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# Male subjugation and alternative masculinity in selected Nigerian novels

**Abiodun Olofinsao**
Department of English
Faculty of Humanities
Elizade University
Ilara-mokin
Ondo state Nigeria

**Abstract:**

*In Nigeria, scholarly attentions on gender issues in literature remain lopsided, with more focus on the plight of women. As a result, little attentions are paid to male subjugation in scholarly effort, while few researches on men still continue to portray men as perpetuators of violence. Hence, only a few studies in Nigeria have actually portrayed the complex social realities of men in Nigerian literature, it is against this background that this study examines the subjugation of male characters and alternative masculinities in Chimamanda Adichie, Jude Dibia and Isidore Okpe who's novels to interrogate how men contend with the social expectations of what masculinity entails. It depicted the realities of a changing masculinity as opposed to the socially constructed ideologies of being a man. Using Butler's theory of Gender Performativity, the study examines the fluidity of identities and the cross examination of different sex along with its characteristics. It discusses the subject of lesbianism, bisexuality and gay.*

**Keywords:** Subjugation, Masculinity, Sexuality, Feminism, Marginalized, Subordinated, Gender

## Introduction

Specifically, the study examines various forms of alternative masculinities, and the factors that hinder such masculine characters from conforming to the hegemonic idealized masculinity in the selected texts of Isidore Okpe who's*The Last Duty* (1976)[1], Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006)[2] and Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows* (2005)[3]. Having done this, it explores the experience of the alternative masculinities as a reflection of the socio-political situation in the country. The plight of these changing masculinities is also identified and analysed in relation to the harsh treatment of homosexually in Nigeria and the degrading position of the Biafran people represented by some characters in the texts. This study identifies the harsh treatment on some male characters who are subjugated by fellow men and it equally presents the

[1]Okpewho, I. (1976). The Last Duty. Essex: Longman house.
[2]Adichie, N. C. (2006). Half of a Yellow Sun. Nigeria: Kachifo Limited.
[3]Dibia, J. (2005). Walking With Shadow. Nigeria: Jalaa Writers Collective.

alternative masculinities, their constraint, and harsh experience in relation to the socio-political situation in Nigeria. The study calls for more attention to the neglect, but necessary subject of alternation masculinities in Nigeria scholarship and the need to see it as a new form of social reality in Modern Nigeria.

According to Cornwall (1997),[4] gender refers to the socially constructed relations between women and men. Similarly, Esplen and Jolly (2006)[5] defines gender as the array of socially constructed roles and relationships, personally traits, attitudes, behaviours, values relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Although there is a relationship between `Sex' and 'Gender', it is important to understand that they are two distinct concepts entirely as sex relates to the biological category of being male or female while gender denotes masculinity and femininity.

While advantageous efforts are made to challenge gender inequality, elevate and promote the feminine gender that are largely portrayed as victims and oppressed in literature, there have been little or no attention directed towards the masculine gender and the construct of balancing gender. Although, masculinity is generally defined as traits, roles, qualities, or characteristics considered typical or appropriate for a man, many sociologists of masculinity like Pascoe, Connell, Uchendu[6] have defined masculinity from different point of views. These varieties of definition have given rise to complexities in defining masculinity.

This new sociologist of masculinity approached the understanding of masculinity in a model of "multiple masculinities" (Cornell 1995)[7]; it deviates from masculinity as male role. Cornell, 1995 proposes the model of "multiple masculinities to see masculinity as variations. According to her, there are four various models: hegemonic, complicit, marginalised, and subordinated. While hegemonic masculinity which is at the top of the hierarchy supports gender inequality, complicit masculinity refers to men who do not enact traits of hegemonic masculinity, but rather benefit from it. Subordinated masculinity relates to men who exhibit sexual qualities that are the opposite of those values of hegemonic masculinity, primarily gay men. However, marginalized masculinity describes men who are not well positioned in terms of class or race, but men who at all cost find ways to put them out of the picture. This is the case of Unoka in *Things Fall Apart*,[8] who is shamed for shunning war matters and physical conquests. This is why in the real world, such men especially gays even

[4]Cornwall, A. (1997). Men, Masculinity and Gender in Development: Gender Development, ISSN 1364-9221, Vol. 5, No. 2: June, 1997.
[5]Emily, E. & Jolly, S. (2006). Gender and Sex, a Sample of Definitions. Brighton: University of Sussex.
[6]Uchendu, E. (2007). "Masculinity and Nigerian Youths". *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2: 279-297.
[7]Cornnell, R. W. &Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. Gender & Society, 19, 829-859.
[8]Achebe, C. (1958). *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann

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in places and countries where it is accepted still receive countless death threats from both homophobic men and women because the deficient man is looked down by men and also mocked by women as not being masculine. It is against this background that the study explores the representation of such alternative masculinities in Nigerian prose texts.

**Statement of the Problem**

There have been a growing number of scholarly works addressing and challenging gender inequality and also seeking to elevate the involvement and participation of women in Nigerian literature; however, the male counterpart have been left out; their dilemmas and complexities experienced are being shunned. Over time, men have served as the background in which feminist theorist and female writers analyze their conversation in Nigerian literature; in the examination analysis of the characters of men in scholarly works, men have always been viewed as the problem or obstacle standing in the way of change. This is backed up by the representation of women as victimized and oppressed as a result of the power held by their male counterpart. The questions are: What are the various forms of alternative masculinity exhibited by the male characters in the selected texts? What are the factors that hinder the male characters from conforming to hegemonic idealized form of masculinity? What are the experiences unleashed on men who do not conform to the hegemonic idealized form of masculinity? Are the alternative masculinities a metaphorical tool that reflects the social political situation in the country?

The critical analysis of these texts will be influenced by Judith Butler's theory of Gender Performativity.[9] Gender Performativity is an idea propounded by Judith Butler in 1988 as an attempt to delineate her perception of Queer Theory. She is of the view that gender is like an act that has been practised like a script just as actors practise script through repetitions; gender to her is an expression of what someone does rather than what someone is. This is why a person is either in a condition of doing "straightness" or doing "queerness"[10].

**Masculinity in Africa**

Ouzane and Morrell (2005)[11] explain masculinities as a field which has continued to be neglected in Africa. While three directional steps are discussed in understanding the subject of masculinities in Africa, Africa is identified as the poorest continent whose history is traced from her experiences of slave trade, colonialism alongside developments that have hindered the successes and wealth of her society.Not much has been discussed on the subject of masculinity in displaying the counter portrayal of African men alongside contending

[9]Buttler, J. (1988). *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*. Maryland: John Hopkins University Press.
[10] Ibid.,
[11]Ouzane, L. & Morell, R. (2005). *African Masculinities*. South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

complexities. The subject of feminism contends between Western and African feminism, and Morrell and Ouzgane (2005) points out that the late 1980 and 1990 marks the critique of Western feminism in Nigeria as being placing emphasis on the rift between men and women and also the portrayal of women as victims rather than the portrayal of African women experiences and achievements. This led to the mention of African feminism with connections to Womanism, by African American writer Alice Walker and third world feminist who viewed the movement as one which celebrates the achievements of the African women and also captured their collective experiences characterized by collaboration, negotiation and compromise. While African feminist works focuses on sisterhood, womanhood and motherhood, there is no equivalent discussion of manhood and fatherhood, however, the works of Cornwall and White (2000) is said to have acknowledged the importance and understanding of the role of masculinity. Furthermore, the works of (Haig-Brown 1992; Sillitoe et al. 2002) as quoted in Ologunorisa (2017)[12] discuss the contending factors of masculinity such as the establishment of global imperatives like capital accumulation and political instability as indigenous knowledge that contends with masculinity.

Ouzane and Morrell (2005)[13] further highlight the neglect of men and how it seeks to correct such imbalance. It discusses how the shape of masculinity varies in relation to other men in respect to age, ethnicity, and even race. The position of the diversity of African men resides in infinite variations as not all residents of Africa are Black, Christian, Muslim, Hindu and traditional believers, as there are in fact white settlers and Indian labourers among others. Bob Connell is said to have pointed out that all men have access to the patriarchal dividend, the power that being a man gives them to choose to exercise power over women. This in fact extends to power control of other men as well. African men are said to grabble with the legacy of colonialism and impact of globalization which although may have positively provided access to new technologies and 'new global citizenship', in reality it has created a gap between men to segregate the rich from the poor especially between developing and developed countries. This weight of globalization contends with men in areas of poverty.

Another factor men have to contend with is their complex positioning as `other' as identified by Ouzane and Morrell (2005) thereby identifying four sections in which masculinity can be understood namely: Interpreting Masculinities, Representing Masculinities, Constructing Masculinities, and Contesting Masculinities. I will briefly discuss interpreting and representing masculinities to project Ouzane and Morrell (2005) identifications.[14]

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[12]Ologunorisa, O. (2017) Representation of Alternative Masculinities in Selected Nigerian Prose Texts. An Unpublished Research Paper by EU.
[13]Ouzane, L. & Morell, R. (2005). *African Masculinities*. South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press
[14]Ouzane, L. & Morell, R. (2005). African Masculinities. South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Interpreting Masculinities discusses the flexible nature of masculinity which can be understood and interpreted from different view points with attention to the notion of power. It further focuses on the limitation of Western feminism in adequately understanding the concept of gender in the African context. The issue of body politics in relation to white masculine insecurity and anxiety is further explored in relation to the biological aspect of the human body using Arthur F. Saint-Aubin's *A Grammar of Black Masculinity: A Body of Science* to discuss the natural biological endowment of a black male body. Interpreting Masculinities further takes into consideration the subject of homosexuality and how it is viewed in the African Film Industry using Mohamed Camara controversial film, Dakan to discuss how black 'gayism' is perceived and the reaction of his audiences towards a film considered "taboo". Attention is also given to Frank A. Salmone's final essay on how the Hausa ideal masculinity is disrupted and challenged by the "yandaudu" or rather men who act, and talk like women and also have sexual relationship with each other. Although this study addresses the concept of masculinity from the biological aspect and queer aspect; it is however limiting in its field as it uses mostly film studies rather than literary materials in its analysis.

In *Representing Masculinities*, it recognizes masculinity as a fictional construction learnt from postcolonial criticism and applied to postcolonial locations. In line with this, it explores the representation of masculinity in different settings most especially Africa, and also investigates the impact of western colonialism on masculinity. Representing Masculinities uses Drum, a magazine produced for Africans readers in South Africa after World War II to trace the development of masculinity, growth and role of manhood from being the breadwinner to being an independent self-made individual. It does not fail to explore various magazines, literatures among others to discuss the subject of racism and the 'other' comes into play to depict the relationship between manhood, masculinity and the concept of citizenship and women and this is in relation to what Bob Connell called a "crisis moment"[15] which shifts male behaviour and the norms inscribed within masculinity.

**Masculinity and its Challenges**

Just as Lahoucine Ouzane and Robert Morrell (2005)[16] and Abasi Kiyimba (2010)[17] had noted that the concept of masculinity cannot in most cases be discussed in isolation of femininity, Daouda Loum also confirms this in his article: *The Ambivalence of Masculinity in Gorgui Dieng's A Leap out of the Dark*.

[15] Connell, R. W. (1995*). Masculinities*. Berkeley: Unuiversity of California Press.
[16]Ouzane, L. & Morell, R. (2005). African Masculinities. South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
[17]Kiyimba, A. (2010). "Men and Power: Masculinity in the Folktales and Proverbs of the Baganda".In H. N. Mugambi, & T. J. Allan (Eds.), Masculinities in African Literary and Cultural Texts. (pp. 35-49). Oxfordshire: Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited.

Daouda[18] goes on to highlight that in *A Leap out of the Dark*, masculinity is tackled from the sphere of tradition and modernity. He goes on to identify that often times, masculinity have been discussed from the biological point of view of sex featuring the idea of the phallus, virility, physique, and also generative power. However, in relation to the man's social status, his physical attributes and sex attributed roles are becoming the by-product of gender construction from a masculine perspective in the interaction between men and women. Thus, Dauoda interprets the concept of fatherhood in relation to different country and city. Before discussing the concept of masculinity, Daouda gives a background to Gorgui Dieng and his writings. He signifies it as the first novel written in English by a Senegalese scholar. This enables him convey his message worldwide because of the widespread of English globally. While Dieng's work is not just enriched in content, it also flourishes in terms of form because of the writer's attempt to break away from the European literary conventions. Just as Ahmadou Kouruoma's *The Suns of Independence* had captured the African oral tradition, Dieng's work also slides into areas language interchanging between English and Wolof words, praise songs, tales, adages and other oral techniques. The novel also distinguishes its self in areas of stylistics by depicting a tight relationship between African and European cultures. While Diengs novel attains the status of a social novel whose subject matter explores daily elements of polygamy, bleaching, poverty and also hardship of the rural life, the novel also gives an introspective and imaginative view of an autobiographical narrative which explores accounts of childhood experiences. As a novel that explores postmodernist theory, it concentrates on sexual politics and explores certain areas like gender, sex and culture like other literatures evolved out of feminist movements.

In defining Masculinity, Daouda[19] is convinced that "masculinity can be conceived of as the conditioning or nurturing of a man by civilization, the structuring of the mind to inculcate in him those characteristics considered manly". He further goes on to present American constructivists like Julie Rivkin, Michael Ryan, Julia Kristeva etc. who share the same view and derive their inspiration from the theories of Marxism and Post Structuralism and for whom masculinity as gender identification is a construction of civilization. In discussing sex and sexuality as a ferment of Masculinity, Daouda identifies sex as the first fundamental symptom of masculinity acquired by nature not by nurture. He further goes on to the use of simile, metaphor and figurative expressions in defining Moodu's masculine character. Here, an excerpt of *A Leap out of the Dark*, 'You are a man like others, aren't you? Are their dangling things heavier than yours?' to question Moodu's masculinity and depict that there isn't any intermediary sex as it is either you are a man or a woman. While

[18]Daouda, L. (2010). "The Ambivalience of Masculinity in GorguiDieng's A Leap out of the Dark". In H. N. Mugambi, & T. J. Allan (Eds.), Masculinities in African Literary and Cultural Texts. (pp. 270-287). Oxfordshire: Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited.
[19]Daouda, L. (2010). "The Ambivalience of Masculinity in GorguiDieng's A Leap out of the Dark". In H. N. Mugambi, & T. J. Allan (Eds.), Masculinities in African Literary and Cultural Texts. (pp. 270-287). Oxfordshire: Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited.

masculinity is said to be born of virility, strength, manhood, the penis becomes a symbol of manhood socially valued. In discussing sex and sexuality as a ferment of masculinity, the concept of sex is identified to be one of the three pillars of marriage followed by providing food and shelter. This idea holds that masculinity keeps a marriage through sexual intercourse, and in defending this position, Emecheta's Adah (1983), as quoted by Ologunorisa (2017),[20] speaks in Francis words that "no marriage succeeds without good sex life. As far as he was concerned, marriage was sex and lots of it, nothing more". By contradicting such ideology, Daouda also spells out the implication of a bad sex life in a marriage by using Hester Prynne in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* (1850)[21] to depict Hester's engagement in adulterous act in other to satisfy her sexual needs as a result of her husband long absence. This further leads to the issue of emigration which spells out a cause for the high number of divorce cases and adultery in Senegal whereby many emigrants stay abroad for years leaving their wives behind. Although owning a penis and engaging in sexual intercourse is associated with masculinity, it is not enough to proclaim masculinity as one must show evidences of procreation, otherwise such man is referred to as impotent. Impotency makes a man loose his wife, money and honour and this is why an impotent man is compared to bull who doesn't have erection, while a bull is slaughtered, the man is stigmatized. As a barometer of masculinity, the concept of polygamy or bigamy is seen as a mark of bravery, and financial buoyancy and courage as seen in Okonkwo's life in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.[22] As long as a man takes full control in successfully managing his household, such man is said to bestow masculinity and also seen as a .living proof of courage and industry. Men who marry only one wife are considered weaklings resulting to a decline in their masculinity just as the case of Moodu.

The gendered construction of masculine traits, describes the constructs of gender identities from a tender age in boys where they firstly begin to sleep in their fathers hut, unlike the girls who sleep in their mothers hut, the boys distances themselves from their mother as a way of raising his sexual consciousness and is eventually saved from developing Oedipus Complex as in the realm of psycho analysis. In discussing the economic factor in the fabrication of masculinities, not owing a house or piece of land is considered un-masculine and a form of dependency. Relating masculinity with economics, a man who cannot provide for his family is considered a misfortune; in order to be a man, he is expected to own properties and materials especially in the urban area as this is an assessment of his masculinity. When a man dies, his masculinity is further measured in the number of properties he leaves for the inheritance of his sons. The accumulation of wealth is said to subject one to be called Abrahamic patriarch who controls all things in his aboard. While self-control is expected to be a trait in men, women are said to lack it. The evil effect of masculinity is spelt out to be an alarming cause of embezzlement, in a bid to

[20]Ologunorisa, O. (2017) Representation of Alternative Masculinities in Selected Nigerian Prose Texts. An Unpublished Research Paper by EU.
[21]Hawthorne, N. (2007). *The Scarlet Letter*. New York: Spark Notes.
[22]Achebe, C. (1958). *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann

gauged in term of the amount of money they own, they discard moral traits in order to flaunt their wives and luxuries. This bid to be measured in relation to wealth also forces a lot of men specially to get ill gotten money. This therefore depicts a gradual deviation of the traditional measurement of masculinity in terms of physical, intellectual, psychological traits to a more determined materialistic one. In conclusion, although masculinity affords men certain privileges and power, it subjects them to carry enormous burden in so far it imposes social and economic constraints towards their wives which in turn becomes a privilege for them.

**Alternative Masculinity: An Overview**

Masculinities which refer to the traits and qualities considered appropriate for a man is defined by as a "simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices on bodily experience, personality and culture Connell (2005).[23] Although hegemonic masculinity which is a kind of masculinities concerns itself with traits of strength, violence, prestige, suppression of emotion and homophobia, other variant of multiple masculinities which have emerged in relation to alternative masculinities in areas of literature, music, art and so on Alternative masculinity, therefore covers a variant of men who are oppositions to hegemonic masculinity or do not conform to the ideologies or traits considered to be masculine. This could be as a result of voluntary or involuntary decisions or circumstances affecting the male individual. Factors such as sexuality, class, race etc also have influence on alternative masculinity. Taylor Martin Houston (2012)[24] considers it a dynamic field which allow men to be creative and socially active in ways regarded feminine or un-masculine. Having identified R.W. Connell's contribution to the studies of masculinities, her recognized types includes: hegemonic, marginalized, subordinate and complicit. Complicit masculinity describes men who benefits from hegemonic masculinity but do not enact it. Connell views it as masculinities constructed in ways that realise the patriarchal divided without the tension or risk of being the frontline troops of patriarchy.

Marginalized masculinities refer to a form of masculinity which benefits from hegemonic masculinity, but is unable to fully affirm masculinity due to certain constraints such as race, disability. This is identified with relationship among men that result as class and race intersect with gender. Marginalized masculinity therefore describes men who may be positioned powerfully in terms of gender, but not in terms of class, race or ethnicity. Whereas, subordinated masculinity is form of masculinity that is established with

[23]Cornnell, R. W. &Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). *Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept.* Gender & Society, 19, 829-859.
[24]Taylor, M. (2012). *The Homosocial Construction of Alternative Masculinities: Men in Idie Rock Bands*. The Journal of Men's Studies. E-ISSN/1933-0251, Vol. 20. No. 2: Spring 2012.

emotional men, or men who behave in feminine ways. Ologunorisa (2017)[25]. Connell views them as one often conflated with femininity; she describes them as men who are oppressed by definitions of hegemonic masculinity, primarily gay men, and when held up against hegemonic masculinity as the ideal, subordinate masculinities serve as the inferior "Other".

**An Analysis of Alternative Masculinity in Okpewho's*The Last Duty* and Adichie's*Half of a Yellow sun*.**

**Marginalized Masculinity**

Some characters are analysed to establish the presence of marginalized masculinity as a brand of alternative masculinity in the selected texts of Okpe who's *The Last Duty* and Adichie's *Half of a Yellow sun*.

**Odibo**

Odibo is one of the major characters in the novel. He is described as a man who is crippled in one arm, he is sluggish, dumb because he hardly talks, poor and ugly. As a character in the novel, he could not fully affirm his masculinity due to his physical deformity which is employed by Chief Toje to physically and psychologically oppress Odibo. That is man to man subjugation. This makes him to hate Aku who is sometimes one of the reasons for the Chief Toje's constant insults at him.. He tries everything within his power never to avoid the mockery of women having been oppressed by another man. He says about his relationship with his uncle that "I know I am nothing. I know I have nothing. But why does he keep making me feel so sad." (*The Last Duty*; p. 25) This equally explains why he is marginalized not just as a result of his disability, but his inability to take good care of himself because he could not fend for himself, he depends on his uncle. But surprisingly, Odibo possesses what his uncle doesn't have and what money cannot purchase in the market- a fully developed masculinity. He satisfies Aku on the bed far better than his uncle. No wonder Aku could not hesitate to look beyond his disabilities and she considers him a man after having unexpected sex with him. She claims receiving a welcoming state of mind when she clings to his body, quite different from Chief Toje who could not satisfy her emotionally. She says "I held on for a long while to the body of Odibo, imbibing fully hot billy-goat smell that revived in me a feeling I had not known for years." (*The Last Duty*, p. 159)[26]

**Rukeme**

He is also depicted as a marginalized character due to financial constraints and this is why he does not hesitate to be used by Chief Toje as an instrument to

[25]Ologunorisa, O. (2017) *Representation of Alternative Masculinities in Selected Nigerian Prose Texts*. An Unpublished Research Paper by EU.
[26]Okpewho, I. (1976). *The Last Duty*. Essex: Longman house.

satisfying his personal grudge. He is paid by Chief Toje to fabricate lies against Oshievere leading to his imprisonment.[27]

**Oshevire**

Oshevire is the husband of Aku who is unlawfully accused and imprisoned by his business rival, Chief Toje. His wife Aku is from another town- Sambia and that is why he is marginalized by ethinicity. Toje does not believe that a man with inter-tribal marriage could do better than him in business. Oshevire spends three good years in prison while his wife faces hardship and exploitations from the hegemonic masculinity around who take advantage of her for their own selfish interest. Also, his wife's deplorable situation of being active sexually with other men makes him to become a laughing stock to other men who openly express their regrets of not having carnal knowledge of his wife. His masculinity becomes weakened in that situation. He could not openly challenge or quarry his wife for her immoral behavior while he was in prison. Rather, he chooses to leave the town for his rivals and persecutors but unfortunately, he dies in the hand of another man when he is shot and killed by a soldier on his way out of Zonda.

**Chief Toje Onovwakpo**

He is a rich rubber business merchant who is responsible for the illegal imprisonment of Oshevire. Despite his full masculinity in the areas of wealth and class which can be classified as hegemonic masculinity but his masculinity is deficient in the area of sexual potency. Manhood, sexuality and virility are key components in masculinity. Possessing manhood does not qualify one to be a man if such is inactive sexually and cannot procreate. Toje tries to reaffirm his manliness by having sexual affairs with another man's wife in exchange for money, food and clothing. He blames his wife and his prostitute for his impotency. "… I can never know now wether it should be traced to my wife or that reckless adventure with the slut at Iddu" (*The Last Duty*, p. 5)[28] He adds thereafter that "I was careful, I didn't want to make it sound as though I was accusing her of defiling me, of ruining my manhood" (*The Last Duty*, p. 25)[29] He asserts, in his bid to claim masculinity, that:

> For I felt that MukuroOshevire stood in my way. And that again is why I have not hesitate to seek carnal pleasure with his forlorn wife now that I feel my manhood is flawed, my potency questioned…. In the interest of a reassertion of my manhood as well as pride of place, if this town should continue to keep that treasure of notice which has been won for it by men like me. And what town is there that can

[27] Ibid.,
[28] Okpewho, I. (1976). *The Last Duty*. Essex: Longman house.
[29] Ibid.,

> survive if it becomes known that one of its most pre-eminent citizens has no claims to manhood? (*The Last Duty*, p. 5)[30]

He decides to oppress other men in the novel and to boasts of his masculinity because he lacks what others have and taking advantage of his established trust in the community. The sexual activities with Aku leads to rift and physical battle between him and Odibo and for that is another proof of affirming masculinity between the men.

**Odenigbo (*Half of a Yellow Sun*)**

As a university lecturer tagged a revolutionary man, Odenigbo is categorized as a marginalized character due to ethnicity which constructs him as a rebel and thereby restricts him to a war zone. He alongside other characters is subjected to the harsh realities of the Biafran war. The war brings about famine to himself and his family; he is rendered financially incapable. In regard to this, he becomes deficient in catering and protecting his family which is opposed to the hegemonic masculinity.

In addition, the character of Odenigbo becomes a symbol of the marginalized Igbo man, who still has to contend for his position in this present Nigeria where the war of ethnicity and religion still prevails. Having experienced a war that took place in the 1960's, he faced with the harsh realities of being displaced of his intellectual knowledge and title, home, comfort, properties and families. He becomes a victim of the war in which his mum is killed and he is also subject to animalistic duties by soldiers who consider him alongside his people rebels. Odenigbo therefore becomes an image of the Igbo man, who is caught between the web of religious and ethnic tension where although he is in nature empowered in different spheres of life, his tribe becomes an issue. This gives evidence to the critical subject of ethnicity and religion in Nigeria as concepts that require the utmost caution which can either be used as an instrument of promoting peace or disunity.

**Richard *(Half of a Yellow Sun*)**

Although, Richard is a white Englishman, he is however categorized as a marginalized character due to his profession of being a writer. Subsequent times in the novel, he has been unable to fit in during his outings with Suzan. Even when Kainene brings him to dine with her parents, after learning of what he does and if he had any rich relative in Nigeria, which he replies No, he is overlooked. As a result of his profession which causes him to also be disadvantaged in class status, one would analyze him as a marginalized individual:

> I am a writer, he said. A writer? I see, Chief Ozobia said...
> ...Hmmm...Do you have any family doing business in Nigeria?

[30] Ibid,.

> No, I 'm afraid not. Chief Ozobia smiled and looked away. (*Half of a Yellow Sun*, p. 85-86)[31]

The above excerpt gives a description of one of the reactions he gets when he discloses his profession and his interest in Nigerian Culture and Art. An overview of the novel would reflect the economic situation in Nigeria where the subject of having money alongside power is important. Being a writer, irrespective of the race becomes a profession that is not fully associated with monetary value, as against the Chiefs and top governmental officials who aim at obtaining more money and focusing on business expansions rather than stories that concern out culture, traditions, and heritage.

**Subordinated Masculinity**

This type of masculinity presents the opposite features to hegemonic masculinity as it reveals men who are highly emotional and male characters who behave in feminine ways which can be likened to homosexuality. Some examples will be taken from Dibia's *Walking With Shadows*.[32]

**Ebele/Adrian Njoku**

Ebele is considered as an ignorant character trying to fit into the society that neglected him. He lives a solitary life with no little or no attention while growing up.

> Their mother treated Chinedu like a king… Chika enjoyed being lifted in the air… all Adrian could do was watch from his corner with an uneasy smile on his face, not really wanting to be tossed up in the air like Chika because he was afraid of heights, but wanting some kind of recognition and acceptance. (*Walking With Shadows*, p. 52-53)[33]

He has what can be referred to as bitter experience because it is like he is not wanted in the society. For instance, he is seen as an outcast in this quote:

> Ebele had always seemed to be the outcast. He was a lonely child … As a child he had asked himself time after time why his elder brother was different. Why was he so timid when asked a question? Why did he cry so easily? (*Walking With Shadows.* P. 154)[34]

Ebele's childhood was a complete mystery to his family, he is being ill-treated by the family, perhaps to make him hegemonic in nature having noticed some

[31]Adichie, N. C. (2006). *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Nigeria: Kachifo Limited.
[32]Dibia, J. (2005). *Walking With Shadow*. Nigeria: Jalaa Writers Collective.
[33] Ibid,.
[34] Ibid.,

feminine traits in him. Despite that, he is unaware of his sexuality and thereby exhibits traits considered homosexual. An instance is when he is aroused by a hilarious gay character in a romantic comedy. Chinedu comes in at that moment and feels amused at Adrian when he says: "isn't that guy a faggot? Chinedu's face looked disgusted and his tone conveyed as much…" (P. 61)[35]The word "fag" used there is considered derogatory to imply disdain towards anything that disrupts that system of hegemonic masculinity as it has the tendency to subdue other variants of masculinity especially subordinated masculinity. Ebele's transition to Adrian is a transition from ignorance to discovery and the self-discovery is an establishment of the full recognition of his sexuality.

Ebele's transition is equally another stage of bondage in his life as he tries to keep his sexuality a secret and pretends to be heterosexual making himself belief that he has become heterosexual. He is constantly tormented psychologically and physically by this suppressed or pretended understanding.

> Every day in a gay man's life, he is constantly hurt by the people he loves the most. His friends. And even society. We live with the rejection every day and that hurts. We have to grin and bear it constantly so that other people are comfortable at our expense. … He smiled when he had to smile, played when he had to play, and he had become good at it. He had even fooled himself into believing that he was finally like the other normal heterosexual men…. (Pp. 33; 79-80)[36]

The third stage of Ebele is his transition back from Adrian to Ebele which he explores shortly before getting married and that exploration finally becomes his exploitation. It is a stage of acceptance of his personality and a decision to shun walking in pretense and shadow. In conclusion, Adrian identifies as Ebele at the airport on his way to London which is after his so-called reborn or rebirth. He decides to go ahead through difficulties and challenges, even shame, by reconciling with his family, quitting his job and relocating to London where he feels things will be better and will be accepted by exploiting various options for his newly redefined life.

> He knew that boy. He recognized him. He used to be that boy … He was no longer that scared lonely child who did not understand why his father would not throw him up in the air and catch him … he knew who he was now and he had found the acceptance he had once craved within himself. (P. 293)[37]

[35]Dibia, J. (2005). *Walking With Shadow*. Nigeria: Jalaa Writers Collective.
[36] Ibid.,
[37]Dibia, J. (2005). *Walking With Shadow*. Nigeria: Jalaa Writers Collective.

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**Femi and Abdul**

A couple, Femi and Abdul try to hide their sexuality because they are gay characters but at last they desist from that and thereby remaining as the only gay couple in the novel through regaining their identity and freedom. In fact, Abdul, with all boldness, informs his mother of his sexuality which she admits she already knew thereby gaining his family's support and approval. The couple creates brotherhood support to Adrian during his trying moment. Despite their stand, they still suffer humiliation from the society.

> But if I were to hold hands with Femi in public, na another story be dat one … This doesn't mean I should stoop to their level by advertising my sexuality. I don't need their validation or approval, Adrian…. Abdul unlike Adrian had long set himself of the truth, and he even admits this. After that, I felt free." (Pp. 28, 30)[38]

**Rotimi**

Another character, as an example of subordinated masculinity, who hides under the camouflage of heterosexual masculinity in marriage is Rotimi. He tries to disguise or suppress that part of himself. It can even be seen that this Rotimi can be considered as bisexual rather that homosexual because he confesses that he is attracted to both male and female personalities. He says: "Sir, Rotimi said, I like women. A lot but, Rotimi continued, I have been with a man before. (P. 206, 301).[39]Rotimi could be likened to individuals who engage in homosexual activities but deny that part of them because of their state of confusion. He tells Adrian that: Ï have this friend who works at the bank … He is gay…it happened one night with him. I don't know why we did it, but whatever… But I'm not gay". (P. 207)[40]

We conclude subordinated masculinity with the words of Ebele when he says that:

> People will always talk and gossip … I don't go about advertising the fact that I'm 'queer. I don't expect the average heterosexual man to rub his sexuality in my face, so I don't expect, he expects me to rub mine in his … but I refuse to be hypocrite when it comes to these matters …. It's on the billboards, the televisions. Radio, everywhere and no one objects, not least the gay folks. (P. 28)[41]

[38] Ibid.,
[39] Ibid
[40] Ibid.,
[41]Dibia, J. (2005). *Walking With Shadow*. Nigeria: Jalaa Writers Collective.

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**Failed Masculinities**

This refers to male individuals who do not conform to the hegemonic form of masculinity by virtue of failing to bring up their off springs or individuals in ways that denotes hegemony. Adrian's father in *Walking with Shadows* is depicted to be characterized under failed masculinities due to his inability beyond his power to prevent Adrian from becoming a homosexual. This is why his health fails on hearing of the news about his son's sexuality.

**The Experiences of the Marginalized Masculinities**

It is important to understand that the experiences and realities of the subordinated masculinities are quite different from the marginalized masculinities. Unlike the subordinated characters in *Walking with Shadows* who receive backlash from the society as a result of their sexuality, homosexuality to exact, the marginalized characters, though benefit from the hegemonic society are faced with issues resulting from their class, ethnicity, economy, deformity, religion and even sexuality in the case of virility or being unable to engage in sexual act or procreate. Having analyzed briefly Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty* and Chimamanda Adichie's*Half of a Yellow Sun*, certain male characters like Chief Toje, Odibo, Odenigbo, Oshievere, Ugwu and many others fall in such category as a result of certain constraint.

**Victims of War and the Marginalization of the Subverted in the Selected Texts**

Marginalized masculinities are constrained by class, wealth, manhood, deformity, occupation, ethnicity and many other factors. A brief evaluation of the Isidore's *The Last Duty* and Chimamanda's*Half of a Yellow Sun* would depict the adaptation of the theme of war that existed between the Biafran Republic and Nigeria. In light of this, many male characters in the novels are disadvantaged resulting from ethnicity and other effects of war.

Oshievere becomes a victim of the war due to his wife's ethnicity as a Simbian and because of this, Chief Toje takes advantage of this opportunity by framing him for collaborating with rebels thereby putting him behind bars. As a marginalized character, he experiences some psychological trauma in the prison where he is brutally inflicted by soldiers. He is made to understand the chronicles of the prison and he does not hesitate to make Agbeyegbe, an impatient young man who takes things easy and survive the way he and the rest did for the past three years. As a result of his imprisonment, he experiences a form of indirect exploitation. Due to his absence, arrest, and inability to protect and fend for is family, his family becomes unsafe in their community and Aku, his wife becomes sexually exploited by the same man that falsely accuses him as a rebel. To this extent, one can realize the oppression of men by other men, especially by the hegemonic men who try to assert and maintain power, not just on women but also on men. Just like Oshievere who is a fully established family man who owns a successful rubber business, the character of Odenigbo in *Half*

*of a Yellow Sun* becomes marginalized having being a Professor of Mathematics at Nsukka. As a result of his ethnicity of being Igbo, he alongside is family and friends becomes disadvantaged. He becomes a victim of the war who is rendered handicapped as his mother is killed during the war, unable to have saved her; he becomes sober and experiences an emotional breakdown which prompts him to take to drinking:

> I 'm fine, Nkem, he said. But he no longer went into the interior with the Agitator Corps, no longer returned with the lit-up eyes. Instead, he went to Tanzania Bar every day and came back with a taciturn set to his mouth. (*Half of a Yellow Sun*, p. 391)[42]

His being marginalized does not only bring along the experiences of losing his loved ones, but also a physical and mental abuse on him. Even after the war, he is still a victim of the war who is brutalized by soldiers, made fun of as results of the Biafra defeat and a reason of having an identity as Igbo: “When Odenigbo climbed out, the officer slapped his face, so violently, that Odenigbo fell against the car... You are not grateful that we didn't kill all of you? Come on carry those wood planks quickly, two at a time” (*Half of a Yellow Sun*, p. 501).[43] This reveals the brutish and savage attitude of the Nigerian soldiers who create a distinction between the people by labeling them as civilians and also subjecting them to physical torture. Along with Odenigbo, another man is also being • made to lay on the coal tar and beaten on his back and buttocks for reasons known to them.

Just as Femi Osofisan highlights in one of his poems “Women of Owu: End of the War”, he says "A war only ends when another war begins"[44], and in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the new war is the aftermath, the war of recovering. The war never ends, the inhumanity goes on and on causing different damages to the people, changing the fate of man, and this is reflected in the novel as it subjects Odenigbo and his family to live in constant fear as they are still being harassed by soldiers who come to raid their house and even eat their foods. The aftermath of the war stripes Odenigbo of his possession and that of Olanna as they arrive to meet a fully looted house upon their arrival at Nsukka.

Ugwu is also faced to experiences the inhumanity of the war which renders him marginalized due to his ethnicity. Having being bundled up and forced into the army, presumed dead, but is later found alive, he is forced to live with the torment of having to rape a girl. It is however, ironical that Ugwu’s sister is also raped during the war. "It haunted him, filled him with shame, it made him think about the girl in the bar, her pinched face and the hate in her eyes as she lay her back on the dirty floor " (*Half of a Yellow Sun*, p. 477).[45]

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[42]Adichie, N. C. (2006). *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Nigeria: Kachifo Limited.
[43]Adichie, N. C. (2006). *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Nigeria: Kachifo Limited.
[44]Osofisan, F. (2006). *Women of Owu*. Nigeria: University Press Plc.
[45]Adichie, N. C. (2006). *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Nigeria: Kachifo Limited.

The war causes a lot of effect on Odenigbo, Richard and also Ugwu as well as other characters in the novel. Richard, the English man becomes a victim who loses the love of his life, Kainene who goes missing and is never found in the novel. Odengibo is also faced with the task of consoling Olanna, Kainene's twin sister who goes missing during the war. The war creates a chain that bonds various characters of the novel to the brutality it can offer.

**Anxiety and Psychological Trauma in the Selected Texts**.

A careful evaluation of hegemonic masculinity would perceive traits of dominance, power, strength, bravery, wealth, class and many others; however, above all is the possession of what makes a man, the manhood and the ability to perform and procreate. Having possessed traits of hegemonic masculinities, the character of Chief Toje, though hegemonic in nature becomes marginalized as a result of his in ability to perform with his manhood. In a bid to still cling to his dominancy and hide his weakness, he consequently oppresses Odibo and attempts severally to take advantage of Aku's vulnerability to seek restoration for his deserted manhood which is now, but a flab of flesh.

Because of his fear that he may be perceived as being weak, he does not hesitate to influence the decisions of Major Ali in putting an effort to keep Oshievere for so long in prison. The concept of manhood brings along respect, and what Chief Toje experiences after its loos is the fear of people knowing his secret of being ineffective and the mockery and shame that would follow afterwards. "And what town is there that can survive if it becomes known that one of its most pre-eminent citizens has no claims to manhood?" (*The Last Duty*, p.5)[46]

It would be unfair to exclude the character of Oghenovo, the son of Oshievere in this analysis of a marginalized. Because of the deprived position of his parents, he becomes marginalized and experiences conflicts within himself. While he is being constantly lied to about the arrest of his father, Onome, his friends uses the imprisonment of his father to insult and abuse him, he even goes as far as calling Oghenovo's father a thief. "He said it was a lie that my father did not buy me any clothes, because he was in prison, and that the soldiers put him in prison because he stole something that belonged to them..." (*The Last Duty*, p. 14).[47] The writer tries to reveal Oghenovo struggle to redeem his father's image from Onome. "I am going to tell Onome that my gather is a good man" (*The Last Duty*, p.15).[48]

Subsequent chapters in the novel gives light to Oghenovo, either sneaking out or attempting to sneak out to show some of his new clothing's to Onome and convince him of the father's absence as a result of his journey to Iddu. Oghenovo therefore becomes a character who suffers the lack of a fatherly figure in his life. Even he meets with his father; he seems like a stranger to him, and he expresses

[46]Okpewho, I. (1976). *The Last Duty*. Essex: Longman house.
[47] Ibid.,
[48] Ibid.,

his hatred towards him for the pain he causes his mother. "I don't like that man, how can he be my father when he makes my mother cry and now, she won't talk to me I will not tell Onome about him anymore" (*The Last Duty*, p.234).[49]

Oghenovo becomes a victim of circumstance who suffers from the reflection of the societal injustice melted on his parents. At the end of the novel, Oghenovo narrates his ordeal in the hands of his father who ties up his hands and feet and hangs him upside down swearing to cut off his head. The writer also uses Oghenovo as a character to tell of the death of his father who is brutally murdered by soldiers on their way out of Zonda after they had been declared unfit to live among the community.

Odibo on the other hand becomes a man who is constantly oppressed by Chief. As a result, he questions his creation and position in life. Subsequent chapters in the novel reveals that he is constantly rejecting himself and is filled with low self-esteem that he tries as much as possible to avoid Aku and other women in order to prevent getting mocked for his deformity: "What use is this awkward mass of body, he said, if you cannot help yourself? And you have no mind. No sense. Nothing. All you have is a huge body. And that is no use to anyone. No use at all, not even to yourself. Utterly useless..." (*The Last Duty*, p. 60)[50] Asa result of his deformity, Odibo becomes unable to get a job which forces him to subject himself to the constant abuse of Chief Toje.

> How much does it take to be a man, besides knowing that someone takes good and healthy notice of your manhood, and you can come and receive the fresh, beautiful morning air full in my face without fearing that some other man would take you to task for it? (*The Last Duty*, p. 179)[51]

However, the concept of manhood is revealed to be the first liberating key of man in which Odibo feels liberated and fully masculine when he sleeps with Aku. His possession of what Chief Toje lacks puts him in a position where he begins to make plans of leaving Toje to find work on his own. Odibo becomes a representation of the subordinated masculinities who are taken advantaged of because of their deformity; although, Odibo walks very hard in assisting with the provision of food during the war, his hard work is not recognized as a result of the overshadowing aura of his deformity.

**The Concept of Alternative Masculinities as a Reflection of Socio-Political Realities in Nigeria.**

A cross examination of the novels reveals the setting of Nigeria which is characterized with war. While *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *The Last Duty* capture the effect of the Biafra war, *Walking with Shadows* depicts the war against

[49]Okpewho, I. (1976). *The Last Duty*. Essex: Longman house.
[50] Ibid.,
[51] Ibid.,

homosexuality. A common trait in the novels reveals the unceasing brutality of the Nigerian Army Soldiers who exert power on innocent civilians. Literature is viewed as the mirror of life and the society, and the writers of these novels have not failed to give a vivid description of the socio-political situation in Nigeria in which the Nigerian soldiers sexually abuse women, and even subject the citizens to physical torture. Even a peak into the military regime of Nigeria gives evidence to the characteristics of coup de tact and brutish exercise of power. Is it not hypocritical to stigmatize and subject people (accused) to a state of degradation, emotional torment, oppression and exile as a result of their sexuality when in fact the accuser commits the same sin in his abode or even a greater sin? Is it not ironical to watch the law enforcing embodies break a law which they swore to keep? Is it not ironical that the true essence of marriage is rather now a sham? Or that the same society that upholds religion and the doctrine of love, tolerance and forgiveness does otherwise?

If we begin to answer these questions, we would realise the in-depth message of .lude Dibia's novel, and how he tries to give a vivid reflection of the socio-political situation in Nigeria which shuns homosexuality. Once guilty of this, such a person is to be imprisoned for fourteen years. As a result of the hegemonic nature of the Nigerian society which only supports heterosexuality accompanied with polygamy, the image of a homosexual man is that of a second class citizen. This feeling backed up by a fourteen years imprisonment law instils fear in the heart of those engaging in such act. Just like the governmental and important individuals who are gays and lesbians who hide under the pretext of heterosexual marriage. With careful evaluation of this, one would begin to question the motives behind marriages and even the number of undercover homosexuals in a country which denies the existence of this nature in its domain when it knows full well of the possible number of closet homosexuals.

For fear of facing the same fate of the unlucky homosexuals, or being perceived as unmanly, these `hegemonic' men do not hesitate to take laws into their hands in order to suppress that part of them. Rather than fighting against socio-political issues that ravage the economy and political situation of the country, they concern "themselves with biological traits exhibited by individuals without their will."[52] As stated earlier, the experiences and realities of various kinds of Alternative Masculinities are shared differently. The socio-political setting in *Half of a Yellow Sun* andeven *The Last Duty* gives evidence to previous political upheavals that had once taken place in Nigeria which claimed a lot of lives and properties, rendered various victims poor and subjected men and also women to physical and sexual assault. As a depiction of our hegemonic society, the writers of these novels do not fail to make revelation of Ojukwu's role in imprisoning the husband of the woman he.is sleeping with: "The only saboteurs we have are the ones Ojukwu invented so he can lock up his opponents and the

[52]Ologunorisa, O. (2017) *Representation of Alternative Masculinities in Selected Nigerian Prose Texts*. An Unpublished Research Paper by EU.

men whose wives he wants...0jukwu is having an affair with the man's wife and has just had the man arrested for nothing. (*Half of a Yellow Sun*, p. 391)[53]

This is not different from what Chief Toje in *The Last Duty* did to his opponent, Oshievere while sexually exploiting his wife. One would also question the purpose of these wars and realise that they are means employed by political leaders to settle probably their personal disputes. Recent resemblances are the USA -Afghanistan war and Russian- Ukraine war. Just like the gods in Ola Rotimi's*The Gods are not to Blame* and Osofisan's*Women of Owu*, who are the dictators of our destinies, these political leaders become the dictators of our lives who benefit from the war and cause damages, ignite and stay behind encouraging the 'prospect of war'[54]. The writers of the novels do not hesitate to reveal the main victims of the war who are the women; they suffer physical, emotional and sexual abuse and trauma from both the hegemonic and marginalized masculinities.

## Conclusion

The position of the Alternative Masculinities remains, one that would continue to exist in the society because as long as they exist, they help replenish the dominating power of the hegemonic society. Just as the rich in Sola Owonibi's*Homeless Not Hopeless*[55] cannot do without the existence of the poor, the hegemonic masculinities cannot do without the existence of the Alternatives as these alternatives becomes kind of a yardstick for them to lash out their power. Also, in a kind of way, many men are in fact openly or secretly alternative in nature.

[53]Adichie, N. C. (2006). *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Nigeria: Kachifo Limited.
[54]Buttler, J. (1988). *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*. Maryland: John Hopkins University Press.
[55] Sola Owonibi, (2015) *Homeless not Hopeless* Retrievedon 05/05/2023 fromhttps://africanpoemarchives.blogspot.com/2015/06/homeless-not-helpless-by-sole-owonibi.html