

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA  
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY OF MOHAMED BOUDIAF - M'SILA

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES  
DEPARTMENT OF LETTERS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
N°:.....



DOMAIN: FOREIGN LANGUAGES  
STREAM: ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
OPTION: LITERATURE & CIVILIZATION

**Empowering Narratives: Gender Politics and Female  
Experience in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun***

**Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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## **Declaration**

We hereby declare that this dissertation is our own work and that, it contains no material previously published or written by another person and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment.

Malika SERRAH & Sara MOUSSOUD

Signature:

## **Dedication**

We dedicate this work to our parents,  
friends and all loved ones.

## **Acknowledgments**

*First of all, we faithfully thank Allah for giving us the strength and the patience to accomplish this work*

*We would like to express our full gratitude to our supervisor, Dr. Abla Ahmed Kadi, who provided us with full guidance and continuous pieces of advice from the beginning of this work until its end. She has always been present and patient whenever we need her.*

*We are thankful for our teachers at Mohammed Boudiaf university of M'sila for their efforts.*

*Last but not least, we would like to thank our families and friends for their support and motivation.*

**Malika & Sara**

## **Abstract**

This study explores gender politics and the female experience in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's acclaimed novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006). Set against the backdrop of the Nigerian Civil War, Adichie explicitly mirrors how the females undergo personal, social and political struggles as well as double marginalization within deep-rooted patriarchy and colonial legacy. However, the suffering of these females provides them with strength to revolt against the oppression imposed on them. Adichie gives a new dimension to the novel imparting the colossal strength to her female characters who employ several tools to resist patriarchy and oppression. Therefore, through the feminist lens, this study examines how Adichie portrays the intersection of gender, power, and identity, revealing the ways in which her female characters confront and resist patriarchal structures. By analyzing key characters and their relationships, this research sheds light on the strategies employed by women to assert their agency and voice amidst conflict and oppression.

**Keywords:** Gender politics, Female experience, Double marginalization, Patriarchy, Agency.

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# ***GENERAL INTRODUCTION***

## General Introduction

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### General Introduction:

African literature includes a wide range of works that represent the continent's vast cultural and linguistic variety. Some notable authors include Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*. These authors investigate topics such as postcolonialism, identity, and societal transformations, making major contributions to world literature.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is from Abba in Anambra State, Nigeria. She was born in Enugu but grew up in Nsukka, a university town in southern Nigeria, where her father was a statistics professor and her mother was the university's registrar. She briefly studied medicine and pharmacy at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, before moving to the United States to study communications and political science at Drexel University, Philadelphia. She switched to Eastern Connecticut State University to be closer to her sister, who owned a medical practice in Coventry. She earned a bachelor's degree from Eastern and graduated summa cum laude in 2001. In 2003, she finished a master's degree in creative writing at John Hopkins. In 2008, she got a Master of Arts in African Studies from Yale (Ogechukwu A. Ikediugwu 1).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian author, is regarded as one of the most important and well-known writers in modern literature. The very creative author has written and published many novels that have won significant literary honors, including *Americanah* (2013), *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2016), as well as a highly acclaimed collection of short stories. Adichie's novels address a wide range of issues, with a focus on the long-term effects of colonialism in Nigeria. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's is mostly concerned with war trauma. Throughout the novel, Adichie describes the horrific struggle waged against the Igbos in post-independence Nigeri. Furthermore, the latter tries to show the effect of seeing the horrors and sad acts.

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Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* is published four decades after the Nigerian Biafra War. The story depicts Biafran women's battles for vocalization, presentation, and freedom. It tells the tale of the war in its many stages and depicts the vital tenacious roles of Biafran heroines in their attempts to survive, win the war, and reconstruct a war-torn country. The work separates itself from previous novels by retelling Biafra war episodes from several social, cultural, and diplomatic angles (V.B.Sowmiya and Dr. K Radah 3284).

The storyline of the novel is around the origins and effects of the war, as well as its consequences for Biafran families, the political atmosphere before to the fight, the corrupt counter-coup leaders, the anti-Igbo slaughter, secession, and war. These events are reflected in the conversations of university intellectuals during their nighttime meetings at Odenigbo's residence on Odum Street at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Their frequent gatherings become a hub for national debate. The story depicts the circumstances that precipitated the conflict, as well as the university women's attempts to help the thousands of refugees who left their workplace (V.B.Sowmiya and Dr. K Radah 3284).

The novel is about Olanna and her twin sister Kainene. These two girls of a very affluent family who had received a fine education overseas with bright prospects and hopes returned to Nigeria only to have their dreams shattered by the crises of war, namely the civil war of the 1960s. Olanna and her family lived in Lagos, Nigeria's center, where the majority of politicians and prominent businesses lived. She and her twin sister, Kainene, attended high-profile parties and dinners planned by their parents, who presented her to wealthy businessmen with the expectation that she would marry one of them. Despite her parents' attempts, she remained committed to her lecturer lover, Odenigbo, with whom she relocated to Nsukka to work as a lecturer in the Department of Sociology at Nsukka University. Olanna's delight did not last long, either, because Odenigbo's mother referred to her as 'a witch' and refused to support Olanna's relationship with Odenigbo due to her childlessness. She not only insulted Olanna, but

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also brought a girl from the village to replace her as Odenigbo's bride. Odenigbo consoled Olanna and attempted to make her understand that his mother was a rural woman: "Nkem, my mother has spent her entire life in Abba. Do you understand what a little bush village is? Of course, having an educated lady living with her son will make her feel threatened. Of course, you must be a witch. This is the only way she can grasp it ( Asuzu Ifeyinwa & Ogonwa Chika p 33).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie includes feminist themes within *Half of a Yellow Sun*, presenting female characters encountering complicated sociopolitical environments during the Nigerian Civil War. The story questions established gender stereotypes and demonstrates women's power and perseverance. Characters like Olanna and Kainene challenge social norms by pursuing independence, making decisions, and actively participating in the story. Adichie's investigation of women's lives within the historical setting enriches the novel's feminist discourse.

This study examines Adichie's novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, to understand how she empowers female characters within the power hierarchy and how they work to overthrow patriarchy, highlighting the oppressive issues faced by African women writers. Moreover, it examines how the novel metaphorically represents Nigeria's political situation and explores the author's vision for an alternative society in Africa, focusing on gender issues.

The study aims to answer the following main question: how do the female characters challenge traditional gender roles and struggle for empowerment and agency in *Half of a Yellow Sun*? In order to answer this question, this study attempts to answer the following sub-questions: How does Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie portray gender roles and females' empowerment amidst the backdrop of the Nigerian civil war? What insights do their experiences provide into the broader socio-political changes and challenges faced by women during this period? Are there

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instances of solidarity among the female characters that amplify their agency, and if so, how do these interactions shape their empowerment?

This study aims to examine how the female characters challenge traditional gender roles and struggle for empowerment and agency in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. It also aims to discuss the way Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie portrays gender roles and females' empowerment amidst the backdrop of the Nigerian civil war and investigate the challenges faced by women during this period.

This study contributes to the discourse on women's struggles. Many scholars have explored Adichie's novel through different perspectives. Ogechukwu Ikediugwu's article focuses on the psychological dimension. She observes that the author has an ear for interesting details and that the novel explores specific situations within each event through vivid descriptions and analysis, exposing the characters' anxieties, apprehensions, sufferings, losses of both humanity and property, and how these have generally affected people's lives. The essay also connects the remote cause of the Nigerian/Biafran war back to the colonial masters' selfish interest in Nigeria, as evidenced by the methods they nurtured, encouraged, and sustained the war over three years. The article also proves that the primary cause of the conflict is the 1966 pogrom against the Igbos in Northern Nigeria, which caused them to secede from Nigeria and Gowon to launch a total war on them in 1967.

Stratton (1994) examines the "Mother Africa Trope" in African male writing and the romanticization of African women, which perpetuates patriarchal social and political structures. According to Stratton, this cliché undermines African women's interests and should be questioned to challenge male dominance. Our study discusses this stereotype in a positive light. This article examines women's challenges from a female perspective and argues for their inspiration. Ogun-dipe-Leslie (1987) argues that female African writers should be committed to eradicating oppression of African people, regardless of gender, race, religion, class, ethnic

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background, or geography, through three strands of commitment: art, womanhood, and third-world identity.

Nwanjiaku's (2004) paper, "Representation of the Womanist Discourse in the Short Fiction of Akachi Ezeigbo and Chinwe Okechuku," examines the enslavement of women by cultural influences. She explores the power dynamics of African women. The author suggests using womanism to analyze African women's literature and explore how they collaborate with males to combat neocolonial oppression.

Shigali (2008) examines African women writers via the lens of empowerment, offering an alternate interpretation that challenges western feminist readings of African literature. Her study contributes to the gender discourse on power and creates new frameworks for interpreting African female writers' works. However, it does not address the current difficulties facing African people, such as corruption, misrule, ethnic strife, religious fanaticism, and neocolonialism. These are the issues that stand out in our analysis of Adichie's two novels.

In her article "Women's Struggles and Independence in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*" (2009), the researcher Azuike Maureen Amaka explores Adichie's novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* through feminist perspectives. The latter depicts the Igbo female's struggle to survive in Nigerian patriarchal society. Accordingly, the sexual violence committed against women remains the most traumatic experience the female characters endure in post-independent Nigeria (86). Amaka stresses Olanna as a marginalized victim in a male-dominated society and depicts the way women survive in the face of violence, sexual assault, and terrible poverty.

In an essay on *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Maya Jaggi argues that Adichie's powerful focus on war's impact on civilian life, as well as the trauma beyond the trenches, elevates this novel to the level of Pat Barker's *Regeneration* Trilogy and Helen Dunmore's depiction of the Leningrad blockade, the *Seige*. According to her, the novel's characters are first developed during a period

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of quiet. She characterizes Odenigbo as a radical mathematics lecturer at the University of Nsukka, in the secessionist Igbo nation. She attributes ethnicity as the primary reason for the 1966 Igbo riot in Northern Nigeria. The issues of refugees, Nigerian blockades, the characters' pain, perseverance, and fractured relationships are all tackled. Odenigbo, the revolutionary freedom fighter, succumbs to alcohol and despair, but the outwardly submissive Olanna draws on profound strengths. She also remarks on the novel's structure.

This essay examines Chimamanda Adichie's feminist impulses in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus*. The essay focuses on the main characters in the texts and evaluates the author's portrayal of female characters in contrast to male ones. Because of the stark differences in the growth of both sexes, the essay concludes that Adichie is a feminist whose feminism is not viewed from an African perspectives.

Feminist literary criticism provides the theoretical framework for this study. By applying feminist theory to *Half of a Yellow Sun*, this research explores how Adichie's portrayal of female characters contributes to feminist discourse and offers new perspectives on women's roles and experiences during the Biafran War, highlighting their struggles, resistance, and empowerment.

This study aims at developing an understanding about one of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's gender politics and female experience novels. In addition, it examines Females' Struggles and Acts of Resistance. Besides this, the current study attempts to cast light on women's struggle during the Nigerian Biafran War. Finally, it is of an equal importance to analyze the strategies used by women to assert their agency, resistance and voice amidst conflict and oppression.

In terms of structure, the present study is divided into two chapters. The first chapter, places the work within its cultural context and empowerment framework. It focuses on providing an introduction to the Nigerian civil war and its relevance to the study. It sheds light

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on gender roles, empowerment, and agency in literature, particularly in post-colonial contexts. Additionally, this chapter includes a discussion of cultural norms and their impact on the concept of empowerment.

The second chapter shed light on Female Agency and Resistance in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. It is devoted to the analysis of how female characters struggle to deal with their forced control by societal norms and the oppression stemming from patriarchy. It focuses on providing an exploration of the challenges faced by female characters in asserting their agency and shapping their relationships during the Nigerian civil war. In addition, it explores female solidarity and support networks during the Nigerian Civil War. The poll focuses on women's perspectives of their societal responsibilities, the oppressive gender systems that marginalize them, and their plans for recovering their place within society.

# ***CHAPTER ONE***

## *Historical and Cultural Context*

### **1.1. Introduction:**

The first chapter places the work within its theoretical foundation as well as historical and cultural contexts. It provides an introduction to the Nigerian civil war and its relevance to the study. It also sheds light on the intersecting factors that shape power dynamics and social norms and focuses on how gender roles, women empowerment, and agency is portrayed in literature, particularly in post-colonial contexts. Additionally, this chapter discusses the cultural norms and their impact on the concept of empowerment in the novel. Moreover, it provides theoretical framework selection and justification for analyzing empowerment and agency based on feminist theory.

### **1.2. The Postcolonial Context of Nigeria during the Biafra War**

The Nigeria-Biafra conflict, which ranged from 1967 to 1970, earned international headlines, particularly for the catastrophic famine caused by the Nigerian state's (federal military government, FMG) blockade of the self-proclaimed separatist Republic of Biafra in the country's east. The crisis compelled famous academics and journalists to rally public opinion, prompted a large international relief operation to provide supplies to starving populations. It was a truly worldwide event. The conflict was widely regarded as significant due to its estimated one to three million deaths, ramifications for secessionist movements and political stability in Africa, position as a furnace of contemporary humanitarianism, and inspiration for prominent African novelists (Heerten & Moses 169).

The distant cause of the war lay in the amalgamation of 1914, the three regional structures of the 1946 Richards constitution for Nigeria, which granted greater autonomy to regions, the tribal crises that followed the 1960 independence manifesting themselves in the various elections and parliament of the 1960, and the January 15, 1966 coup led by Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu, which led to the ascension of General Aguiyi Ironsi as the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of A. This coup was regarded as having helped Igbos in the army at the

expense of Yorubas and Hausas commanders, as well as the promotion of many in the army, which fanned competition and eventually led to war. The immediate causes can be traced back to the 1966 countercoup that was installed by then-Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon. When General Ironsi was killed and Lt. Col. Gowon, who was not the most senior army officer, took over instead of Brigadier Ogundipe, who was next in command to Ironsi, Lt. Col. Ojukwu saw it as a slight, and as a result, Ojukwu was unwilling to take orders from Gowon, whom he saw as a military mate and thus did not recognize his leadership. Gowon, according to Ojukwu, was a symbol of northern dominance that threatened the Igbos' very existence. Ojukwu believed that leaving the nation would be the wisest course of action rather than removing Gowon from his position as the problem's solution (Rev & Augustine 89).

As stated by Ekpu, war frequently marks the end of politics, even though politics generally starts with war. The federal government, led by Yakubu Gowon, a young head of state trained at Sandhurst, and the government of Eastern Nigeria, led by Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, a bearded, Oxford-educated soldier and historian with an aristocratic background, engaged in a bitter political power struggle that culminated in the Biafran war. There was a growing hatred of the easterners among the northerners, as evidenced by speeches and writings from that era. Later, numerous massacres of easterners living in northern Nigeria resulted from this growing antagonism and distaste. Igbos' lives are becoming less secure, and there are more massacres. Following the massacre, more Igbo refugees arrived in appalling and deplorable conditions in eastern Nigeria. While some Igbos were fortunate enough to have their bodies restored, many others were just maimed or crippled. Certain women were forced to have their intestines removed while they were pregnant. Wherever they fled home, Eastern soldiers, whether in their underwear or not, returned nude. Ojukwu did, nevertheless, attempt a few conciliation techniques. In an effort to resolve the issues, he made numerous attempts at peace

conferences. He even went to the "Aburi conference," whose agreement was not carried out, which led to the start of the conflict (90).

On May 27, 1967, Gowon announced a new constitution with twelve additional states, which was the direct cause of the war. Easterners saw this as an attempt to break their bonds. So, while Nigerians tended the crops and the British dispersed the seed, a crisis was unavoidable. The eastern area of Biafra, or the governor's sovereignty, could unavoidably spark a civil war. According to Obasanjo, the proclamation of secession made war imminent rather than inevitable. The federal government under Gowon declared "political action" against Biafra, leading to a full-fledged war. It was a full-fledged conflict with unrelenting destruction of life and property. Some of its consequences were broad, while others were specific (90).

### **1.3. Intersecting Factors Shaping Power Dynamics and Social Norms**

Power dynamics and social norms are deeply interrelated, frequently affecting and reinforcing one another. These dynamics are shaped by a number of intersecting factors.

#### **1.3.1. Colonial Legacies**

Colonial legacies refer to the lasting effects of colonialism on political institutions, economy, cultures, and society, significantly influencing social norms and power relations. When Nigeria achieved independence from Great Britain in October 1960, like other decolonized countries in Africa, it was a nation in name only. It existed as a political and legal entity, not as an effective and emotive identity. It was not a nation in the sense of community and common character. It was a state encompassing many ethnic nations, each claiming their own separate heritage, language, and culture (Davis & Khalu-Nwiwu 2).

Politically, like many African governments, Nigeria's political entity was defined by the former colonial power's objectives and ambitions rather than actual regional and ethnic boundaries. As a result of the arbitrarily drawn lines by colonial powers at the 1884/1885 Berlin

Conference, the partition of Africa into multiple governments ignored the ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural, and existing boundaries between the diverse populations thereby divided. As a result, interaction between members of the same community was disrupted, leading to the emergence of irredentism and boundary conflicts among nations in the subregion. The recurring border crises between Nigeria and its neighbors are a direct result of the arbitrary delimitation of geographical boundaries (Ogunjewo 32).

Economically, colonialism originated as an economic desire for cheap raw materials. Roads and railways were built to promote the efficient use of raw resources generated for industry in the United Kingdom and Europe. These infrastructures became the unintended outcomes of colonial exploitation. From the beginning to the present, British economic relations with Nigeria have been motivated by interrelated requirements for cheap sources of raw materials and outlets for mass-produced manufactures, both of which strengthen the British international position, enhance the international value of its currency, and secure a source of collective enrichment through the transfer of economic surpluses from Nigeria (36).

Culturally, the socio-cultural ethos inherited at independence was also linked to the preceding economic systems, which aimed to maintain a worldview commensurate with the goals of the British Empire. For example, the colonial education program was intended not only to meet the needs of Christianity but also to promote the growth of the English language and strengthen British cultural colonization of Nigeria. As a result, by 1960, a small group of educated Nigerians who had studied abroad and at Nigeria's two universities had become the primary policymakers. Some of these handfuls showed the vivid markings of British brainwashing, while others harbored a strong resentment of colonialism's faults. This last group stayed as. This last group remained the vanguard of Nigeria's struggle for independence and the decolonization of Africa (38).

By independence in 1960, all these structures had secured the perpetuation of the colonial legacy in Nigeria's domestic environment. The assertion of unalloyed independence from that legacy of the past was the greatest challenge for Nigeria's foreign policy.

### **1.3.2. Postcolonial Nationalism :**

Nationalism is a term generally used to describe two phenomena: first, the attitude which members of a nation have when they care about their national identity; and second, the actions that the members of a nation take when seeking to sustain self-determination. Nigeria has a complexity in the definition of national loyalty and national identity for and by its citizenry. According to Ojukwu, "the granting and accession to independence was not an end but rather the beginning [. . .] of the journey to nationhood". During a national discourse, Awolowo argued that 'for Nigeria to move forward and progressively as a nation there was no need to consider our inter-ethnic differences and cultural background', but contrary Ahmadu Bello insisted that 'we must understand our differences as diverse ethnic-nations to build the nation Nigeria'. Both leaders were right in possessing their own perception of Nigeria, but these perceptions did not coincide because while the latter held the belief in evolution of a modern nation from existing ethnic nations, the former thought of establishing a modern nation, since it never existed, without recourse to traditions. This cannot build a nation. Where common values are not identified national integration is not attainable (Cited in Godfrey 17).

The most researched component of Nigerian history is its political past, for obvious reasons: politics is central to the human experience. Politics impacts not only a state's future but also the kind and extent of human organization and societal growth. However, African historiography arose as an instrument of the anticolonial nationalist fight. Pioneering Africanists took keen interest in exploring the political past of states and communities for the purpose of demonstrating to colonialists that Africans not only developed complex political institutions prior to colonial rule but were later able to effectively manage the affairs of their

territory. In fact, nationalist historians study state formation in the context of human migration, the evolution of political culture, wars and revolutions, and so on. Political historians of precolonial Nigeria have demonstrated that colonial authority was only one of many stages in Africans' political history and certainly not the entirety of their political and cultural experience (Falola 39).

The creation of colonial power, combined with the British's numerous draconian laws, provided grounds for anticolonial feeling. During the colonial and post-independence periods, three major types of nationalism emerged: political, economic, and cultural, all of which were inextricably linked. Economic nationalism is associated with the myriad initiatives put out to sabotage imperialism during the colonial era. It includes revolts like the Women's War of 1929, labor movements like the General Strike of 1945, and a variety of other protests, such as water tariff agitation in Lagos and Benin. While the educated elite primarily led cultural and political nationalism, economic nationalism involved a diverse range of people, mainly the poor and lower class. Among them were the thousands of Nigerians who demonstrated during the popular uprising known as the Enugu Colliery Shooting of 1949, as well as the Women's War (49).

As previously stated, the earliest kinds of nationalism was cultural nationalism promoted by African missionaries and converts in the eighteenth century. This type of nationalism persisted well into the twentieth century, reaching its climax in the 1930s. Among other notable achievements, cultural nationalism in the first half of the twentieth century created a large number of local intellectuals who documented the history of their respective communities. They were driven by the desire to disseminate the history of their cities for future generations. They occasionally wrote in their native, or vernacular, language. These intellectuals told the stories of their societies, presenting myths, heroes, and heroines at battle. They relied heavily on oral traditions passed down through generations, and they recognized the importance of history to a people and the need to preserve the past in recorded form.

Political nationalism is undoubtedly the most studied form of nationalism in Nigeria. Historians have documented how educated elites founded political parties, voluntary organizations, pressure groups, and other associations with the goal of ending colonial control. Educated elites used a variety of channels, including print media, to educate the public about the problems of colonial authority in Nigeria. Newspapers, in particular, as demonstrated by Fred Omu in his *Press and Politics in Nigeria*, aided in the propagation of nationalist views among Nigerians of various educational backgrounds. Thirty nine newspapers in indigenous languages were widely read and circulated throughout the country. Most of these newspapers appeared on a weekly basis, while others like the *Nigerian Daily Times*, *The Daily Service*, *Southern Nigeria Defender*, *West African Pilot*, and *Eastern Nigeria Guardian* were dailies (Falola 50).

### **1.3.3. Traditional Gender Roles in the 1960s**

In general, most African communities divide responsibilities according to gender. Cooks, nannies, minor traders, housewives, and farm workers are all common demeaning roles allocated to women. As they take all of these terrible situations, women transform into slaves. African women began as victims of African males and traditional traditions and practices, with colonization having little or no impact. According to Quinta, "the African woman in the rural area is portrayed as little more than a slave, going about her task with silent acceptance. She has no past or future since her society is intrinsically backward. She never talks for herself, but is always mentioned " (Qtd in Asuzui and Ogonwa 31).

In a complex historical context, the role of women is multifaceted. They often become agents of change, adapting to challenging circumstances and contributing to societal resilience. Women may take on diverse roles, from caregivers and nurturers to active participants in political and social movements. Their experiences, sacrifices, and resilience are frequently illuminated in literature, providing a nuanced perspective on the ways women navigate and

shape historical events. The complexities of their roles showcase the intricate interplay between gender dynamics and historical forces (31).

Women's life has been spent in just bearing and taking care of children and their father, and they have not been allowed any other space to grow or have a say in their affairs. In all, women were considered as property and as tools for achieving men's goal of having pride and respect through the children borne to them and through women's active participation in encouraging them to attain their goals. To ensure the efficiency of this policy, women were made to understand that their primary and only significant responsibility - which also qualifies them as bonafide members of any community - is bearing and taking care of children for their husbands. When any woman desires to aspire to political position or any sense of relevance in activities outside the bearing of children, she is tagged a loose woman who is not fit to be a role model for other women or any other person in society. In essence, the traditional feminine gender role is essentially one of power and position, whereas the traditional feminine gender role emphasizes intimacy and solidarity as a social orientation. Observers have carefully noted that the issue is not that traditionally feminine women are indifferent to their status or power in relation to others, nor is it that traditionally masculine males are indifferent to the degree of intimacy or connection they have with others. Instead, the distinction is in the importance and level of focus. The feminine disposition is to assess the consequences of a social transaction for closeness and solidarity after taking into account its implications for status and power, whereas the male disposition does the opposite (Ickes 76).

### **1.3.4. Patriarchy and the Politics of Representation**

In the pre-colonial times, women contributed to the development of the various ethnic groups that would later form Nigeria. Women did this not just as mothers and wives taking care of both husbands and children, but also as co-workers with their husbands and children on the farms, helping to ensure bumper harvest that the family could rely on especially in the periods

of famine (Effah Attoe). Women worked in fish drying in pre-colonial Nigerian coastal areas such as Calabar and Oron. They were also involved in the cassava processing to produce garri. As a result of their involvement in trade with other communities, either directly or through their children, as was the case in most northern locations where women were kept in purdah, they gained access to income that they could use to purchase various household or personal products. They were also involved in providing medical aid for their families, particularly their children, because there were few centralized health centers at the time, with the exception of traditional medicine homes, which led to medical problems being critical (Ogun and Martins 97-98).

In the colonial times, collectives were instrumental to the famous Aba Women's Riot of 1929, where market women and housewives in especially Owerri and Calabar were uncomfortable with the likelihood that the head count in the eastern part of the country could result in heavy taxation of their palm produce and other goods. This riot caused the colonialists to rescind their plan (Marissa Evans). Between 1941 and 1947, Egba women in Abeokuta emulated this feat by refusing taxation and all sorts of discrimination against women. The baton of women's fight would be passed to Onitsha women, who rioted in 1950 to oppose the creation of the Nsula Oil Mills due to economic implications for their trade (Edith Osiruemu). Women would formalize their movement by creating the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies (FNWS) as a powerful voice for the collective fight of women (Ogun and Martins 98).

Women have always faced challenges in political settings, especially in Nigeria. Women's struggle for political and social equality began in English-speaking countries. A Vindication of the Rights of Women was published in 1792. However, it took more than a century in 1893 for women to be granted nationwide suffrage. They were the weaker sex and so psychologically unfit for "Momentous events, such as lawsuits, rituals, or making decisions about the allocation of resources" (Cited in Ogun and Martins 98).

### 1.4. Women's Struggle during the Nigerian Biafran War

During the conflict, women and children were both victims of violence, internally displaced individuals, and refugees. Throughout the conflict, violence against women and children destroyed families, impoverished communities in the impacted areas, and perpetuated other kinds of injustice. Furthermore, women and girls were subjected to bodily abuses, such as reproductive violations and unwanted pregnancies. This conflict was replete with pandemic rates of sexual and gender-based violence, together with a high degree of gender-based human rights violations. Women and children died from hunger (Yebo 40).

Women continued to be a minority of soldiers and perpetrators of conflict, but women were increasingly the ones who suffered the most harm. Women and children were particularly affected by the fighting. The Nigerian Civil War bereaved many mothers and orphaned numerous children. Women struggled to provide a living for their children after the War (45).

The majority of revolutions appear to limit women's direct participation in warfare, relegating females to supporting roles such as chefs, nannies, and even suicide bombers. According to Bello, women reportedly joined the Biafran army [Cited in Ogechi Anurioha 2278]. In some respects, they were working in an office. Some worked as chefs, others as nurses or physicians. Women were occasionally present in the Biafran armed forces, most notably in militias, civil defense organizations, and paramilitaries. When men were in limited supply due to the deaths of so many men, women were expected to step in. Some exceptionally nimble ladies offered their assistance in warfare. According to a recent research, women routinely fight in Biafran paramilitaries, militias, and civil defense organizations (Ogechi 2279).

Men are widely seen as the primary actors in these armed organizations, with most women considered victims. Historically, women in Nigeria were important participants in the anti-colonial movement. However, since Nigeria's independence, it has been difficult to determine the role of women in non-state armed organizations' operations against the state, particularly if

women hold important positions of influence within these groups and may engage in violence. Since 2014, Boko Haram's use of female suicide bombers and other terrorist tactics has raised awareness of women's involvement in Nigeria's armed conflicts and their potential for violence. Generally, women have demonstrated the potential to engage in armed conflicts as either willing and voluntary or compelled perpetrators.

As armed non-state groups like Boko Haram target girls and women, the government must respond by implementing gender-specific legislation and policies, such as increasing the number of female security personnel and political leaders. This study examines the participation of women in Nigeria's non-state armed organizations, including Niger Delta militants and Boko Haram, from 1999 to the present. The study examines women's engagement and non-participation in Nigeria's security system (Nwankpa 8).

Women faced aggression from the military and occasionally even from certain federal civil personnel and organizations. Their struggles have realistically been portrayed with sympathy. Frequently, finding themselves without their male counterparts, who were away at war or had moved elsewhere. Thus, women took on the responsibility of leading their families which often comprised not just the young but also the elderly. Moreover, many women assumed the duty of ensuring their families survival, caring for and supporting aging relatives, and occasionally even supporting their spouses. A state of emergency was automatically imposed on nations that were engaged in hostilities. Women found it more difficult to manage their increased obligations and hardships which were heightened during times of war or disaster. It got difficult and demanding to search for food to feed their dependents. Women even arranged during the civil war to give the military supplies including clothing, food ammunition, and medical care. Thus, they became more and more likely to die as a result of these hardships (Uchendu 20).

### 1.5. Empowerment and Agency in Gender Studies Discourse

The educational system in Nigeria is a tremendous force for change, producing a large number of intelligent, confident, and educated women who are active in many fields, particularly politics. According to Toyin Falola, "The formal education system in Nigeria has been a powerful agent of change for the fashionable woman, producing an excessive number of elite women confident, knowledgeable, and intellectual woman" (Benguettat 11).

Women were viewed as second-class citizens in Nigeria. As a result, they lacked representation in important industries and influential institutions that make decisions. Oloyede Oluyemi, for instance, stated that women were not given equal rights to vote in elections, saying that "Nigeria has been recording low participation of women in both elective and appointive positions". This means that women have been denied the chance to play such significant roles in society. Nonetheless, women have worked hard to raise their percentage of participation in the political, social, and cultural spheres (Cited in Benguettat 14).

Gender equality and women's empowerment saw a global turning point with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995. Twenty years later, it had been conceived and approved. In order to understand the objectives of human development and gender equality in Nigeria, the BPFA has persisted in providing an inclusive policy and programmatic guidelines. Following the adoption of the BPFA, Nigeria made significant progress toward promoting gender equality and, consequently, women's empowerment. These achievements include: Institutional arrangements on gender that are entrenched in publicly administered administration systems and processes; increased female participation in public and political life; integration of gender and social inclusion targets in economic policies, budgets, and development frameworks; initiatives to work with men and boys in promoting gender equality and, consequently, women's empowerment (15).

The Beijing international conference on women in 1995 encouraged girls in Nigeria to participate effectively, noting that women's roles in a country's development had emerged in the 1980s. Women's economic contributions have become increasingly recognized in academia and policy circles. The rising confession highlights women's active participation in both official and informal production (Benguettat 18).

The women's movement has successfully established the women's agenda in public and commercial sectors via numerous efforts and activities. The women's movement's advocacy for women's rights is affecting national policies. Improved access to education has bolstered Nigerian women's role in society and contributed to the country's prosperity (30).

The UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace, and Security is important international framework for promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. International processes like the Commission on the Status of Women and the Generation Equality Forum advance gender equality and empower women and girls. The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and development partners can use these processes and commitments to promote gender equality and empower women and girls worldwide.

Feminists worldwide have advocated for reforms in agencies and procedures to increase gender equality and empower women. This includes implementing various plans, programs, and projects. Several agencies work on gender and development issues. The key agencies include state, market, international non-government, monetary, and voluntary groups, as well as local and national civil society organizations (OECD 2).

Conservapedia Online claims that feminism is a word used by female suffrage activists, who were mostly in favor of life, to gain the right to vote for women in the early 1900s in the United States and the United Kingdom. By the 1970s, liberals had redefined the term to include those who supported abortion and equal roles or quotas for women in the military and society as a whole. It also states that a modern feminist denies gender distinctions, opposes encouraging

women to stay at home and raise children, and works to participate in traditionally male activities. Most modern feminists see marriage as unacceptably patriarchal, implying female slavery when it is actually a reciprocal connection. Moreover, B.E. Nwaneri writes that the second wave of feminism began in the early 1960s and continued through the late 1980s. It has existed continuously since then and continues to coexist with Third Wave Feminism. The movement encourages women to understand some aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and reflective of a sexist structure of power, and it is largely concerned with other issues of equality, such as the end of discrimination. He posits that feminist theory and activism of the 1960s were informed and fueled by the social, cultural, and political climate of that decade, as more women were gaining entry into higher education, the establishment of academic women's studies courses and departments, and feminist thinking in many other related fields such as politics, sociology, and history. All these theories cited are relevant to this essay since its focus is on the activities of the male characters as opposed to the principles of feminism and the counterreactions of female characters to assert their rights and positions as individuals in society (Ogechukwu 2).

Nigerian women's historical ascent into modern society has neither resulted in a unified group, nor can their current social status be readily linked to a precolonial conception. Indeed, until recently, stereotypes of African women outside of the continent were created by the sexist and racist portrayals of Western anthropologists and missionaries. These early writers believed that African women's functions, position, and physical characteristics accurately reflected their idea of the female of the species in a prehistoric setting. Furthermore, Nigerian women's jobs as traders and farmers, their involvement in religious ceremonies and community decision-making, and their status as mothers, wives, and queens all entwined inconsistencies that were hardly conducive to the European standard. Many interpretations were offered in response to these contradictions, the majority of which tried to

confine, confound, and simplify what is nonetheless a complicated system of social relations (Phil E. Okekep 50).

African women's position has really been steadily declining over the past thirty years due to development endeavors on the continent, and the current economic downturn is merely exacerbating this previously established tendency. Women are unable to freely take use of the social chances that are available to them if they are dependent on patriarchal favors to improve their social status. Every decision they make to fit in with today's culture is still shaped by this unfair standard. Afonja explains this pattern historically in Western Nigeria by arguing that traditional Yoruba gender stratification embedded inequality, many of which are barely noticeable because they are "culturally legitimized," while simultaneously appearing giving women enormous autonomy (122).

Depending on their qualifications and social relationships to male authority, educated women have a greater position in Nigeria, as they do throughout Africa. Through their economic endeavors, women in the informal sector can frequently achieve some degree of personal autonomy, yet males frequently view women as the elite. Women entered many African governments' colonial societies as subject to male rulers. Women's access to formal education, wage employment, and social mobility was closely linked to their new status as housewives and companions to the male ruling elite, as opposed to men (Phil E. Okeke 51).

In general, and from contemporary perspectives in Nigeria, it would appear that women have never had influence in the realm of Nigerian politics. Historically t, and even in the present democratic dispensation, there has been and still is some fair share of recognition of the increasing role of women in Nigerian society, whether social, economic, or political.

Falola and Fwatshak wrote that the place of women in politics during the pre-colonial period is sufficiently familiar. Therefore, the exploits of legendary women like Queen Amina of Zazau in Zaria, Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura of Ibadan, Princess Moremi of Ife, Princess

Inikpi of Igala, and Emotan of Benin readily come to mind. During the colonial period, women asserted and expressed themselves politically. Some women who made political marks during that period included Mrs. Margaret Ekpo of the famous Aba women riots of 1929, Madam Tinubu of Lagos and Egba land, Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of the Abeokuta Women Union of 1948, and Hajia Swaba Gambo of the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU), to mention but a few. It is, however, worthy of mention here that though women enjoyed a higher level of authority in southern Nigeria, men have always been dominant in the political structure, with women playing sedentary roles as inferior and subordinate partners (Erunke, 2009). Thus, the issue of equal representation and clear democratization of the Nigerian political space to reflect women in conformity with the 35% affirmative action norms is becoming increasingly important. Even when women are extensively involved in Nigeria's highest levels of decision-making, their participation is superficial, severely insufficient, and lacks the moral grounds for effective representation (Erunke 3 -4).

In the ongoing Fourth Republic, Nigerian women's political participation is undeniable. Prominent women, such as Dr. Okonjo Iweala (who is currently Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister for the Nigerian Economy), have undoubtedly played an important part in Nigeria's political economy. She has also set the pace on the international stage. Iweala, for example, during her first ministerial job since the post-1999 democratic dispensation, was particularly essential in the debt talks between Nigeria and the Paris or London Club. It was her diplomatic efforts that brought about the eventual cancellation and eventual forgiveness of Nigeria's debt running into billions of American dollars. Likewise, it can be said that, drawing from her wealth of experience as an employee of the International Monetary Fund (IMF/World Bank), she has logically brought her ideas to bear in the Nigerian economy. However, critics from several quarters—academics, public analysts, and intelligentsias—generally have argued that most of Iweala's ideas are simply drawn from the culture of the west, comprising Europe

and America and that such policies may not be in harmony with the acceptable norms and peculiarities of the Nigerian state and its people at large. In all fairness, however, it must be said that, as a woman, Iweala has greatly influenced the direction of Nigerian politics through her economic agenda as the coordinator minister of the economy of Nigeria. One basic point worthy of mention, however, is that most of her perceived policies are undemocratic and do not reflect the growing interest of the Nigerian people (Erunke 7-8).

### **1.6. Conclusion :**

In short, analyzing *Half of a Yellow Sun* through various theoretical and contextual frameworks improves understanding of the novel's themes and characters. It helps to go deeper into issues like power, identity, and resistance while also recognizing the complexities of the historical and cultural factors at work. Adichie's technique of retelling Biafran war episodes from a womanist perspective reveals the untold truth about Biafran female characters, offers optimism for future conflicts, and highlights women's role in human efforts for victory and survival.

## ***CHAPTER TWO***

Female Agency and Resistance in  
*Half of a Yellow Sun*

### 2.1. Introduction:

This chapter provides an insight into female agency and resistance in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. It examines how female characters deal with being obliged to conform to cultural conventions and oppression that come with patriarchy. It focuses on the difficulties female characters confront in establishing their agency and shaping their relationships throughout the Nigerian civil war. It also focuses on women's perceptions of their societal responsibilities, the repressive gender systems that marginalize them, and their strategies for reclaiming their place in society. In addition, this chapter discusses obstacles, contributions, and repercussions in light of specific events, character arcs, and examples of female character solidarity.

### 2.2. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Literary Context

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a writer who challenges standard representations of African identity by telling stories about gender relations, power and culture that many readers might be less familiar with. While her speech "*We Should All Be Feminists*" made headlines, not much attention has been given to the fact that her novels also portray manifestations of masculinity. While analysis of 'Black Feminism' has become a popular topic in contemporary research works, the ideas and representations of 'Black Masculinity' are yet to gain such prominence. The whole notion of blackness has been constructed by white people in their own interests. It is by creating the idea of the 'other' that white colonizers tried to legitimize their superiority and their hegemony over the colonized. In this connection, 'black male gender identities have been culturally constructed through complex dialectics of power' and thus unveiling this complex system can expose the hypocrisy of the white hegemonic structure. Adichie initiates a conversation on 'Black Masculinity' by investing her fictional narratives with characters that represent different shades of masculinity. Reflecting upon the depictions of masculinity in her novels *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, it is clear that through

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her novels she emphasizes the transforming definitions of black masculinity. The trajectory of the notion of black masculinity finds expression through Adichie's literary endeavours as these novels are representative of the stages of its evolution (Falola 40-41).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's second novel, *Half of a Yellow* (2006), is one in a long line of works by Nigerian authors to portray the Nigeria-Biafra War (1967–70). While Adichie has stated that she wanted to make modern Nigeria aware of its history by writing the novel, the writer has also revealed that she drew from past literary portrayals to construct her narrative.

Adichie also provides an account of her inspiration for writing *Half of a Yellow* (2006), which won the Orange Women's Prize for fiction in 2007. The novel is set in the 1960s in newly independent Nigeria, a period of growing social and political tension that led to the secession of the eastern region as the Republic of Biafra and culminated in the Nigeria-Biafra War (1967– 70) (LECNAR 113).

As one of the youngest members of this generation and as a writing career first began to unfold in the U.S., Adichie has thus far a slightly different trajectory from many of her peers, particularly since her careers have developed primarily in Nigeria. These differences from her decision to attend college and graduate school have meant that she has followed a career path common to writers. She has published her short stories in several magazines, including prestigious American journals such as *Review* and *Zoetrope All-Story*; her stories have won several awards, including the O. Henry Prize; and her novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, published in 2003 by Algonquin, was shortlisted for the 2004 Orange Prize for Fiction and longlisted for the Booker Prize. Adichie's career is still developing, but her work warrants it for several reasons. She is a talented writer who has already achieved success that eludes many writers, both in Africa and the U.S. Her work to date expands our understanding and characterization of Nigerian writing. While her fiction reveals various influential Nigerian writers, particularly

from the first generation, it also contains a wide range of texts, from Nigeria, other African nations, and the Black Atlantic. This transnational intertextuality suggests the presence of a heterogeneous, diasporic dimension within contemporary literature—a dimension present within many national literary texts in a postmodern, globalized world (Hewett 75).

### **2.3. Adichie's Representation of Female Experiences in her Writings**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is known for her powerful portrayal of the female experience in her writing. Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* came with a big bang on the patriarchal question. Nonetheless, the two succeeding novels, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* have implicated a profuse characterization of women not exactly as being oppressed by man but indeed often browbeaten by their own self-delusion. On their merit, these works are infused with purposive literary ingredients, justifying the ingenuity of a master (mistress) storyteller for which Achebe attests, on the front cover of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, that Adichie came as a writer that was fully made. It is perhaps in riding at this echelon that the consciousness of the key conflicts of African literary engagement is ostensibly implicated in the expediency which precipitates the discourse of her satiric intentions in works easily adjudged to be feminist. There are visible suggestions that the polarization of critics as well as creative writers on the basis of gender is arraigned with a purposed satire in the portrayal of the characters in both novels of Adichie under study here (Uchenna 3).

### **2.4. *Half of a Yellow Sun*: Context**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian novelist, wrote the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Published in 2006, it is set during the Nigerian Civil War, commonly known as the Biafran War, which lasted from 1967 to 1970. The novel examines the influence of the war on Nigerian society and its people through the lives of its protagonists.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* is released four decades after the Nigerian Biafra war. The story focuses on Biafran women's battles for vocalization,

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presentation, and freedom. The film depicts the many stages of the conflict and highlights Biafran females' resilience in surviving, winning, and rebuilding a war-torn community. The work separates itself from previous novels by retelling Biafra war episodes from various social, cultural, and diplomatic angles. Moreover, the narrative covers the reasons and results of the war, its impact on Biafran families, the political atmosphere before the fight, corrupt countercoup leaders, the anti-Igbo slaughter, secession, and the war itself. Conversations among university intellectuals in Odenigbo's residence on Odim Street at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka reflect these occurrences. Their frequent gatherings become a focal point for national debate. The narrative depicts the early war-causing events, as well as the university women's attempts to help the thousands of refugees who left their workplace (Sowmiya & Dr Radah, 3284).

In addition, *Half of a Yellow Sun* celebrates the myth of Igbo women's passive role in Biafran conflict history. The pictures of educated, assertive, and passionate female actors in the battle to win the war and rebuild the damaged Biafran Republic expose patriarchal mechanisms that hinder female heroism. The work honors the tradition of creative enlightenment, mental liberty, and emancipation. It is apparent that a credible understanding of history is not only redemptive, but also provides hope and bravery for addressing the future. Adichie's technique of retelling Biafran war events from a womanist viewpoint reveals previously unknown facts about Biafran female characters, offers optimism for future fights, and re-emphasizes the woman's role in human efforts for victory and survival. Race and financial position are also used to further marginalize people in the play, which shows conservative sectors of society as believing that sex is the sole thing that defines gender identity. Both works' female protagonists, who are racially marginalized and sexually oppressed, demonstrate that race or biological construction do not determine social or gender identity in important ways. They face not just a male-dominated culture, but also a segment of traditional women who, out of ignorance or fear,

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are absolutely dedicated to conventional cultural norms and rules. Despite their diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, these unorthodox females excel beyond traditional gender roles (3287).

Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), later adapted into a film with the same name, directed by Nigerian author and director Biyi Bandele (2013), is a Civil War fiction that documents the Nigerian Civil War and tells the history of the indigenous stories of the secessionist republic Biafra. It supports the notion that: "The Nigerian-Biafran Civil War provided some Nigerian writers with raw material for literary activity" (Wosu 122). Adichie, a Nigerian Igbo author and novelist, used her Civil War storyline to highlight the history of ethnic minorities, the North-South divide, and conflicting tension. Wosu depicts the African nation's struggle for unification in black and its abundant riches in green, pointing to a bright future. Adichie writes: She informed them about the Biafran flag. The teacher unfurled Odenigbo's fabric flag and explained its emblems to the students while they sat on wooden planks in a roofless classroom (123). According to Adichie, the colors red represented the blood of the murdered siblings in the North, black represented sadness, green represented Biafra's prosperity, and *Half a Yellow Sun* represented the beautiful future. This Civil War drama, set in Nigeria during its early post-independence years, is primarily inspired by the Biafran struggle (Bouazdia & Salha 37).

Adichie's story explores emotional bonds beyond the harshness of war via the experiences of her protagonists. In her note, Adichie notes that "This work is based on the Nigeria-Biafra War of 1967-70. While some of the characters are based on real people, their depictions and the circumstances that surround them are imaginary" (Adichie 525). In addition to her parents' experiences and the horrors of war. As a result, she writes in her novel's postscript that she included their experience as well. The author used fictional events and creative approaches to rebuild the Civil War's history. The author uses flashbacks and flashforwards to depict the instabilities encountered by her characters, the uncertainties of postcolonial Nigerian identity, and Nigerians' quest for a stable and cohesive identity. Following gaining

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independence from British colonial powers, the Nigeria-Biafra War erupted as a result of conflictive ties between Northerners and Southerners, as well as the formation of cultural and ethnic conflicts. Adichie, a Nigerian novelist with Igbo heritage and cultural background, emphasizes her ethnic identity and explores Igbo experiences from a female perspective (37)

Adichie's book also depicts the tensions between characters caused by genuine political and ethnic conflicts, as well as the interactions between characters and war instabilities and their effects on the characters' bonds, resulting in a sense of deprivation, loss, and deceit. The story begins with Ugwu, an Igbo adolescent, being taken to Nsukka by his aunty to work as a houseboy for Odenigbo, an intellectual radical Igbo man. The book explores the cultural and class differences between Odenigbo and Ugwu, who represent different models of identity within the same ethnic tribe. The novel's female voice begins with Olanna, an affluent Igbo woman and Odenigbo's love interest. During the Biafra Civil War, this figure exemplifies female patriotism and Igbo women's battles for survival. The narrative then portrays the "white man's experience" (Wosu 128). In Nigeria, Richard Churchill, an Englishman who is attracted by African arts, starts a love affair with Kainene, Olanna's twin sister and the second female protagonist in the novel. She represents the alternative paradigm of female nationalism throughout the struggle (Bouazdia & Salha 39).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, chronicles the events of Nigeria's Biafran War from 1967 to 1970. The novel uses real-life locations and historical events to investigate historical events and political figures. Adichie depicts the fight using genuine military personalities such as Gowon and Ojukwu. The audio recording of a conference in Aburi, Ghana, depicts the fight for a solution, with Ojukwu dominating. Despite a compromise agreement, both parties descended into conflict, accusing each other of ill faith while seeking to negotiate. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a novel about African sociopolitical struggles in the 1960s, namely the Nigerian Civil War. It investigates identity loss, racism, feminism,

nationalism, and the importance of education in combating gender prejudice. The work promotes a better knowledge of history among younger generations (Dr. Saiel 24).

*Half of a Yellow Sun*, won the Women's Prize for Fiction in 2007 and as 'Best of the Best' of the second decade of winners, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie will receive a special-edition Bessie statuette, cast in manganese bronze. Thirteen years after she won the Women's prize for fiction, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel about the Biafran war, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, has been voted the "winner of winners" of the literary award in a public vote

### 2.5. Adichie's Portrayal of Gender Politics in the Novel

Adichie's novel is a complicated examination of gender politics during the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1971). Adichie's varied characters and their experiences investigate how gender roles and expectations affect individuals and their relationships during a time of severe social and political change.

Adichie's work delves into women's inner challenges and agency, placing them front and center. Olanna and Kainene are upper-class twin sisters. Throughout their trips, they have had a variety of experiences that challenge social norms and gender expectations. Sadly, throughout the novel, society's prejudices about Olanna's attractiveness overpower her beauty and intellectual interests. As a result, she faces dissatisfying treatment from Oden Igbo's mother. In the colonial context, Kainene stands out as a brilliant businesswoman who bravely challenges established norms and overcomes racial and cultural barriers. Adichie's affecting portrait of African women draws attention to the obstacles that women experience within patriarchal systems while also emphasizing their tenacity and autonomy in challenging social expectations. Through characters like Ugwu's aunt, who demonstrates resourcefulness and resilience despite her disadvantaged background, "But, by far the most enchanting of all Nigerian civil war narratives is Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*" (Wosu 122), Adichie emphasizes the strength and independence exhibited by these women as they

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encounter emotional and financial realms. By expanding outside Nigeria's borders, Adichie's narratives serve as a tool to introduce readers from many nations to the Nigerian Civil War. *Journal of Namibian Studies*, provides a humanistic perspective that contradicts traditional historical records and preserves the memories of the conflict and its deep toll on mankind (Harry & Dr. Vijayakumar 10).

Adichie's influence reaches beyond Nigeria. Her novels have contributed to familiarizing readers from other countries with the Nigerian Civil War, providing a humane and sympathetic perspective that contrasts the frequently disconnected representations found in traditional historical documents. As a result, she plays an important role in preserving memories of the war, its causes, and the devastating toll it took on humanity. Marriage, as depicted in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's writings, particularly *Half of a Yellow Sun*, exemplifies the unequal power dynamics and sacrifices made by women in marriage. Anulika and Olanna's experiences highlight women's demands to conform to social expectations.

Despite her youth and lack of education, Anulika is forced into marriage and early motherhood due to conventional expectations. Olanna, on the other hand, despite her education and apparent independence, feels compelled to have a child in order to solidify her relationship and gain approval from her partner's family. These examples show how women are burdened with following traditional gender conventions while sacrificing their own desires and goals. Manieson (2017) writes, "To protect their marriage, thousands of women, like Nkem, deny themselves the pleasures of life in the name of marriage. Such women rely on their husbands' whims and caprices" (169); Adichie's picture emphasizes the problems women have in balancing power imbalances within relationships and social restraints that limit their agency and autonomy. It emphasises the need to critically examine and challenge these assumptions in order to promote more equal and meaningful collaborations (11).

## Chapter Two: Female Agency and Resistance in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

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Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's portrayal of strong female characters and their struggles against oppressive gender norms in *Half of a Yellow Sun* defies patriarchal expectations. During the Biafran War, the novel follows the lives of Ugwu, Olanna, and Kainene, demonstrating the impact of combat on female relationships. Adichie depicts women who reject societal expectations by refusing to fulfill the traditional roles of subservient and quiet. Olanna, for example, goes against her mother's wishes by dating Odenigbo, a revolutionary philosopher. She asserts her individuality, challenges patriarchal marriage conventions, and refuses to accept a subordinate role. Kainene, on the other hand, is a fiercely independent woman who runs her own businesses while defying gender conventions. Adichie's portrayal of these people and their defiance of patriarchal ideals criticizes authoritarian systems. Critique the restrictive structures that limit women's autonomy and perpetuate gender inequality. Adichie invites readers to analyze and face their own preconceived notions about gender roles and power dynamics. "Clearly, these causes influenced the writing of *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The trauma of the Biafra war appears to have damaged the author due to her relationship with her father" (Makosso 168). According to Makosso, Adichie's deep bond with her father, who survived the war, affected the work. The war's devastation, including the deaths of Adichie's grandparents, shaped her family's recollections. Adichie witnessed the anguish of the Biafra War through her father's memories and emotions. Adichie's personal connection and family experiences inspired her to research the subject and its implications for society. *Half of a Yellow Sun* was written by Adichie to respect her family and community while also sharing the memories and recollections of war victims. Adichie was inspired to examine this period and reveal its implications by her father's long-term effects and family connections to the conflict (11- 12).

### **2.7. Females' Struggles and Acts of Resistance**

*Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explores the issue of resistance against traditional gender roles and societal standards through the lives of its female

protagonists. The narrative, set during the Nigerian Civil War, shows how women overcome restrictions imposed by society.

### **2.7.1. Females' Defiance of Traditional Gender Roles and Societal Norms**

Gender roles are prescribed behaviors for men and women in both private and public settings. They were coined by psychologist Dr. John Money in the 1950s to suppress all genders and maintain dominant power. These roles promote strong, ambitious men and women, leading to confusion and resentment in relationships. Society's expectations vary across cultures and ethnic groups, with African traditions often being male-centered and male-dominated. In reality, men and women are not born with these characteristics

In the 20th century, African women faced new opportunities due to economic and political changes. They began writing about gender inequality, social expectations, and women's roles in marriage. Contemporary female African writers like Helen Oyeyemi, Chika Unigwe, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie focus on Activist Feminism and raising children based on abilities and interests. Adichie's novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* explores these themes.

The novel portrays the Nigerian Civil War, highlighting the gender roles assigned to women and the pressure on men to be the main earners. It highlights the subjugation of women and the issue of identity (Moses & Kumar 13).

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Ugwu, the house boy, hopes he could cook for his mother when she was unwell. He has not told anyone, not even his cousin Anulika. She has previously informed Ugwu that he has spent too much time around ladies cooking, and that if he continues to do so, he may never grow a beard. On the contrary, Ugwu's mother hits Anulika's bottom for not properly bending to sweep. She says, "sweep like a woman!" (Adiche 3).

Another example is when Odenigbo's mother mocks Ugwu's food. She asks, "What does a boy know about real cooking?" "Does a boy belong in the kitchen?" (95). There is a societal notion that women should undertake home tasks. A boy in a home is taught to occasionally

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assist his father and is allowed to play outside, but a lady is always instructed to study cooking and household cleaning tasks. Many people continue to police gender stereotypes out of fear of being mocked for not being manly or 'feminine'. In *Pots and Politics*, second-wave feminists argued that cooking should not be considered a feminine duty since "people of both sexes eat; people of both sexes cook"(5). Adichie's book, *Dear Ijeawle, A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions*, discusses the importance of cooking as a domestic work and life skill for both men and women. She reflects on her childhood instruction to bend down while sweeping, which emphasized female qualities. Adichie also discusses societal expectations surrounding marriage, where young girls often prioritize it over work. She argues that marriage is not an achievement, as girls are not conditioned to aspire to it.

African Society often educates and prepares females to find a suitable partner. Boys are not, however, taught to see marriage in the same manner that girls are. African society grows up believing stereotypes about educated women who refuse to follow their husbands. Odenigbo's mother's opinion of education mirrors this concept: "Too much learning wrecks a lady, as everyone knows. It gives a lady a huge head, and she starts insulting her spouse. What kind of a wife will that be? (Adichie 98). Because of these societal norms, most young ladies want to marry rather than attend university. Gender expectations and societal norms pressure women to conform to traditional roles, valuing academic life less. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Arize's mother-in-law pressures her to confess abortions, highlighting the persistent pressure towards early parenthood. Gender inequality is prevalent in society, with women often facing societal expectations and stereotypes. Anulika, Olanna's cousin, desires a baby boy to support her husband, while Odenigbo's mother prefers a boy for her own company. Adichie's novel portrays Kainene as an independent, strong-headed woman who takes on her father's business, overcoming societal expectations and stereotypes. This story highlights the challenges faced by women in male-dominated industries (Moses & Kumar 14-15).

To summarize, Adichie's female characters question and challenge established gender roles and society standards. Adichie's actions and choices highlight the larger battle for female equality and the changing of cultural expectations during a national crisis.

### 2.7.2. Females' Negotiation of Identity and Independence

In Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, female characters struggle to find their identities and independence amid the tumultuous backdrop of the Nigerian Civil War. For instance, Ollana, a young woman from a rich upbringing, approaches life with a sense of entitlement and security. However, as the Nigerian Civil War progresses, she is forced to confront the brutal realities of violence and relocation, which threaten her sense of identity and belonging. Ollana's journey involves safeguarding her identity and asserting her independence in a context of societal expectations and political instability.

In the novel, Adichie portrays daughters who refuse to be used for male self-importance. For example, Ozobia uses his daughter Olanna to obtain a contract from the Minister of Finance, Chief Okonji. Olanna is uncomfortable with it: "She wondered, too, how her parents had promised chief Okonji an affair with her in exchange for the contract. Had they stated it verbally, plainly, or had it been implied?" (Adichie 32). This extract points to the question of daughters being used as sex enticements as Kainene later observes:

The ten per cent is standard, so extras always help. The other bidders probably don't have a beautiful daughter. Kainene dragged the word out until it sounded cloying, sticky: beautiful. She was flipping through the copy of Lagos Life, her silk robe tied tightly around her skinny waist. The benefit of being the ugly daughter is that nobody uses you as sex bait". (35)

This demonstrates the use of women by men in the society represented by Adichie for material gains. When the parents conspire to have Olanna get sexually involved with the finance minister they paint an ugly picture of daughters who have no choice of even sexual partners. We learn that Olanna's father did not receive her choice of Odenigbo positively. The narrator

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identifies that all is not well with Odenigbo as Olanna's fiancée and notes, "her father only wanted to gall him and show how unimpressed he was by a senior lecturer from Nsukka" (32). Such wish of parents to control Olanna's choice of partners is explored when Olanna talks about her mother and the different opinions they hold over her choices (kivai 47-48).

Adichie brings up a situation where Olanna rebels to suggest that women should stand their grounds on issues of personal choice as she said: "I will not let societal pressures dictate my choices or define my worth". Personal choice points to Ollana's autonomy and some degree of liberty on the part of women (kivai p47-48).

Furthermore, Ollana shows her individuality in choosing a job path against society expectations and limitations. Olanna placed her spoon down: "I've decided to go to Nsukka. I'll be leaving in two weeks". She saw the way her father tightened his lips. Her mother left her hand suspended in the air for a moment, as if news were too tragic to continue sparkling salt: "I thought you had not made up your mind", her mother said. "I can't waste much too much time or they will offer it to somebody else", Olanna said (Adichie 31).

Olanna very happily announces how she has independently decided to move away from her home in order to make progress in her career. Though a Third World African woman, she is dominating and indomitable in her spirit even while confronting the horrors of war and its disasters (Parajuli 20).

Kainene's success in the business world and her economic independence de-stabilize the patriarchal structures of gender inequalities and economic imbalance. *Half of a Yellow Sun* introduces a reversal of social roles where the male characters like Odenigbo, Richard and Ugwu have to depend upon Kainene for survival, especially at the critical period of the war. Adichie equips her female character with the weapons of western education and financial security. Kainene and Olanna are independent women of substance and social relevance, not like Omotoso's De Madam, who is bereft of intellectual freedom and voice. For example

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Kainene is a master degree holder in Business Administration and her sister holds master degree in sociology and works as a lecturer in University of Nigeria in Nsukka. Both characters are strongly empowered with all it takes to participate as active members of society, leaders and decision makers. By highlighting the contrast between Olanna and Kainene's social and economic freedom and their mother's marital enslavement, the novel recreates the binary relationship between the old and the new (Uchenna 169).

Kainene is a character with a strong mental toughness. She is the ugly sister, as they often joke about while Olanna is described as being illogically beautiful. Kainene embodies all the characteristics Olanna does not have. Adichie intentionally contrasts the two sisters in order to emphasize the importance of Kainene being a strong woman. Kainene faces all the challenges like Olanna, but she has the stamina to face it in a more sophisticated and confidential way. Each problem that happens around her and to her seems trivial since she seems to overcome all the obstacles as soon as she faces them. Kainene is described as a fearless woman with the inscrutable look on her face. With her stoic character, Kainene is able to keep her femininity, but still has a profound ability to run the business of her father just like any other man. Kainene's father recognizes her brightness to run his business and is sure that Kainene's brilliant strategies will help him gain more money:

She'll oversee everything in the east, the factories and our new oil interest. She has always had an excellent eye for business. Kainene is not just like a son, she is like two, her father said. He glanced at Kainene and Kainene look away as if the pride on his face did not matter. (Adichie 31-32)

She even shows her business skills during the war, and is an army contractor; she imports stock-fish and after that she runs a refugee camp in Orlu. When it comes to interaction with the other characters in the novel, Kainene shows sympathy to others, but still feels very comfortable

in her skin. She shines with confidence and does not need anyone to confirm her as a daughter, as a woman or as a lover. She might serve as the epitome of a strong woman.

Kainene is a person who does not mind saying what she thinks; even if her opinion hurts people, she will say it anyway. As a very open and a realistic person, she does not develop close relationships with the other characters in the novel. The closest relationship she has, is the one with Richard, even though in certain situations she seems very distant. Her strange sense of humor reflects what she is as a person. People around her often do not find her jokes appropriate but she only jokes about things that are really there, her jokes have a certain touch of reality. She does not have the tendency to stall something, she is quite straight-forward: "Kainene used to say their mother's breasts did not dry up at all that their mother had given them to a nursing aunt only to save her own breasts from drooping." (Adichie 39).

The intricacy of these women's experiences and the manner in which they negotiate their identities and claim their independence during a turbulent period are highlighted by Adichie's portrayal of them.

### **2.7.3. Females' Agency in Shaping their Relationships**

Several significant female characters' experiences and choices in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* illustrate how women have agency in forming their relationships. Within the framework of cultural and political turmoil, the novel delves into issues of love, power, and personal agency, all set against the backdrop of the Nigerian Civil War.

Ollana's agency in constructing her relationship with Odingbo is an important part of her growth as a character in the novel. Despite cultural expectations and pressures, Ollana establishes her independence and shapes the dynamics of her romantic relationship.

The first and most important relationship in the novel is her relationship with Odenigbo. It is a kind of relationship that, on the one hand, is characterized by a strong and confident man

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and, on the other, an even stronger woman who is too independent to dedicate her life to a man. Through the entire novel, Olanna struggles against the one thing that might take away her freedom, and that is marriage. For her, marriage is an unnecessary act; if two people love each other, that should be enough to confirm their union (KASIĆ 22).

Olanna, with love and patience, defeated Mama (Odenigbo's mother) and married Odenigbo. Adichie celebrates the liberated woman in Olanna. Despite Odenigbo's mother's efforts to separate him and Olanna, the two remained connected until an interloper, a country girl named Amala, entered the picture. Mama employed black magic to make Odenigbo pregnant Amala, forcing Olanna to leave Odenigbo's home for her own. However, her aunt, Ifeka, encouraged her to take control of her life because it belonged to her alone, not to a man (Adichie, 283).

She ended up sleeping with another man (Richard) to get even with Odenigbo, which helped her discover her self-worth. (This deed, however, is not a womanistic idea.) When she ultimately forgave and reconciled with Odenigbo, their love grew stronger, which was somewhat unexpected. Plaias argues that her betrayal, in exchange, serves as a leveling act, providing her with a sense of well-being and even grace.

Moreover, Olanna excused Odenigbo's betrayal and transforms it into the basis for increased intimacy instead of disruption, reversing therefore the patriarchy's dynamic instead of considering herself the victim of Odenigbo's unfaithfulness. She stood firm as an African woman. She accepted the prevailing situation, got back on her feet, forgave Odenigbo and when Amala's baby was born, she decided to take care of her, despite warnings from Mama. Olanna doubled her efforts to save her relationship with Odenigbo.

Olanna fights against emotions she cannot understand. However, she is obviously upset within herself but does not allow others to see it. She faces Odenigbo's mother and wants to see

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Amala and the baby too. "She had known this was coming for months now, and yet looking at Amala she felt an ashy hollowness. A part of her had hoped this day would never arrive." (Adichie 248).

Olanna is holding the infant and not thinking about Amala or Odenigbo just now. She feels as if the other patients in the hospital are watching her. The fact that she is unable to have children follows her, and this is the point at which she is once again disillusioned with her body: "Olanna was certain that they could tell that she did not know what to do with a howling infant in her arms, that she was incapable of getting pregnant." (Adichie 249).

But when the nurse asks her how many children she has, she is relieved for a moment that someone believes she has any. She softens up slightly. She even understands how Odenigbo and Amala interact and how everything eventually breaks apart. The past has now shown its causes and effects. She is determined to make peace with the past, and she makes the most significant decision in the story: they should keep the kid because no one else wants it. After telling Odenigbo, she feels justified in her decision. The chasm between them finally closes; she realizes that was the wisest decision she could have taken (KASIĆ 28).

Mama, on seeing Olanna's kindness as a mother to Odenigbo's child, changed her attitude towards Olanna and accepted her as a daughter in law, before she got killed during a raid in her village. Olanna and Odenigbo finally got married, and went back to their previous house in Nsukka, at the end of the war. Olanna acquired her Identity as Odenigbo's wife amidst the war, just like Nigeria recaptured Biafra through war and plenty of bloodshed, as part of its territory and continued to live as one country (Asuzu & Ogonwa 35-36).

In other side, Adichie underlines Kainene's strength through two relationships: one with her boyfriend Richard and one with her father. Richard is so terrified by her that he becomes impotent throughout their early sexual relationships.

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During the war, she works as an army contractor, importing stock-fish and then running a refugee camp in Orlu. When it comes to interacting with the other characters in the narrative, Kainene is sympathetic to them while being quite comfortable in her own skin. She exudes confidence and does not require validation for her identity as a daughter, woman, or lover. She represents a powerful lady. From the beginning of the narrative, her relationship with Olanna is distant and formal. Adichie does not explore the relationship between the two characters or why Kainene changes. One may imagine that Kainene lives in Olanna's shadow for a long time. In terms of exterior appearance. The internal joke about the ugly and illogically lovely sibling may relate to her personality. Olanna's parents attempt to introduce her to other men, but not Kainene. This is another evidence that Olanna sets the beauty standard (Jennifer 29).

Kainene had always been the withdrawn child, the sullen and often acerbic teenager, the one who, because she did not try to please their parents, left Olanna with that duty. But they had been close despite that. They used to be friends. She wondered when it all changed [...] they had simply drifted apart, but it was Kainene who now anchored herself firmly in a distant place so that they could not drift back together. (Adichie, 37)

When it comes to her love life, she dates white English men mostly. Olanna does not like any of them; she is irritated by her choices until she meets Richard Churchill. He is a different person in comparison to all the other men Kainene dates. He does not possess the tendency to dominate over other people in conversation, as other white English men do. Richard is interested in Kainene as soon as he sees her. She stands out from all the other women in the room with her superiority and blank expressions. She seems as nothing and no one could intrigue her enough to give someone a moment of her precious attention (KASIĆ 30).

She was smoking. She could blow perfect smoke rings [...] He didn't think Kainene was some wealthy Nigerian's daughter because she had none of the cultivated demureness. She seemed more like a mistress: her brazenly red lipstick, her tight dress, her smoking. But then she didn't smile in that plastic way the mistresses did. She didn't even have the generic prettiness that made him inclined to believe the rumour that Nigerian politicians swapped mistresses. In fact, she was not pretty at all [...] She was very thin and very tall, almost as tall as he was, and she was staring right into his eyes with a steely blank expression. Her skin was the colour of Belgian chocolate. (Adichie, 57)

Kainene is sure that Richard will be more interested in Olanna than in her, so the day she meets Richard she asks him if he wants to meet her sister, saying that everyone else always insist upon it but Richard is more interested in Kainene, even though Olanna is the pretty one.

Have you ever been to the market in Balogun? She asked. They display slabs of meat on tables, and you are supposed to grope and feel and then decide which you want. My sister and I are meat. We are here so that suitable bachelors will make the kill. (59)

Kainene is very open and intimate with Richard from the moment they meet, which he admires as everything else about her. Her attitude and her self-confidence attract him the most. However, as one of the narrators, Richard provides more information about Kainene. He is the only person who realizes that Kainene hides some feelings beneath that cold, sardonic face. In his own opinion, Kainene is dissatisfied with herself. The reason for such dissatisfaction is her sister Olanna. Kainene becomes "emotionless" due to her sister's beauty. Kainene always emphasizes herself as being the ugly daughter. Not only she feels ugly but she always has some kind of proof that others emphasize her as the aesthetically unattractive one. In her conversation

with Richard about her "bride price" which her father gives it to her, she emphasizes her necessity of having a bride price, while Olanna does not need it since she has always had it – her beauty is enough (KASIĆ 31).

It's monstrous. My father gave it to me last year as a bit of dowry, I think, an enticement for the right sort of man to marry his unattractive daughter. Terribly European, when you think of it, since we don't have dowries, we have bride prices [...] Olanna said she didn't want a house. Not that she needs one. Save the houses for the ugly daughter. (Adichie, 69)

Kainene is a great leader, a successful businesswoman, but still there is something missing, some kind of gap which no university degree or her ability to run her father's business could fill. She knows she is not able to compete with her sister's beauty and she shows it in a way that no one recognizes the real reason for her distance to everyone in the family, except Richard. He is the only man whom she lets see her without her mask. Before him, there were a lot of men, white men, who were only her lovers on a physical level, but not on the emotional level. Her relationship with her sister Olanna, as mentioned above, is very distant. Olanna never recognizes the true reason for this. Even though Kainene does imply with her comment on Olanna's beauty, still Olanna is not able to see how deep her sister suffers because of her, "Olanna wanted Kainene to stay, to sit on the bed and hold a pillow on her lap and gossip and laugh into the night." (Adichie, 36).

Each time Olanna tries to get closer to her, Kainene acts very distantly and talks in her sardonic voice as usual. When Olanna asks her for a reason of distance between them, Kainene successfully avoids the answer and changes the topic. In her sister's eyes, Kainene is someone who does not need anyone who will support her and stand by her; she is a kind of person who stands firmly on the ground.

After finding out about the affair Kainene is hurt but Olanna cannot justify her action.

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Olanna realized that what she felt was relief. Kainene knew. She would no longer have to worry about Kainene's finding out. She was free to feel real remorse. Why did you do it? Kainene sounded frighteningly calm. You're the good one and the favourite and the beauty and the African revolutionary who doesn't like white men, and you simply did not need to fuck him. So why did you? I don't know Kainene, it wasn't something I planned. I am so sorry. It was unforgivable. It was unforgivable, Kainene said and hung up. Olanna put down the phone and felt a sharp cracking inside her. She knew her twin sister well, knew how tightly Kainene held on to hurt." (Adichie 254)

Kainene is unable to forgive, but also to understand why her sister, who does not like white men and is beautiful, would have anything to do with Richard. Olanna is selfish and does not think about the pain which she will cause by her action. She thinks only about the benefits which will this act bring to her, she will achieve some kind of freedom combined with satisfaction. Kainene acts very uniquely when it comes to revenge. She burns Richard's manuscript but does not throw him out, she wants him to stay and fight with the consequences of his action. By doing this, she shows her rage and how deep she is hurt. She knows how much the manuscript *The Basket of Hands* means to Richard. It is the only way to show him that she will stay with him, but at the same time to express her feelings without words. Once again, she shows her ability to have control over the situation, but the day after she finds out, her swollen eyes show more than enough. Within the safety of her walls, she is the only person who witnesses her pain. Even the readers are not allowed to go to her room. What happens and how does she cry her eyes out when she is alone, no one knows. This is another evidence of her being a very powerful character, for not allowing others to celebrate her pain.

After some time, Richard feels a new emotional bond between them. She writes him a note when he goes to London; the note which Richard reads over and over again, believing that Kainene forgives him and is finally emotional which is a characteristic unlike her: "Is love this

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misguided need to have me beside me most of the time? Is love this safety I feel in our silences? Is it this belonging, this completeness?" (Adichie, 150).

When it comes to her sister, she just stops talking to her, until the war begins. The absurdity of war connects two of them. Kainene shows her feelings once again, of course only in front of Richard; she asks him about the moment when he meets Olanna at one of the seminars at the university: "How did she ask about me? She said, How is Kainene? And you said I was well? Yes. She said nothing else about it; he did not expect that she would." (172). With such short question, Kainene finally opens up to the readers and acknowledges that her sister actually means something to her. Up until that moment, she does not show interest in her sister's opinion at all.

Both sister's witness a war scene, which influences the outward perspective. Olanna is first to experience it, and later on, when Kainene experiences it too, the only thing she has in her mind is to share the horrible images with her sister; one of the rare moments, in which Kainene wants to share her emotions with Olanna. The moment when Kainene shares her thoughts with Olanna, they both sit in silence. It seems as if the things that happen on the outside change Kainene within; she becomes softer, "There are some things that are so unforgivable that they make other things easily forgivable." (347).

Such war experience influence not only Kainene's character but also the movement of the narrative. Kainene forgives her sister by using again an indirect way so characteristic of her. Kainene emphasizes the brutality of the events they both witness, finally concluding that people often pay attention to things that are not that important. After some time, Kainene is completely normal in the presence of Richard and Olanna. She is different; it is as if she is happy in her own skin. She does not have so many sarcastic comments and her face is full of expressions.

"He watched Kainene's face carefully for withdrawal, for returning anger, for something. But there was nothing; her laughter softened the angles of her

chin. And the tension he had expected, the weight of memory and regret that would come with seeing Olanna in her presence, were absent." (*Adichie*, 375)

Both sister change in the course of the narrative; they develop different views of themselves but also of others. The changed views help them to connect to each other, and have finally taken the roles they should have from the beginning of the narrative – they are close sisters, "Olanna laughed and noticed that they were both walking at a leisurely pace and that their steps were in harmony, their slippers coated in brown dust." (390).

Adichie utilizes these characters to examine issues of personal autonomy and empowerment in the face of historical and societal limits, demonstrating how women manage and impact their relationships and lives.

#### **2.7.4. Females' Engagement with Political Activism**

Olanna's engagement with political activity has been exceptional. She has spoken out on social media, attended rallies, and even organized events to raise awareness about numerous social and political issues. Her drive and passion for effecting positive change are absolutely inspirational.

Olanna comes to represent women as a nation through a series of life-changing experiences. Kandiyoti describes the psychology behind Olanna's shift as follows:

Women participating in nationalist movements were [...] prone to justify stepping out of their narrowly prescribed roles in the name of patriotism and self-sacrifice for the nation. Their activities, be they civic, charitable or political, could most easily be legitimized as natural extensions of their womanly nature and as a duty rather than a right. (379)

Olanna's Western lifestyle changes as the narrative progresses as she confronts adversity with other Igbo women and is influenced by these women, whose duties are culturally defined by a nationalist view of women. Deniz Kandiyoti explains the overall meaning of this:

On the one hand, nationalist movements invite women to participate more fully in collective life by interpolating them as “national” actors: mothers, educators, workers, and even fighters. On the other hand, they reaffirm the boundaries of culturally acceptable feminine conduct and exert pressure on women to articulate their gender interests within terms of reference set by nationalist discourse. (380)

Through the adversity of war, Olanna embodies the women’s role of “national’ actor[s]” by becoming an adoptive mother, educating small children in the refugee camps about their new country, The Republic of Biafra, working with the other women in the camps to provide food, and fighting for her family’s survival (Jennifer 72).

### **2.7.5. Females’ Business Ventures**

Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* examines the role of women in business during Nigeria's Civil War. Olanna and Kainene, two key characters, display entrepreneurial energy and perseverance while managing several companies. Kainene runs a trade and shipping enterprise, whereas Olanna shows the problems that women encountered in professional and business contexts throughout the conflict.

Kainene and Olanna are educated middle-class Igbo women from postwar Nigeria, the daughters of a prominent "Big Man." Adichie explores their lives both before and during the war, helping readers to comprehend the devastating consequences of civil war and the hardships of battle. Kainene complies to female factory standards and maintains a connection with Richard, whilst Olanna prioritizes school and family (Rackley 10).

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In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, two Nigerian women, Kainene and Olanna, reject traditional Nigerian womanhood and embody the "new women" concept. Kainene lives alone and dates a British man, presenting herself as a politician's mistress. Olanna, on the other hand, lives with Odenigbo for years before marrying him and adopting his child. Despite not belonging to traditional Nigerian womanhood, society accepts this definition during times of peace (10).

During war, the divide between male and female gender performances becomes unclear, as gender performances must be reconfigured to maintain stability and safety. Kainene emerges as a provider, becoming a food supplier for a refugee camp and supervising daily operations. War instills a sense of potential in women through their newfound abilities to provide and rule the familial unit. The women undergo the hardest experiences of their lives, awakening their fight for survival. Olanna becomes filled with rage and decides to dictate her fate within her own terms, allowing her to become an agent of her own well-being. Kainene also risks her life for the wellbeing of others, deviating from the former "sanctioned gender codes" and becoming empowered by their newfound practice of dictating their own fate (10).

Kainene and Olanna, before and during the war. The protagonist, Kainene, is represented as a male daughter in her family "Kainene is not just like a son, she is like two, her father said. He glanced at Kainene and Kainene looked away, as if the pride on his face did not matter" (Adichie 32).

As a business administrator, the head of her own home, the manager of her own contracts with the government and oil companies, and the controller of her relationship with her lover Richard, an emigrant researcher, she is characterised throughout the novel by such masculine traits as those expressed in the aforementioned statement. When Kainene takes the initiative to establish and oversee refugee camps to save the war victims, her leadership abilities become very apparent. She is portrayed in the book as having an imposing masculine height and vigour

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in taking on difficult work, speaking her thoughts, and occasionally smoking like a man. These photographs are put side by side to show her as a superwoman or a woman-man, an image that challenges male authority (Sowmiya & Kumar 85).

*Half of Yellow Sun* is a novel by Adichie that destabilizes patriarchal structures of gender inequalities and economic imbalance in Biafra. The protagonist, Kainene, is a successful businesswoman and economic independent woman who defies patriarchal structures. The novel recreates the binary relationship between the old and the new, with the female characters gaining access to social freedom, gender equality, freedom of expression, and active engagement in societal matters. Olanna, a new Igbo woman, overcomes male-female dominance and conquers female antagonism imposed by patriarchal structure. She also serves as a teacher during the war, providing humanitarian services to Biafran children (Sowmiya, V.B., kumar 86).

In Adichie's *Half of Yellow Sun*, Kainene is the heroine not just for breaking ground, but also for her heroic efforts to win the war and restore Biafran society after the war. She personally donates to Biafra, accepts a contract to fund the war, manages humanitarian logistics, sacrifices her abilities, and seeks innovative ways to help the Biafran people. Her assault exploits metaphorically finish the novel, but her massive responsibilities extend beyond narrative potential, making her a mysterious character. The novel explores the Biafran war stories through a womanist perspective, revealing the untold truth about Biafran female characters and highlighting their significance in human struggles. It exploits race and financial status to marginalize people, portraying conservative societal views that sex determines gender identity. The racially marginalized and rebellious female characters challenge traditional societal norms and societal expectations, demonstrating their superiority despite their unique socio-cultural backgrounds (Sowmiya & kumar 86-87).

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Kainene is the novel's strongest female character. She is capable of handling any scenario in her life. Kainene is the polar opposite of Olanna, since she is more logical while Olanna is more sensitive. They are aloof from one other, their discussions are nearly always formal throughout the novel, until in the end there is a sense that their relationship is starting to evolve and the gap between them steadily disappears. Olanna has a distant relationship with her family. Though she wonders what happened to them and why they are so far from one other; they are strangers living in the same home. Olanna and her father's discourse had a formal tone. Make the talk appear business-like; "Olanna felt a sudden pity for him, for her mother, for herself and Kainene. She wanted to ask why they were all strangers who shared the same last name." (Adichie, 219).

Olanna is shown via Ugwu's eyes. The work emphasizes the importance of both physical appearance and personality in defining real beauty.

Her oval face was smooth like an egg, the lush colour of rain-drenched earth, and her eyes were large and slanted and looked like she was not supposed to be walking and talking like everyone else; she should be in a glass case [...] where people could admire her curvily, fleshy body, where she would be preserved untainted. Her hair was long; each of the braids that hung down to her neck ended in soft fuzz. She smiled easily." (23)

The narrative focuses on the protagonist's connection with Odenigbo. This type of relationship involves a confident guy and a strong woman who is too independent to commit to a man. Olanna fights throughout the story with the one thing that may take away her freedom: marriage. She believes that marriage is superfluous and that two people's love should suffice to cement their relationship.

Olanna, despite their strong relationship, has deep fears about marriage. She refuses to go on a trip to Ibadan with Odenigbo to make peace with her fears and her vulnerability. This leads

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to conflicts between their relationship, as Olanna believes marriage is unnecessary and their perfect relationship is enough. Odenigbo accepts her as she is, and she refuses to marry. She believes her parents' life is not what she wants for herself and that her mother's unfulfilled life is an illusion. She concludes that there is no sincerity or compassion between them, and the idea of marriage moves further away from her.

Olanna undergoes a significant transformation in the novel, transforming from a strong woman to a weaker one due to her love, causing her to question her own strength and self-worth, "she worried again about her future with Odenigbo. She wanted certainty. She longed for a sign, a rainbow, to signify security. Still she was relieved to ease back into her life, their life" (Adichie, 105).

On the other hand, Kainene Ozobia, Olanna's twin sister, is portrayed as a strong, intelligent, and fearless character. Adichie contrasts her with Olanna, who is described as illogically beautiful. Kainene overcomes challenges in a sophisticated and confidential manner, maintaining her femininity while running her father's business. Her father recognizes her brightness and believes her brilliant strategies will help him gain more money.

She'll oversee everything in the east, the factories and our new oil interest. She has always had an excellent eye for business. Kainene is not just like a son, she is like two, her father said. He glanced at Kainene and Kainene look away as if the pride on his face did not matter (Adichie, 31-32)

Kainene is a wonderful leader and successful entrepreneur, but there is a void that cannot be filled by a university degree or running her father's firm. She realizes she cannot compete with her sister's attractiveness and she does it in such a manner that no one, save Richard, understands why she is so far from the rest of the family. He is the only man she allows to see

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her without her disguise. Prior to him, many white guys were simply physically interested in her, but not emotionally.

Both sisters see a combat scenario, influencing their external perception. Olanna is the first to experience it, and when Kainene experiences it, all she can think about is sharing the horrific visions with her sister. This is one of the few instances where Kainene wants to express her sentiments to Olanna. The moment that Kainene shares hers. They share their opinions with Olanna and sit in quiet.

Kainene's attitude and storytelling style are influenced by her military experiences. Kainene forgives her sister in her customary indirect way. Kainene emphasizes the brutality of the events they both encounter, finally culminating people typically pay attention to little matters. Kainene, now changed, continues to battle for the cause. She becomes incredibly intense, "There were tears running down her face. There was something magnificent in her rage"(398).

As the lone character in the story with total decision-making ability, she decides to breach the enemy line and purchase anything with Nigerian money. She is determined to accomplish it, despite her sister and Odenigbo has stated that it is risky to go. Richard is the only person who does not even attempt to oppose her. He made this decision because he knows she has the capacity to make people do anything she wants, "Richard saw the similarity in the curve of their lips, in the shape of their slightly front teeth."(*Adichie*, 403).

Adichie uses these characters to investigate the interconnections of gender, power, and enterprise. Kainene's commercial success questions established gender stereotypes and illustrates the importance of female leadership and economic independence in a volatile historical era. The tale shows how women like Kainene can express themselves and make substantial contributions to their communities and economy despite difficulties.

### 2.9. Female Solidarity and Support Networks in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* explores female solidarity and support networks during the Nigerian Civil War. The novel highlights the complex relationships between Kainene and Olanna, who form a deep bond despite their differences. Women in refugee camps form supportive networks to cope with the war's challenges, sharing resources, providing emotional support, and managing daily life. Domestic helpers, such as Ugwu's sister, also contribute to these networks, offering emotional and practical support to their families. Mutual aid and support are essential for women to navigate the uncertainties of the war and maintain a sense of normalcy and hope. Overall, Adichie's novel highlights the importance of female solidarity and support networks in confronting adversity.

African societies had a strong sense of community, and the individual experience was enhanced by group interaction. Adichie's works highlight instances of women banding together to combat patriarchy or overcome disasters caused by males (Kivai 57).

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Kainene and Olanna, despite their distance, come together during difficult times to assist each other overcome conflict and poverty. Kainene welcomes the sister to Orlu and prepares to stay with Olanna and her family as the conflict rages. Mrs. Muokelu and Olanna share a mutual relationship. Mrs. Muokelu assists Olanna at a difficulty. When Baby becomes ill, she is willing to give up some egg powder for Olanna and her family. She teaches Olanna how to produce soap when it gets scarce. Moreover, Olanna and her mother share a sense of solidarity when they meet at the women parlor, when Mama Olanna tells her daughter about the father's mistress. When the mother tells her daughter about her father's indiscretions with other women, it creates a close bond that may provide consolation to Madam Ozobia. This is what drives Olanna to confront the father and discuss the mother. The discussion resolves an issue that would have otherwise resulted in a household conflict. Mrs. Ozobia's residence contains a salon where ladies gather, fostering sisterhood and female solidarity (58).

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When Olanna is experiencing issues with Odenigbo's mother, she seeks comfort from Edna Whaler. Olanna notices that Edna "cultivated zinnias in her front yard and eventually cultivated a friendship with her" (Adichie 228). She speaks to Olanna and tells her to quit acting that everything is OK when she is having troubles with Odenigbo. She pushes her to seek assistance from someone, even recommending the Priest at St. Vincent de Paul. Edna's story of the man who abandoned her a week before their wedding in Montgomery helps to reduce Olanna's pain.

Olanna seeks guidance from Aunt Ifeka, who shares her own experience with her first marriage to Uncle Mbaezi and her fear of being replaced by another woman. Aunt Ifeka's remarks inspire Olanna, who is facing troubles in her relationship with Odenigbo. Aunt Ifeka has a deep link with Olanna as she is the lady whose breasts Olanna and Kainene sucked after their mother's dried up after they were born. Olanna's mother and Ifeka have a link of caring for others via nursing newborns. Adichie utilizes these experiences to promote the notion of female bonding as a way to transcend the oppression and exploitation that comes with motherhood. Women in Africa contribute to win-the-war efforts by supplying food, sewing, and organizing seminars. These groups empower women by providing knowledge and reducing their suffering during war. Olanna, for example, creates a relationship with Alice, providing her with soap and allowing her to discuss her domestic issues. Womanism emphasizes female bonding and collective action, advocating for collective action to benefit African women. These efforts help overcome unfriendly situations and improve their lives.

African Women have traditionally worked together to challenge dominance and injustice. The scenario of women working together to achieve a shared objective in Adichie's novels is admirable because there is success in numbers. Adichie appears to be encouraging women to band together since there is power in numbers and more possibilities of success.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie beautifully depicts the need of female solidarity and support networks in managing the complexities of war. Adichie

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emphasizes the many ways in which women's solidarity appears via the profound interpersonal relationships between characters like Olanna and Kainene, the practical help women lend each other during times of distress, and the powerful leadership of individuals like Kainene. The novel emphasizes the need of female social networks for survival, empowerment, and resistance in the face of tragedy, rather than simply providing consolation. In doing so, Adichie's book praises women's strength and endurance, providing a stunning monument to the long-lasting influence of female solidarity in times of strife.

Thus, Adichie's portrayal of these networks highlights women's power and endurance during times of adversity. Female solidarity is shown not just as a method of survival, but also as a source of empowerment and strength, emphasizing the critical role that women play in supporting one another during difficult times.

### **Conclusion**

Adichie's female characters serve as progressive voices advocating for reform in society's treatment of women and oppressed groups. Adichie's writing is recognized as a current voice from the fringes that demands careful consideration. concern as African culture grapples with gender, class, ethnic, and other social issues inequalities. It is thus a voice of agency that attempts to challenge the previously established. The repressive masculine hierarchy has structures at both the domestic and national levels.

# ***GENERAL CONCLUSION***

## General Conclusion

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### **General Conclusion:**

This study examines Adichie's novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* through the perspective of postcolonial feminist theories and notions, focusing on the newer elements of third-world females. They are shown not only as repressed and abused victims of patriarchy, colonial heritage, and conflict in this story but also as the prominent ones who raise their voices against institutional oppression. Furthermore, their strategic use of their bodies and behaviors to oppose patriarchy adds a new dimension to this research. To see how the main female characters celebrate their own lives despite the fact that they are not immune to the negative impacts of patriarchy and colonial heritage in interaction offers a new depth to this inquiry under the umbrella of postcolonial feminism.

The other notable feature is the unrestricted feminine bonding between the female characters. Almost all of the female characters experience the same form of patriarchal tyranny, so they can easily sense each other's anguish and joy. The work vividly depicts the twin sisters' love and hate relationship, their intimate tie with their mother, whom they recall repeatedly in their lives, and the idea of motherhood that the women carry within them.

Furthermore it is wonderful to notice how the female characters play vital roles during the time of war in both the war-fields and family. On one side they feel pride of their community and employ their full efforts to fight against the attacks in the grounds of war while on the other side they attempt their best to protect their family members from the severe impacts of war and are worried of them fulfilling their roles either as mothers or sisters or daughters

As a result, this study provides a fresh perspective for people interested in conducting additional research on the powerful attitude of third-world women in various countries. It would be particularly interesting to examine how women meet domineering and oppressive situations

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around them, turning their battles into more powerful ones to assert their own positions and empower themselves.

Finally, this study has achieved a set of objectives in which *Half of a Yellow Sun* is classified as an example of an empowering narrative that describes the impact of the Biafran War on the protagonist's resilience and struggle attitude. Besides this, this study looked into the writer's postmemory as well as her postmemorial work, *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

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## الملخص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة سياسات النوع الاجتماعي والتجربة النسائية في رواية شيماندا نغوزي أديتشي الشهيرة، نصف شمس صفراء وعلى خلفية الحرب الأهلية النيجيرية، تعكس أديتشي صراحةً كيف تخضع الإناث للصراعات الشخصية والاجتماعية والسياسية فضلاً عن التهميش المزدوج داخل النظام الأبوي المتجذر والإرث الاستعماري. ومع ذلك، فإن معاناة هؤلاء الإناث تزودهن بالقوة للثورة ضد القمع المفروض عليهن. تمنح أديتشي بعداً جديداً للرواية وتمنح القوة الهائلة لشخصياتها النسائية التي تستخدم العديد من الأدوات لمقاومة النظام الأبوي والقمع. لذلك، من خلال العدسة النسوية، تدرس هذه الدراسة كيف تصور أديتشي تقاطع النوع الاجتماعي والقوة والهوية، وتكشف عن الطرق التي تواجه بها شخصياتها النسائية الهياكل الأبوية وتقاومها. من خلال تحليل الشخصيات الرئيسية وعلاقاتها، يلقي هذا البحث الضوء على الاستراتيجيات التي تستخدمها النساء لتأكيد وكالتها وصوتها وسط الصراع والقمع.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** سياسة النوع الاجتماعي، تجربة المرأة، التهميش المزدوج، النظام الأبوي، الوكالة.