or less rhetorical and is intended to make both Maxwell and the driver agree with Olanna’s Mother. The interrogatives emphasize Olanna’s mother’s power and influence over the male characters, Maxwell and the driver. She influences their opinion and sense of judgment to align with hers.

#### I. Masculine as Oppressors

“She should not have expected a *round-faced, voluntary eunuch in white* robes to be in a position to understand how she felt” (p. 281)

Father Damian is sarcastically addressed by Edna, Olanna’s friend. Olanna expected Father Damian to condemn Odenigbo’s action of sleeping with Amala, but the priest, asks her to seek God. To Edna and Olanna, men are partners

in crime. If not, why did father Damian not condemn Odenigbo's act of infidelity. Father Damian is consequently described in a negative term as, 'round-faced, voluntary eunuch'. Those expressions are sarcastically derogatory. The excerpt further reveals that men all over are the same, their faith and calling notwithstanding.

Again, the use of **should** in 'She **should** not have expected a round-faced, voluntary eunuch in white robes to be in a position to understand how she felt' expresses a logical necessity. This implies that it is in the habit of Reverend Fathers to take sides with their fellow men and show bias in judgment. Father Damian is portrayed as being hypocritical, undiscerning and biased.

"When that **bastard** left me in Montgomery, I tried to kill myself and you know what he was doing? He had gone off and was playing in a band in Louisiana!" (p. 283)

Edna shares her own sad experience of disappointment by a man who claimed to love her. In order to express her disgust for the men, Edna refers to him as a bastard. The word 'bastard' is insulting and projects a bad image of the man in question. To highlight the man's carefree attitude, Edna informs Olanna that while she was trying to kill herself for being abandoned by a man who has stolen her heart, the man goes about partying without any sense of remorse and concern for Edna. This man is a sadist and like other men he derives pleasure from the pains he cause the women. Language allows for creativity and Adichie exploits the resources of language to create a special world. In this case, she creates a world where men are seen as naïve and clumsy in words and action. This is not the traditional image of men in Africa, but Adichie chooses to create a special world of men, a world where these men are humiliated just like they humiliate women.

"And they choose the **best houses and force people's wives and daughters to spread their legs for them and cook for them**" (p. 347)

The soldiers of the Nigerian Army are ingloriously cast in the above excerpt. They are portrayed as wicked beings, extortionists, grabbers and rapists. The activities of these male soldiers could be summarized as a show of force and brutality. They choose the best houses they never built, seize people's wives and daughters and rape them, and force them to cook for them. Here, men's callous activities towards women for their sexual pleasures and satisfaction without concern for the emotional and psychological state of the women are portrayed.

## V. CONCLUSION

This research has demonstrated that the superiority of the masculine gender over the female gender as claimed in society is a cultural creation. There is a clear subversion of male chauvinism in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, showing the ingenuity of women. There is also a reversal of the roles assigned to females in male literary creations. The stock of masculine characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun* represented by their characteristic manners, appearance and behaviours cast doubt on their person and personality because they contrast sharply with societal view about men. Professor Ezeka has '**thin legs**' and **snorts**. These linguistic choices are meant to upturn the veneration with which men are held. The act of describing Chief Okonji as an elephant in the excerpt is a metaphorical expression which reveals the ugliness of the masculine gender— he is obese and this results from his life of squander mania. In the excerpt, Abdulmalik is cast in ugly image. The lexical items 'narrow faces and 'teeth stained with varying shades of yellow and brown colours' depict his ugliness.

The attribute of bravery assigned to male characters by the society is subverted by representing Richard as a fearful and timid fellow. This is an act of position reversal just as Okeoma is also represented as an indecent fellow. The heroic and central position men occupy in society are called to question and subsequently smashed with the linguistic sledge hammer of Adichie. Pa Anozie in the excerpt 'had a dirty –working cloth round his body and tied behind his neck'. The masculine gender is associated with nothing good or attractive. Everything about man in the text is repulsive and repugnant, thus glorifying women over men.

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