

## “Osun Honey”: Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* from an African Sexuality Standpoint

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**Abstract.** Diverse critical commentaries have acknowledged the fuss over the pleasures of sex in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In this novel, Adichie strikingly claims notice of sex, consequently shattering readers’ sense of convention through a radical departure from the rhetoric of reticence, indirection or shyness over sex matters – which had been the convention of African literary practice. Very significantly, Adichie succeeds in creating a style that is uniquely hers going by the evidence of her loud and clear erotic scenes, with full exposure of sexual details. Such a sensibility has been explained in the light of Western epistemic viewpoints or condemned, even, as an untoward influence of Western idiosyncrasies. This paper, however, seeks to explore Adichie’s aesthetics from a theory of African eroticism conceptualized as ‘osunality’, and as found in Yoruba divinity. Thus, this paper finds an approach such as this, from indigenous epistemology, relevant to the interpretation of what Adichie does with sex in the novel, especially as it pertains to her radical reconstruction of female sexuality.

**Keywords:** Sexuality, Adichie, Yoruba divinity, African epistemology, eroticism, reticence.

### 1. Introduction

This paper seeks to explore Adichie’s aesthetics from the framework of African sexuality theorized as ‘Osunality’ with the intent to fulfil the call for “an African-centred alternative theory of literary interpretation” (Olaniyan, 2013, p. 80). Similarly, Francis Nyamnjoh (2019) makes a case for scholarship that promotes insight and wisdom grounded in African realities and experiences. Thus, in his discourse on Tutuola’s writings he demands that “the reservoirs of insights and wisdom extant in

the lived experiences of ordinary Africans” should be “tapped and channelled into the lecture halls of universities to refresh minds and configure practice in the interest of more contextually relevant scholarship” (Nyamnjoh, 2019).

As it were, the theme of overt treatment of sex has rather been more associated with Western postmodernist or even modernist tendencies; and there seems to have been little attempt to relate the subject to the knowledge base of African sexual experiences – a fact that may very well, indeed, be linked to the aesthetics dominant in the works of the earlier generations of African writers in the twentieth century. Before the dawn of the twenty-first century, sex was muted in Nigerian literature in line with the “rhetoric of reticence” (Balogun, 1981, p. 22) that has guided taste in African literary practice. However, in the emerging Nigerian prose fiction of the twenty-first century, many writers claim notice of sex in a manner that is much unlike their literary forebears. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a canonical representation of this new aesthetics, which is best demonstrated in her *Half of a Yellow Sun*. She involves virtually all her characters in sex, exploring their sex lives with an explicitness that speaks of a style that is exclusively and uniquely hers in that same way that decay and filth imagery typifies Ayi Kwei Armah’s style in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Adichie succeeds in creating a style that is uniquely hers by the evidence of her loud and clear erotic scenes, with full exposure of sexual details. The way our olfactory sense is affected by filth in Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* compares with the erotic impact on our senses in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

### 2. Breaking the Rhetoric of Reticence

Indeed, erotic visibility stands out as a distinguishing feature of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and this has attracted diverse critical commentaries. Ehijele Femi Eromosele sums Adichie's engagement with sex and sexuality as follows:

*And all through, what comes across from the works of Adichie is a concern for sexual matters; whether writing about the crippling effects of religious fanaticism and dictatorial parenting or the harrowing experiences of the Nigerian-Biafran civil war or other unconnected issues, the reader's attention is drawn to sex and the sexuality of her characters.* (Eromosele, 2013, p. 110)

Tanure Ojaide (2011, on-line), in his essay "Examining Canonisation in Modern African Literature", credits Adichie's engagement with sex to the non-inhibiting "liberal environments" in which she finds herself as a foreign-based writer, unlike Nigerian writers based at home. On his part, Akin Olaniyi (2013, p. 77) also sees the fuss on sex in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* as an indication of an untoward Western influence, ascribable to Adichie's exposure to Western 'liberalised' culture, which has taken its toll on her depiction of sex and sexuality. Renowned critics, notably, Charles Nnolim and Dan Izevbaye, have made some very remarkable comments on the new aesthetics of sex in contemporary Nigerian literature. Hence, thinking that the new twenty-first century writers, canonically represented by Adichie, are interested in the trivialities of city life and sexual promiscuity, Nnolim refers to them as the "fleshly school" whose "focus is now women, wine, club, fun" (Onukaogu & Onyerionwu, 2009, p.100). Then Izevbaye opines that "the present generation has acquired something a bit less momentous" unlike the Soyinkas and the Achebes who "have historical importance" by dealing with "big issues that have resonances beyond the nation" (Onukaogu & Onyerionwu, 2009, p.101).

In Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, there is no doubt a "demonstration of almost extreme sexual and sensual liberties" (Onukaogu and Onyerionwu, 2010, p. 174). The novel is definitely among the third generation Nigerian fiction, which Kanchana Ugbabe says has made "forays into the 'touchy' subjects that incur the wrath of the guardians of morality" being that in African literature sex is a touchy subject whereby, "We skirt around it, imply it, suggest it and pass over it" (Ugbabe, 2013, p.16 ). Ugbabe then goes on to support Verrissimo's defence of the sex scenes and the language in which they are presented in Jude Dibia's *Unbridled*, and Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (in her article "Characterizing Sex in Two Nigerian Novels: Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Jude Dibia's *Unbridled* of *ANA Review*,

2007), agreeing with Verrissimo's praise for the authors for giving sex "'roundness and life' by which she means that the sexual act is not isolated for titillation but becomes part of achieving the authors' overall purpose" (Ugbabe, 2013, p. 18).

In the novel, Adichie breaks the 'rhetoric of reticence' and shatters the existing reader convention to liberate sex and treat it with openness. She is uninhibited in her disclosure and explicitness, exposing all without recourse to euphemism and figurative turn-around. In it all, Adichie underlines that the pleasures of sex can also be the "proper stuff of fiction" (Woolf, 2010, on-line).

Adichie, an authentic, authoritative representative voice of her generation, has not only defended Ekwensi's interest in the city and sexuality but has also justified her interest in the subject of sex: "Perhaps as part of my reaction to the gross hypocrisy around sexuality in our country, I am interested in writing about sex in the most upfront and demystifying way" (Adichie, 2007, on-line). In a feature entitled "Sex in the City", Adichie praises Ekwensi and expresses her delight in his works contrary to the unfavourable criticism that had trailed his works. She then goes on to say that "Ekwensi's engagement with sexuality is refreshing, though, because it lacks the pursed-lip restraint of much of the Nigerian fiction of his time and, even more remarkable, has female characters acting as sexual initiators" (2007, on-line). With such an approval for an Ekwensian sensibility towards sexuality, it will not be out of place to describe Adichie and some other Nigerian writers of the twenty-first century fiction as Ekwensi's disciples. Allwell Abalogu Onukaogu and Ezechi Onyerionwu (2010, p. 180) rightly say that on the issue of sexuality "a closer camaraderie can be traced between Adichie and ...Ekwensi" than with Achebe.

### 3. 'Osunality': Theorizing Eroticism from an African Standpoint

In her essay entitled "'Osunality' (or African eroticism)", Nkiru Nzegwu (2011) presents sexuality in the indigenous African cultural space of Yoruba divinity that serves as an important framework for interpreting Adichie's engagement with sexuality in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Nzegwu, in the essay, contends that African eroticism got eroded or reshaped by Christianity and Islam, colonial modernity, and capitalist ideology that resulted in Westernization and "adoption of a universal and uniform meaning of eroticism" based on Western intellectual tradition. Accordingly, eroticism comes from the Greek word

“Eros”, meaning sexual desire or libidinal passion. The name of the Greek male god of love and sexual desire was Eros who dethroned his mother Aphrodite, the goddess of love, beauty and sexual rapture to become the personification of love, creative power and harmony. The implication, therefore, is that the purveyor of sexuality, sexual desire and fertility and the force that propels individuals to actualize their wholeness is represented as male. This conception of eroticism reinforces the patriarchal ideology of Greek, Roman, pre-modern and modern European worlds and also “underwrites theoretical, literary and fictional narratives of sexuality from a phallogocentric position”, which privileges man’s sexual needs with a sexual scheme that turns women into “objects of pleasure rather than subjects who ought to have pleasure” (Nzegwu, 2011, pp. 253- 254).

Nzegwu in ‘osunality’ theory provides an alternative to the Western knowledge base, explaining African eroticism before the impact of Western hegemonic influence to reveal how African cultures set up their sexual schemes, which made sexual pleasure and fulfilment normal for both women and men so that “sensuality was neither pornographic nor the basis of women’s subjugation and domination as was the case in Europe” (2011, p. 254). She, therefore, theorizes about African eroticism based on the conception of human sexuality and of female sexuality found in Yoruba religion in which Osun is the female divinity in whose charge the Creator-God places all the good things on earth. Osun deity stands for “female sexual knowledge and agency”: and it is also “the epitome of sensuality and sexual pleasure.”

It becomes clear that the issue of women’s rights to sexual enjoyment is very central to Osun sexuality contrary to European/Christian/Muslim notions of sexuality. Women who represent Osun divinity neither hide nor restrain their sexuality, but rather display it unselfconsciously. Highly sexual and sensual, Osun symbolizes a sexuality-fertility paradigm, “a pronatalist, female-centred, life-transforming energy that courses through and animates life.” Life is driven by Osun force which “outlines a sequential energy flow from desire, arousal, copulation, pleasure, fulfilment, conception, birth and growth” with “the principle of pleasure at the heart of copulation”. Metaphorically referred to as “Osun’s honey”, it legitimizes the normality of sexual pleasure and the erotic”. Osunality, thus, unites sexual pleasure with fertility and underlines sexual pleasure as an invaluable aspect of human existence the absence of which results in “suspended animation or stasis” (Nzegwu, 2011, p. 258). This is so crucial that discourse on sexuality recognizes the

importance of teaching sexual socialization to both men and women. Osunality education lies within the women’s sphere, and parts of its curriculum require young women to learn about the osun force, entailing such things as: the value of coital pleasures, its critical place in life and its importance as “a seat of women’s power”, the critical stages and techniques of coitus, the art of pleasuring and gaining proficiency in things like “sexual cues, ways of issuing initiations for sex, and the use and value of sexual enhancers” (Nzegwu, 2011, p. 260). In her conclusion, Nzegwu underscores that “sexuality is far too important an area of human life to be left in the realm of ignorance, patriarchal forces and market-driven economics” (2011, p. 266).

#### 4. Adichie’s Sex Aesthetics and Osunality

Very importantly, osunality provides a key to understanding what Adichie is doing with sex, and especially as it pertains to the radical reconstruction of female sexuality, which goes to corroborate Osofisan’s view that the new Nigerian writers’ liberty with sex has precedence in our tradition and is traceable to ancient and indigenous roots. Referring to a collection of short stories by Lord Weaver and Olukunmi Egbelade, Osofisan says that deities themselves were active protagonists in sexual activities, pointing out that “the great mother of all orisha, Yemoja herself, led a romantic life even more turbulent than that of Jagua” (Osofisan, 2008, on-line).

In the light of the foregoing, one may say that what Olaniyan sees as the “‘bug’ of Westernization” (2013, p. 73) or the loss of innocence marked by the liberties with the sex/taboo subject in contemporary Nigerian fiction may not be totally strange to traditional African reality. Osofisan, therefore, rightly states that “our traditional societies were frequently unequivocal in the matter of sex and that our societies never put a taboo on the open discussion of it even in the presence of minors” (2008, on-line). With the benefit of this insight, we may think of the highly orgasmic art of the Makosa music-dance from the Republic of Cameroun. We may also recall Mongo Beti’s satirical yarn aimed at religious sexual suppression or sexual repression in his two novels, *Mission to Kala* and *The Poor Christ of Bomba*. Most certainly, these instances do not speak of African sexual innocence!

Adichie’s sexual aesthetics accords with Osun sexuality that valorizes the place of sexual force in human life. In tandem with this, sex is treated as an important subject: it is visibly centred and given

verbal and physical expression in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Sex is featured as an indispensable aspect of being human, in good as well as in bad times. In the novel, sex is proliferated amidst the tragic story of Biafra. As one may say, in the midst of gloom and agony, characters have sex. And for good or for bad, sex thrives as a constant human practice.

The key characters who are also key players in the Biafran tragedy are portrayed in their sexual realities. Indeed, one of the sex scenes between Kainene and Richard is described as their blissful “ritual since the war started, the only reason he [Richard] was grateful for the war” (pp. 307-308). In Odenigbo’s house at Nsukka, the “serious” political discourse on race, colonialism, the nation and the Biafran cause, all bothering on the public domain, interfaces with the robust sexual activities of the characters within the domicile. Ugwu the house boy, after enjoying the orgasmic sound of sex between his master and mistress in the main house, retires to his boys quarters room to have “quick thrusts” of sex with Chinyere, Dr Okeke’s house girl, on her frequent nightly visits.

At the point of the war coming into Port Harcourt, a certain young woman’s fancy becomes how to have carnal knowledge of a white man, hence she appeals to Richard: “Come to my flat. I never do it with *oyinbo* man before, but I want try everything now, oh!” (p. 172) Sex in this instance evokes the disorder and fear of the impending war, which is getting people worked up to a crazy frenzy. In the face of anarchic violence, sex portrays a sense of shallowness or purposelessness that drives life to the pursuit of momentary, passing pleasures of the flesh, with the *carpe diem* motif of enjoying the moment because death or dissolution is afoot. Sex here, therefore, serves to reinforce a sense of social disintegration and anarchy that is let loose in the society. It is within such a context we must place a number of sex acts, such as Pastor Ambrose’s voyeurism, Father Marcel’s demand for sex from Urenwa before giving her the crayfish meant for the refugees of which she is one, the white mercenary’s sex orgies with young girls (p. 323), and Ojukwu’s abusive powers expressed in his affairs with the wife of his subject (p. 313).

Sex is also featured as a human necessity useful for releasing tension or as a source of comfort and sensual joy. Thus, in their impoverished refugee two-room home, Olanna and Odenigbo enjoy sex even at the very heart of the Biafran crisis. They make up for their material deprivations with the pleasure of sex:

She turned her back and leaned on the wall and guided him into her.... She knew she should lower her

voice because of Ugwu and Baby in the next room and yet she had no control over her moans, over the raw primal pleasure she felt in wave after wave that ended with both of them leaning against the wall, gasping and giggling. (p. 282)

Characters are fully explored through sex, and not merely sketched as rudimentary souls; their humanity is shown through their sex life, revealing their inner consciousness. Take the example of Richard. All of Richard’s obsessions with Biafra, his jealousy, and inferiority complex are tied to erotic love. And his life disintegrates as soon as this love is terminated with Kainene’s disappearance as part of the war casualty. Hitherto, at the height of the war, he had enjoyed robust sex, being the only joy to clutch at as a relief from the war tragedy:

*They would go out to the veranda.... When she climbed astride, he would hold her hips and stare up at the night sky, and for those moments, be sure of the meaning of bliss. It was their new ritual since the war started, the only reason he was grateful for the war.* (pp. 307-308)

There are different dimensions of sex featured in the novels. However, we shall just briefly look at how sex serves as a device for revealing the humanity or otherwise of characters, revealing their consciousness and essential nature as sexual beings. Jumoke Verissimo (2016, on-line) observes that although Adichie has written a story on Biafra, the fact cannot be denied that “she has portrayed sex as something that should be fussed about, because it is integral in the humanizing and the dehumanizing of people during the war”. Accordingly, the story of the major characters – Ugwu, the thirteen year old houseboy, the pairs of Odenigbo /Olanna, and Richard/ Kainene – with the intimate details of their sex life is fused into the narrative. Verissimo further adds that these characters’ sex life is built in “as an integral action in the progress of the story, with phenomenal presentation of realistic sex”. In Odenigbo’s university home at Nsukka, sex is always hovering around both in the master’s and houseboy’s spaces. There is so much sex between Odenigbo and Olanna that makes it very easily identifiable with moaning, that is an auditory trope or a characteristic voice for sensual delight and excitation. Ugwu’s ears are often riveted to the master’s bedroom door for this voice, from which he derives proximate pleasure. Thus, in a sense, sex is like an inmate whose voice arrests Ugwu’s attention and interest. And at night he engages in his own act with Chinyere, Dr Okeke’s maid at the boy’s quarters during her frequent night visits. Pages after pages depict graphic scenes of the sex act and romantic affection between the lovers.

Indeed there are far too many erotic scenes, graphically and provocatively presented as to make one agree with Osofisan (2008, on-line) about the “near-pornographic” texture of the text as the following scene reveals:

*In her mouth, he was swollen stiff. The faint ache in her lower jaw, the pressure of his widespread hands on her head, excited her....*

*They undressed silently ... and then clinging together in bed.... She marvelled at the comforting compactness of his weight on top of her. (p. 246)*

Sex becomes a tool with which to gauge the emotional attachment and intimacy between couples. The love between Odenigbo and Olanna takes the central place and is accordingly matched with the characterization of their sex in terms of details and frequency of focus.

Ugwu, as young as thirteen, is sexually conscious and active. He is drawn to an erotic book entitled *Concise Couples Handbook*. His ears are ever keen for the voice of sex from his master’s room, and he often has sex with Chinyere, which lacks the love and emotional attachment of his master’s with his mistress Olanna. Thus, Ugwu will have “hasty thrusts” with Chinyere at the cover of darkness but thereafter in the day there remains nothing between them:

...and he imagined that she was Nnesinachi and that the taut legs encircling him were Nnesinachi’s. ... Perhaps she imagined that he was someone else too... When he saw her the next day across the hedge, hanging out clothes on the line, she said ‘Ugwu’ and nothing else; she did not smile (pp. 126-127).

We cannot miss the pervasive presence of sex in the text: master, mistress, houseboy and maid are delineated in their sexual realities. Ugwu’s teenage consciousness is filled with the sensual, whether he is thinking of Anulika his sister, Olanna, or Nnesinachi his childhood attraction, or Eberechi – all these women are evocative of sex to him. He fantasizes about Nnesinachi’s breasts, or imagines his brother-in-law, Onyeka, having sex with his wife Anulika, his sister (p. 119), or thinks of Olanna’s moans, and of Eberechi’s “perfectly rounded buttocks.” As the war approaches and people leave Nsukka, Ugwu is obsessed with going for Anulika’s marriage in order to use the opportunity to realize his dream of having sex with Nnesinachi, and thereafter laments his failure to actualize the desire. Indeed, most of the time Ugwu is obsessed with sex. Ugwu’s physical, mental and emotional consciousness is, to a very great extent, defined by sex, such that his growth and

development from naivety to maturity can be monitored through sex.

While finding the Osunality framework profitable in making sense of Adichie’s sex aesthetics, it must be however conceded that Adichie may not have been aware of an African indigenous paradigm such as osunality when she set out to liberate and fuss over the pleasures of sex in her novel, and it is, indeed, more likely that she may have been influenced by the traditions of the West rather than by any knowledge of African sexuality model, being what Olaniyan (2013, p. 72) has in mind when he laments the “untoward consequences of Western idiosyncrasies” in recent Nigerian literature and recommends that there should be “a sustained investigation of African epistemology” to find “an indigenous system of thought credible enough for the interpretation of Nigerian texts”. Adichie is, therefore, rather more likely to have been influenced by the postmodern and globalized age reality, where nothing – not even sex – is hidden, where everything is allowed and exposed, and where we live in a sex-crazy society.

##### 5. Osun Honey and Women’s Rights to Sexual Pleasure

In Adichie’s *Half*, the subject of claiming sex for females looms very large. The female characters are given to enjoying as much sex as do the men. For what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Kainene’s liberated sexuality is evidenced in the many white men she had dated in England. In her on-going relationship with Richard, she is the active dominating partner. And it is to the credit of her erotic prowess that Richard, who has initially found it hard to perform in bed, is roused to the joy of sex. Prior to Olanna’s arrival at Nsukka, Lara Adebayo had shown sexual interest in Odenigbo. Olanna, on her part, makes no shy pretences about sex. She enthusiastically demands it from Odenigbo. The act gives her much pleasure as is obvious from the instances of moaning, being the sound of mating joy and excitement from her very frequent sex with Odenigbo. Besides, she makes sexual advances at Richard, practically luring him to sex in order to relieve herself of the pains from Odenigbo’s treachery.

Based on the established conventions of sexuality, many readers of contemporary Nigerian fiction have expressed their shock that female characters make demands of sexual kind, thereby breaking the restraint, reserve, passivity and shame towards sex associated with women. Olaniyan (2013, p. 77) thus remarks: “.... Adichie’s female characters are

presented as either sex-maniacs or sex-starved people.... Most of her female characters do the unusual by luring, cajoling or thrusting themselves at men in an unprecedented manner.”

Contrary to the Western notion of sexuality that has gained acceptance in various parts of the world, and, indeed, from Osunality standpoint, Adichie has re-written female sexuality in a way that has come to shock and shatter readers’ sense of convention. In the novel, she challenges the sex ethos that enthrones male-privileged erotic pleasure, to reconstruct a liberated female sexuality that centres female characters and credits them with positivity towards sex, which very much aligns with Osunality framework. Women are, therefore, accorded the rights to pleasurable eroticism. We find here a liberated female sexuality that is in consonance with Osun sexuality in contrast with the Christian and Islamic conception of sexuality that inhibits orgasmic pleasure for women. It is particularly significant that more than affirming the normality of the erotic and sexual pleasure in life, Osun sexuality centres female sexual enjoyment evident in the fact that Osun divinity is personified as female and typified by women’s open and unselfconscious demonstration of their sexuality (Nzegwu, 2011, pp. 258-259). More strikingly still, Nzegwu further posits that Osunality positively affirms women’s sexuality, assigning agency to the vagina as an important organ imaged as “the devouring vagina” (p. 263). Arising from this, copulation is likened to food consumption during which the penis is eaten, thereby assigning to the penis a measure of passivity, unlike its active dominant function in the Western epistemological frame. The perception of sexual intercourse as an enveloping act cedes power to the vagina as the devourer, eater, or consumer which pulls the seed from the penis for its nourishment, and this goes to affirm that “African cultures created a positive role for the vagina without castrating male libido” (Nzegwu, 2011, p. 265). In all, Adichie delineates female characters that are aware of their sexual desire and initiate the move to satisfy it. There is a striking resemblance between what she is doing and what obtains in Osun sexuality. Sex is claimed as empowering for the woman, who in the image of the “devouring vagina” (Nzegwu, 2011, p. 263) appropriates the benefits of nourishment from the penis. Through this revolutionary temper, Adichie seeks to establish the normalcy of female libido. Against the background of a male-centred sex scheme, she, therefore, channels her creative efforts towards re-writing female sexuality to awaken readers to the fact that women have as much sensual desire as do the men. Thus, she liberates sex for

women by countering the cultural and social attitudes that depict sex as something not to be enjoyed by women. With the benefit of this insight one can better appreciate her shocking projection of female libido in the novel. Her liberation of female sexuality, therefore, aligns with a homespun traditional framework.

The active-passive binary of sexuality in tune with traditional Western conception is undermined through an assertion of female sexual desire. There is a truthful acknowledgement of woman’s sexual desire and her eagerness to satisfy it, very much like Osun sexuality.

Still on the point of enthusiastic acknowledgement of female erotic desire, we recall the incident of the sex starved Alice who uses the occasion of Olanna’s absence to relieve her fleshly needs with Odenigbo (p. 353). Alice, a war victim at the refugee settlement, is characterized as sexually starved and frustrated. Her private, emotional reality connects with the national violence. She suffers from the double treachery of an army colonel who deceives her into marrying him even when he already has a wife and family and that of the Biafran military that fails to warn the residents of Enugu to flee until the city falls into the enemy’s hold in which she is a major loser. At the refugee quarters, Alice and Olanna fashion something of a friendship, relieving the time with conversations based on their contrasting sexual experiences in which they laugh and share “a vulgar and delicious female bond”(p. 336). Alice’s husband had been incompetent in bed unlike Odenigbo, Olanna’s husband. Thus, in the following dialogue we can see the motivation for Alice’s interest in Odenigbo with whom she satisfies her starved desire behind Olanna’s back:

‘And he could not even do.... He would jump on top of me, moan oh-oh-oh like a goat, and that was it.’ She raised her finger. ‘With something this small... Men are hopeless!’ ‘No, not all of them. My husband knows how to do, and with something like this.’ Olanna raised a clenched fist. (pp. 335-336)

In fact, there are various instances of females who recognize their sexual needs and go all out to initiate it: Chinyere, Dr Okeke’s housegirl, sneaks into Ugwu’s room at night to satisfy her sexual desire. And then again is the earlier cited story of a young woman who approaches Richard for sex, expressing a desire to enjoy a sexual experience with “Oyinbo” (p. 177).

The question then is, should women enjoy sex? Should they initiate sex to their male partner contrary to traditional codes for female passivity or shyness and shame? Adichie, without mincing words, thinks women should enjoy sex, much in tune with the pleasure principle in copulation and in line with the unconscious display of sexuality typified in Osun divinity. Nwokocha (2020, on-line) underscores this point when she states that “*Half of a Yellow Sun* forms a counter-narrative to critical approaches that view female sexual agency as something inherently Western.”

## 6. Conclusion

In spite of all the negative criticism of Adichie’s undisguised exploration of sex in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, one would conclude that Adichie has come to re-define contemporary Nigerian literary ethos and to underline in the idiom of Virginia Woolf that “everything is the proper stuff of fiction”, including the private sexual experiences of characters; for, after all, literature is about the totality of human experiences.

The Osunality theory has offered us a profitable tool for making sense of Adichie’s liberties with sex, particularly as it pertains to the delineation of female characters and radical reconstruction of female sexuality. Thus, this study has come to underline that Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* in its unhidden, unrestrained sexuality finds correspondence in indigenous African sexual practices. Adichie’s aesthetics of sex can be understood from the underpinning of Osunality framework, being “an indigenous system of thought credible enough for the interpretation of Nigerian texts” (Olaniyan, 2013, p. 72).

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