

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE THEME PATTERNS IN SELECTED EXTRACTS  
FROM ADICHIE'S HALF OF A YELLOW SUN: A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL  
APPROACH**

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## 1. Introduction and Critical Literature Review

Linguistics is the science which studies language to see what language is and how it functions. Language is, then, the main concern of such a scientific domain. While ordinary people can define language as a means of communication made of signs and symbols, linguists (especially those familiar with Halliday's SFL) will refer to it as a systematic resource for expressing appropriate meanings in context (Halliday & Hasan, 1985/1989, and Eggins, 2004). It follows from this that people use language (written or spoken) to construct meanings depending on their needs and these meanings can be studied, within the field of SFL, along with three different (but complementary) labels. These are experiential, interpersonal, and textual meanings or metafunctions. (Halliday, 1985, Eggins, 1994, and Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

The present paper focuses on the analysis of an aspect (Theme) of textual meaning in three selected extracts from Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In actual fact, the grammar of textual meaning (the grammar of Theme) has mainly to do with the thematic structure and the cohesive property of text. In other words, textual meaning/metafunction helps to organize experiential and interpersonal meanings into a linear and totally coherent block. It is clear from the foregoing that the textual metafunction embodies the textual property which contributes to the weaving together of the two prior functions to create text. Textual metafunction is, thus, a function internal to language and is concerned with the creation of text. In this vein, Halliday (1978) says that it is through this function (textual) that language makes links with itself and with the situation; and discourse becomes possible, because the speaker/narrator/writer can produce a text and the listener/reader can recognize one (p.107).

The present theory offers the possibility to describe and analyse the structural configuration of clauses or a text (spoken or written) from a systemic-functional perspective. It looks at how language, at the clausal level, is organized as a message with a configuration of Theme (point of departure for the message) and Rheme (new information about the point of departure) (Eggins, 1994: 271). So, the theory of Theme (or Theme-Rheme theory) will help to, systematically, unravel the nature and the functions of the language of the selected extracts from *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Such an endeavour will, surely, help the researcher to provide a new interpretation for the meanings embedded in those selected extracts for their deep understandings since the artefact itself has received an impressive number of awards, praises, and honours, including the Orange Broadband Prize for fiction in 2007 (*Half of a Yellow Sun*, cover page). In the field of SFL, some scholars have also dealt with the application of the theory of Theme to literary texts. Their studies are worth reviewing here.

Koutchadé (2015) has used Theme theory to analyse the language of Adetunjiogudimu's *A Silly Season*. After disclosing the presence of textual, interpersonal, and topical Themes in the selected excerpts from the novel, the findings reveal the predominance of topical unmarked and textual Themes therein. He, furthermore, uncovers that some Theme-types such as topical marked, interpersonal Themes and marked dependent clauses as Themes are foregrounded. Such foregrounded thematic elements make it possible for him to disclose the deep messages of bribery and corruption the novelist is trying to convey. In addition, he confirms that the study of Theme patterns can help to find out, not only the textual properties of/in these selected excerpts, but also the contextual information the writer encodes therein.

Koussouhon and Dadjo (2015) have carried out an analysis of Theme in two selected excerpts from Nwapa's *Never Again* (1975). Actually, they have followed both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the internal organization of the language of the selected texts, on the one hand, and their communicative nature, on the other. They, then, realize that both selected extracts display almost the same features of Theme types with a predominance of topical Themes, a significant presence of textual Themes (especially through Conjunctive Adjuncts), and a low presence of interpersonal Themes in each excerpt. The findings allow

them to assert that the different participants have expressed not only, attitudes and judgments about the limited power related to the role of women and children during war, but also, a high degree of certainty and inclination within that novel about the Nigerian civil.

As for Koussouhon and Dossoumou (2014), they have applied some aspects of Systemic Functional Linguistics, especially, Transitivity and Theme to KaineAgary's *Yellow-Yellow* (2006) so as to gain a full insight into how the writer encodes her experience in the selected extracts, on the one hand, and the way she organizes her language to achieve this, on the other. The analysis of the system of Transitivity language in the selected extracts reveals the occurrence of material, mental, relational, behavioural, verbal, and existential processes with a predominance of the material ones. In terms of the analysis of Theme-types, the findings unveil the presence of textual, interpersonal, and topical themes with a high proportion of topical unmarked Themes. On the basis of these, they have contended that the novel under study is essentially about interaction or exchange of meanings whose main purpose is to orient the reader towards the contemporary and topical menaces undermining and hampering the sustainable development of African countries like Nigeria.

Semiring (2014) has described and analysed Themes of MabaMbur sentences in Karonese society with the use of the Hallidayan approach. The findings show that only ideational (also known as topical Theme) and textual Themes are uncovered in the MabaMbur selected texts. Thus, the ideational Theme or Topical Theme is found at the center of analysis and is made of unmarked and marked Themes whereas the textual Theme is made of continuative, the structural, and the conjunctive. The prevailing topical Themes are nominalization used as unmarked Theme, which shows that most of the sentences therein provide a clear meaning of the message they bear at their onset.

Using the Theme-Rheme theory, Qi (2012), investigates the miscellaneous functions that Marked Themes can perform in English. He, then, finds that Marked Themes can perform four potential functions which are: Information-Transmitting functions, Interpersonal functions, Textual functions, and Stylistic functions. Hence, the study sheds light on the dynamic and flexible practical characteristic features of language and reveals that Marked Themes possess communicative and useful significance in language use. In other words, this implies that Marked Themes can foreground information, transmit relational information, and highlight New information in Rheme of clauses. Also, they can bear the textual functions such as cohesion and coherence, and certain stylistic features in order to add aesthetics to salient perspectives of the writer.

For matter of precision, it would worth recalling that the Hallidayan theory of textual meaning entails two broad aspects which are: the structural configuration and the cohesive aspect of clauses in texts. In the framework of the present dissertation, the application of Theme patterns to the selected texts entails only the structural and not the cohesive aspect. The concept of cohesion is, as far as Eggins (1994) is concerned, another dimension of linguistic description. The contention underlying this view point is that the structural aspect implies the system of Theme. As Eggins (1994) notes:

In describing the structural configurations by which the clause is organized as a message, we will recognize that one major system is involved (the system of Theme), with a configuration of the clause into the two functional components of a Theme (point of departure of the message) and a Rheme (new information about the point of departure) [...] we recognize textual, interpersonal and experiential (or topical) thematic elements. (p.271)

## 2. Theoretical Framework: The Grammar of Theme.

The grammar of Theme deals with the internal organization and communicative nature of a text. It is the realization of the Mode of discourse. It derives from the third strand of meaning, i.e., the textual meaning (metafunction). This is referred to as the enabling metafunction since it is used to relate what is said (or written) to the rest of the text and to other linguistic events (Eggins, 1994:273). In other words, the grammar of Theme exhibits the structural configuration through which language organizes itself as a message. Such a structural aspect is subdivided into two areas which are the thematic structure and information system. In the present research work, a specific emphasis has been put on thematic Structure. Thus, the description of textual meaning involves Theme types (topical, interpersonal, and textual) Theme choices (un/marked and marked dependent clause as Theme), the methods of development of Themes (re-iteration, zig-zag, and multiple Theme patterns), and the foregrounded Themes.

As far as the unmarked topical Themes are concerned, they are the most typical/usual themes (subject, finite, Wh-elements) conflating with the Mood structure constituent that typically occurs in first position in clauses of that Mood class. As for marked topical Themes, they signal that all things are not equal, that something in the immediate context requires an atypical meaning to be made. The analysis of the methods of development of Themes displays the way the author/narrator progresses from one Theme in a clause to the next in the subsequent one. Then, the different types of Theme are summarized in the following table.

**Table 1 : Different Theme types: (Slightly adapted from Eggins, 1994)**

N°	Theme types	Explanations	Examples
a.)	<b>Topical Theme</b>	The topical Theme is the starting point of the clause to which a transitivity function (actor, process, circumstance, behavior, senser, etc.) is assigned, and occurs in first position in a clause.	John gives blood
b.)	<b>Interpersonal Theme + Topical Theme</b>	The interpersonal Theme can either occupy the initial position in a clause or/and be followed by the obligatory Topical Theme. It is a constituent of the clause to which a Mood label (subject, finite, vocative, etc) is assigned.	Can you help me? Maybe John could help.
c.)	<b>Textual Theme + Topical Theme</b>	The textual Theme can also occur in the first position in a clause or be followed by the obligatory Topical Theme. This is a constituent (Continuity Adjunct or Conjunctive Adjunct) which is playing important cohesive work in relating the clause to its context.	Oh! He can really help. But, he can also refuse.
d.)	<b>Textual Theme +</b>	This is a situation where a single clause can contain a sequence of	Well, at least, Carla

<b>Interpersonal Theme + Topical Theme</b>	Themes with often several Textual and/or Interpersonal Themes occurring before the obligatory Topical Theme.	gave it. Yes, but, fortunately, the bomb didn't explode.
<b>e.) Structural Theme</b>	Structural Themes are elements of the clause which can bind and link as Textual Themes do. So, they are considered as textual Themes in the present study.	John meets the lady who gave blood yesterday. They all know that John is a blood giver

### 3. Practical Analysis of Theme Patterns in Selected Extracts from *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

#### 3.1. Theme Patterns Identification in the Selected Extracts

In the present section, practical analyses have been carried out in three excerpts, culled chronologically, from Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Following Eggins (1994/2004), Koussouhon and Allagbe (2013), Koussouhon and Dossoumou (2014), and Koutchadé and Loko (2016). I first split the extracts into numerically manageable clauses within each of the excerpts. Then, I have counted and tabularized the clauses accordingly. Theme identification in the three excerpts is carried out in the appendices.

#### 3.2. Statistical Analyses and Comment on the Findings

##### 3.2.1. Statistics of the Theme types.

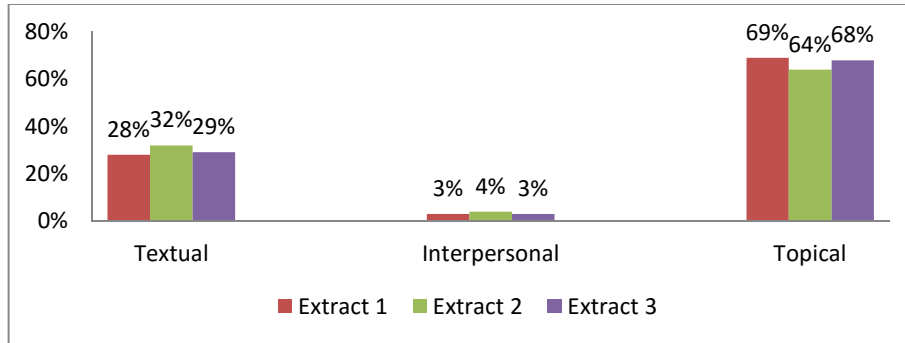
**Table 2: Statistics of the Theme types.**

##### 3.2.2. Comment on the findings

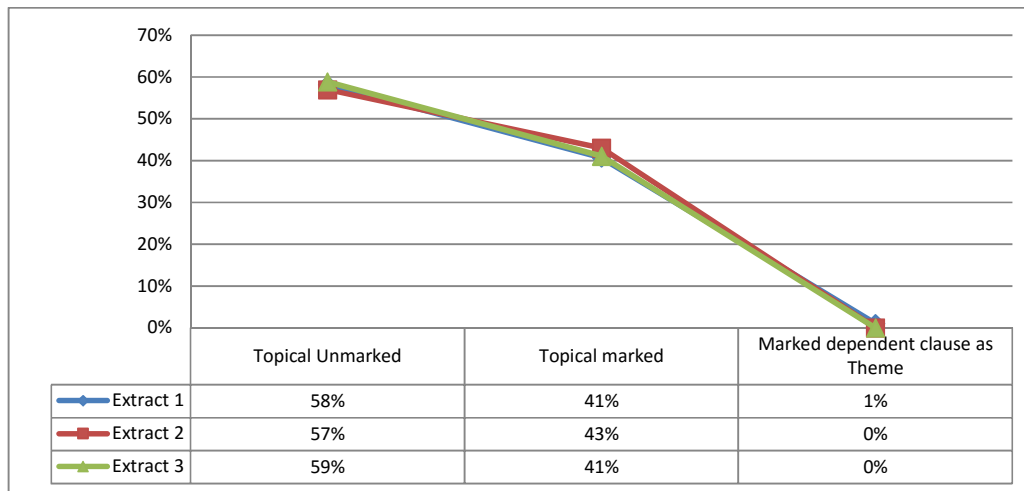
The above table displays the statistical distribution of the Theme types and Theme choices in the selected extracts from the novel under study. It, thus, indicates the predominance of topical Themes (irrespective of their markedness) in each of the extracts 1, 2, and 3 with a proportion of [69%], [64%], and [68%], respectively. Also, it indicates a significant presence of textual Themes which cover 28%, 32%, and 29%, respectively in the selected texts. As for the interpersonal Themes, the statistical table indicates that they are low in the selected texts, i.e., 3%, 4%, and 3%, in that order. The graphical appreciation of these three major Theme types and that of the three most important thematic choices uncovered are, respectively, materialised by the following histograms in order to help us to see their linear progression in the selected excerpts.

EXTRACT N°		Extract 1		Extract 2		Extract 3	
THEME		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>Textual</b>		<b>75</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Interpersonal</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Topical</b>	Unmarked	<b>106</b>	58%	<b>66</b>	57%	<b>116</b>	59%
	Marked	<b>74</b>	41%	<b>50</b>	43%	<b>81</b>	41%
	Marked dependent clause	<b>2</b>	1%	<b>0</b>	0%	<b>0</b>	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>265</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>100%</b>

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**Figure 1: Histogram representing patterns of Theme types in *Half of a Yellow Sun***



**Figure 2: Histogram representing patterns of Theme choice in *Half of a Yellow Sun***

In fact, such a predominant occurrence of topical Themes means that within each clause, there is an initial element to which a transitivity role/function (actor, behavior, senser, sayers, goal...) is assigned (Eggins, 1994/2004). Therefore, it can be inferred from this that the narrators and/or the participants in the selected texts have undoubtedly experienced real facts and actions in a real society. Examples of participants playing such roles of actor, senser, behavior, and sayers, are Olanna (also anaphorically referred as she), everyone, the taxi drivers in the white hat and kaftans, the Sardauna, Arize, Nnakwanze, Sister Kainene, Uncle Mbaezi, Auntie Ifeka, the soldiers, Harrison, Edna, Sir Winston Churchill, Odenigbo, Eberechi, Newspaper vendors, Umuahia, Kainene's father, Mabu, Biafrans... from the extracts.

Moreover, the predominant occurrence of topical Themes has favoured a frequent use of re-iteration pattern (or constant Themes) of development of Themes as the message is being unfold from a given clause to a subsequent one. In actual fact, it is a method of development which results in maintaining a strong topical focus in the text. Its advantage is that it helps the author and/or the narrator to avoid a mere repetition of the same lexical elements appearing in thematic position within clauses (Eggins, 1994: 303). The next method of development that has been uncovered is the zig-zag pattern. This has helped the language user, the story-teller or the narrators, to choose and order thematic elements in a coherent and cohesive way. The zig-zag pattern of thematic progression means that an element which is introduced in the Rheme in clause 1 is developed in the Theme in the clause 2, and so on. In extract 1, for example, this has helped the narrator to, intentionally or unconsciously, developed the semantic content of the rhematic element (waited) previously introduced in

clauses 2 and 4 in thematic position (the airports and there) in clauses 3 and 5, respectively. It is also the same case with the Rheme of clause 13 (knew) which has become Theme (this man) in the following clause, i.e. clause 14. Other examples can also be seen in extracts 2 and 3.

The significant occurrence of textual Themes in each of the selected texts suggest that elements performing cohesive work, in relating the clauses to their situational context, are considerably present in the excerpt, (Eggins, 1994, p. 281). The different Textual elements uncovered in the extracts belong to the category of textual continuative, textual conjunction and textual conjunctive adjunct (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 81). Examples of textual continuative uncovered are “ha, no, and oh” and can be seen in (35, 54, and 105 from the first excerpt, and 16, 37, 68, and 81 from the second excerpt). Illustrations of textual conjunction (parataxis/ hypotaxis) are seen in (5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 40, 52, 55, 56, etc. from the first extract, 1, 5, 7, 8, 13, 23, 29, 31, 35, 36, 37, 47, 49, 52, etc. from the second extract, and 3, 7, 14, 15, 34, 38, 46, 59, etc. from the third extract). Cases of textual conjunctive adjuncts are found in (86, 90, 146, and 151 from the first extract, 27, 54, 71, 84, 88, 100, and 110 from the second extract, and 89, 90, 91, 92, 104, 115, 149, and 196 from the third extract).

The low occurrence of interpersonal Themes indicates that the selected texts are less concerned with authoritarian tenor or command. These interpersonal Themes are realized in (5, 30, 36, 37, 125, 143, 162, and 181 from the first excerpt, 15, 30a, 38, 43, 46, 66a, and 79 from the second excerpt, and 28, 31, 52, 59, 59, 72, 129, 166, 168, and 183 from the third excerpt) through comment adjuncts “please, the same way, perhaps”, vocative adjuncts “Ari, Sister, and Richard”, mood adjuncts (I think, she wondered...), and finite verb (can, have...) in yes/no questions. These adjuncts have served to reveal the characters’ own silent attitudes during the massacres, their sense of equal power in the conversations, and their opinions of the Yoruba occupiers who have seized by force and violence other Ibo people’s properties in time of battles.

The second important manifestation of Themes revealed by the above table is the markedness of Themes or the thematic choice. This takes into account topical unmarked, topical marked, and marked dependent clauses used as Themes in the selected texts. According to Halliday (1985) and Eggins (1994/2004), a topical Theme is marked when it is something other than the Subject in a declarative clause and unmarked when it conflates with the Subject in a declarative, Finite in an interrogative (yes/no question), Wh-element in a Wh-interrogative and the Predicator in an imperative Mood. So, the table indicates a predominant presence of topical unmarked Themes in each of the selected excerpt, i.e., (58% in extract 1, 57% in extract 2, and 59% in extract 3, to suggest that tangible and physical actions have been experienced and/or carried out by the characters in those selected excerpts. Consequently, it can be deduced from this foregoing that the narrators (or the writer, to a larger extent) have used a typical language to depict instances of wars and battles in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Topical marked Themes come second and cover 41%, 43%, and 41% in the extracts, respectively. Such an important informs that the narrators have, sometimes used an atypical language to portray some of the abnormal and odds situations of killings and destructions in the Nigerian society in the sixties. As for the very low occurrence of marked dependent clauses used as Themes, they cover 1% in excerpt 1 and are non-existent in the other excerpts, i.e., excerpts 2 and 3. This indicates that the rhetorical organization of the language of the selected extracts haven’t really been planned giving, thus, an impression of spoken language. Such a rhetorical aspect, sometimes, decreases the level of formality and makes readers think that the selected excerpts from the novel are written texts-to-be-read.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion.

The thematic structure of the selected excerpts has displayed the same features as far as the Theme patterns are concerned. Actually, the Theme-types analysis in selected extracts from *Half of a Yellow Sun* reveals a great proportion of topical Themes: 69% in extract 1, 64% in extract 2, 68% in extract 3. Such a predominant occurrence of topical Themes has led to a preponderant use of the re-iteration pattern of development of Themes (Halliday, 1985, Koutchadé, 2015). Thus, it has been uncovered that the main narrators, i.e., Olanna, Kainaine, Richard, Ugwu, Odenigbo, Eberechi, and Madu, have resorted to the use of Theme re-iteration pattern, the zig-zag pattern, and the multiple-Theme pattern of development as they are unfolding meanings in each of the selected extracts. Theme re-iteration patterns have been frequently chosen by those narrators to pick up and duplicate a previous thematic/semantic content in the beginning of the subsequent clause in order to convey the writer's message of denunciation of collective/cultural hypocrisy in the Nigerian society in the sixties. The re-iteration method has, thus, helped the narrators to give a detailed account of what Olanna has experienced at the time of the coup where airport, the Post Telegraphs, and the local traffic have been interrupted in extract 1.

Furthermore, these personae have, sometimes, resorted to the zig-zag pattern as well as the multiple-Theme one to take readers throughout different angles and stages of the same Biafran history. Examples are related to the events that have happened before the killing of the Sardauna, who is the spiritual leader of the Hausa and the premier of the North. In the same vein, the narrators have been helped by these strategies of thematic development to detail information about Arize's wishes for her future baby, as well as the atmosphere prevailing outside the compound where people are still remembering the Sardauna and the soldiers who wanted to kill him in extract 1. In extracts 2 and 3, Adichie, through the use of these methods, has provided the reader with information about the love story between Olanna and Richard, Kainene's lost properties and what she has probably done to repossess them again, and finally, about the killing of Eberechi. Indeed, these methods have enabled the writer to guide readers towards different characters'/narrators' perception of the world-view in those selected texts from *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In other words, these methods of development of Themes have offered Adichie the possibility to portray all the multifaceted stories about Nigerian political system and the daily experiences of a small set of people, Igbo specially, at the same time. This gives, thus, a sense of several types of stories which are part and partial of the same Biafran War.

The other aspect which is worth discussing here is the foregrounded Themes identified throughout the thematic analysis of the selected extracts. Apart from the apparent features characteristics of the language of the selected extracts under study, there are some trivial linguistic elements (interpersonal Themes, marked topical Themes, and marked dependent clauses used as Themes) that have been highlighted to provide prominence for the messages conveyed in the selected texts. These highlighted elements are referred to by Hasan (1985/1989) as foregrounding and in this section an attempt will be made to the analysis of these foregrounded Themes. In fact, the very low occurrence of interpersonal Themes realized by the finites in yes/no questions and the vocatives, i.e., Ari, Sister, and Richard indicates that these participants have tried to exchange information in a friendly way as can be shown in (30, 36, 162 from text1, 15, 30a, 38, 43, 46, 66a, 79, from text2, and 28, 31, 52, 59, 59, 72, 129, 166, 168 from text3) as they are experiencing an atmosphere of terror and psychosis in the country. In other words, the low occurrence of interpersonal Themes foregrounds, here, a sense of reticence/distance and lack of collaboration among those Igbo characters in the selected extracts.



As for the foregrounding of topical marked Themes, they have helped the narrators/the writer to give details about places, time, and manners the odds situations have happened in each of the extracts. Such a complete description of the abnormal events foregrounds a message of a well-organized massacre (extract 1), a betrayal in/of the relationships (extract 2), and a psychosis and loss of properties that Ibo people have experienced (extract 3). The last case of foregrounded Themes is the one of the marked dependent clauses used as Themes. Their very low occurrence suggests a spoken mode of discourse. Such an aspect makes the researcher contend that the writer has not pre-planned the rhetorical organization of the story she is telling.

In all, the present paper has scrutinized the structural configuration through which a text organizes itself as a message through the theory of Theme within selected excerpts from Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The varied analyses of Theme patterns have made it possible to understand the language of the novel under study and to provide new interpretation of it.

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## Appendices:

Theme identification has been carried out according to the following

### Keys:

**Theme:** Theme is underlined, textual Theme: in *italics*, interpersonal Theme: in CAPITALS, Topical Theme: in **bold**, dependent clause as Theme: **whole clause in bold**

### Extract 1.

(1) **Olanna** postponed her trip to Kano because of the coup./ (2) **She** waited / (3) *until the airports* were reopened, the Post and Telegraphs up again, the military governors appointed to the regions. / (4) **She** waited / (5) *until/SHE WAS SURE there* was order. / (6) *Butthe coup* was in the air. / (7) **Everyone** was talking about it, / (8) *eventhe taxi driver in the white hat and kaftans* who drove her and Baby from the airport to Arize's compound [were talking about it] (9) "*Butthe Sardauna* was not killed, madam," / (10) **He** whispered. / (11) **He** escaped with Allah's help // *and* is now in Mecca./ (12) **Olanna** smiled gently// *and* said nothing/(13) *because* **she** knew (14) *thatthis man*, [with his prayer beads dangling from his rearview mirror] needed to believe that./ (15) **The Sardauna**, after all, had not only been premier of the North, / (16) **he** had also been the spiritual leader for this man and so many Muslims like him. (17) **She** told Arize about the taxi driver's comment/(18) *and* **Arize** shrugged// *andsaid*, / (19) "**there** is nothing/ (20) *thatthey* are not saying." / (21) **Arize's wrapper** was pushed low, below her waist, / (22) *andher blouse* was loose-fitting to accommodate the swell of her belly. / (23) **They** sat in the living room with photos of Arize and Nnakwanz's wedding on the oily wall,/ (24) *while* **Baby** played with the children in the compound./ (25) **Olanna** did not want Baby to touch those children in their torn clothes, milky mucus trailing from their noses, / (26) *but* **she** didn't say so;/ (27) **it** shamed her / (28) *thatshe* felt that way. (29) "**We**'ll catch the first flight to Lagos tomorrow,/ (30) **ARI**, *soyou* can rest/(31) *before* **we** start shopping./ (32) **I** don't want to do anything / (33) **that** will be difficult for you," (34) **Olanna** said. / (35) "*ha, difficult!* **I** am only pregnant, / (36) **SISTER**, **I** am not sick, oh. / (37) **IS it** not women like me/ (38) **who** work on the farm/(39) *untilthe baby* want to come out? / (40) *Andam* I not the one sewing that dress?" / (41) **Arize** pointed to the corner, / (42) *whereher Singer sewing machinewas* on the table amid a pile of clothes. (43) "**My concern** is for my godchild in there, not for you," / (44) **Olanna** said. / (45) **She** raised Arize's blouse/ (46) *and (she)* placed her face against the firm roundness of Arize's belly, [against the stretched-tight skin in the gentle ritual]/ (47) **she** had been doing / (48) *since* **Arize** became pregnant; / (49) *if* **she** did it often enough, / (50) **Arize** said/ (51) **the child** would imbibe her features/ (52) *and (it would)* look like her. / (53) "**I** don't care about the outside," / (54) **Arize** said / (55) *but* **she** must look like you on the inside. / (56) **She** must have your brain // *and* know book." "Or he." (57) "**No, this one** is a girl, // (58) **you** will see./ (59) **Nnakwanze**

says/(60)it will be a boy/(61) **who** will resemble him,/(62) *but*I told him /(63) *that***God** will not allow my child to have that flat face.” (64)**Olanna** laughed. /(65) **Arize** got up //and opened an enamel box / (66) *and* (**she**) brought out some money. /(67) ‘See what Sister Kainene sent me last week./ (68) **She** said /(69) **I** should use it to buy things for the baby.’ (70) ‘**It** was nice of her.’ /(71) **Olanna** knew/(72) **she** sounded stilted,[ knew Arize was watching her.] (73) ‘**You and Sister Kainene** should talk. /(74) **What happened in the past** is in the past.’ (75) ‘**You** can only talk to the person/(76) **who** wants to talk to you,’ /(77) **Olanna**said./ (78) **She** wanted to change the subject. / (79) **She** always wants to change the subject/ (80) *when***Kainene** came up. / (81) “**I** better take Baby to greet Auntie Ifeka.”/ (82) **She** hurried out to fetch Baby /(83) *before***Arize** could say anything else. (84) **She** washed some sand off Baby’s face and hands/(85) *before***they** walked out of the compound /(86) *and down the road* **Uncle Mbaezi** was not yet back from the market, /(87) *and***they** sat with Auntie Ifeka on a bench in front of her kiosk, Baby on Olanna’s lap. (88) **Theyard** was filling with the chatter of neighbours and the shrieks of children running around under the kuka tree. /(89) **Somebody** was playing loud music from a gramophone; /(90) *soon, a cluster of men by the compound gate* began to laugh/ (91) *and* (**they**) jostle one another, mimicking the song. /(92) **Auntie Ifeka** laughed, too, //and clapped her hands. (93) ‘**What’s** funny?’ /(94) **Olanna** asked./ (95) ‘**That** is Rex Lawson’s song,’ /(96) **Auntie Ifeka** said./ (97) ‘**What** is funny about it?’/ (98) ‘**Our people** say /(99) *that***the chorus** sounds like mmee-mmee-mmee, “the bleating of a goat.” /(100) **Auntie Ifeka** chuckled./ (101) ‘**They** say /(102) **the Sardauna** sounded like that/(103) *when***he** was begging them not to kill him. /(104) **When**the soldiersfired a mortar into his house, /(105) **he** crouched behind his wives/ (106) *and*(**he**) bleated, /(107) “[Mmee-mmee-mmee, please] **don’t** kill me, mmee-mmee-mmee”. /(108) **Auntie Ifeka**laughed again,/ (109) *andsodid* Baby, /(110) *asif***she** understood. /(111) “*Oh*”, **Olanna** thought about Chief Okonji/ (112) *and* (**he**) wondered/ (113) *if***he** too was said [to have bleated like a goat before he died]./ (114) **She** looked away across the street,/ (115) *where***children** were playing with car tires, [racing with one another]/ (116) *asthey* rolled the tyres along. /(117) **A small sandstorm** was gathering in the distance, /(118) *and the dustrose// and* fell in grey white clouds. /(119) “**The Sardauna** was an evil man, Ajommadu,” /(120) **AuntieIfekasa**id. / (121) ‘**He** hated us. /(122) **He** hated everybody// (123) **who** did not remove their shoes /(124) *and* (**who**) bow to him. /(125) **IS he** not the one/(126) **who** did not allow our children to go to school?’ (127) “**They** should not have killed him. /(128) **Olanna** said quietly. /(129) “**They** should have put him in prison.” (130) **Auntie Ifeka** snorted/(131) ‘**Put** him in which prison? /(132) *In this Nigeria*where he controlled everything?’ /(133) **she** got up //and began to close up the kiosk. /(134) “**Come**, let’s go inside/(135) *so***I** can find Baby something to eat.” /(136) **The Rex Lawson song** was playing loudly in Arize’s compound/(137) *when***Olanna** returned. /(138) **Nnakwanze** found it hilarious too. /(139) **He** had two huge front teeth, /(140) **and when he laughed**, /(141) **it** was /(142) *as if***too many teeth** had been painfully crammed into his small mouth. /(143) **MMEEEE-MMEEEE-MMEEEE, a goat** begging not to be killed: mmeeeee-mmeeeee. /(144) ‘**It’s** not funny, oh,’ /(145) **Arize** said. /(146) “*Because of too much Book, you* no longer know how to laugh.” (147) **Nnakwanze** was sitting on the floor at Arize’s feet, [rubbing her belly in light circular motions]. /(148) **He** had worried a lot less than Arize// (149) *whenshe* did not get pregnant the first, second, and third year of their marriage; /(150) *when***his** mother visited them too often, /(151) [poking at Arize’s belly and urging her to confess] *how many abortions***she** had had before marriage, /(152) **he** asked his mother to stop visiting. /(153) **He** asked her, too, to stop bringing foul-smelling concoctions for Arize to drink in bitter gulps. /(154) *Nowthat***Arize** was pregnant, /(155) **he** did more overtime at

the railway/(156) *and* (**he**) asked her to cut down on her sewing.

/(157) **He** was still singing the song / (158) *and* (**he** was) laughing. /(159) **A goat begging** not to be killed: mmeeee-mmeeee-mmeeee. /(160) **Olanna** got up. /(161) **The night breeze** was unpleasantly cool. /(162) ‘**ARI, you should** get to bed, /(163) *so you* are rested in the morning for Lagos.’/(164) **Nnakwanze** made [as if to help Arize up,] /(165) *but she* brushed him aside. /(166) ‘**I** have told you people /(167) *that I* am not sick. /(168) **I** am only pregnant.’

/(169) **Olanna** was pleased/ (170) *that the house in Lagos* would be empty. /(171) **Her father** had called to say /(172) **they** were going overseas. /(173) **she** knew/(174) **it** was/(175) *because he* wanted to be away /(176) *until things* calmed down, /(177) *because he* was wary of his ten per cents lavish parties and slick connections, /(178) *but neither he nor her mother* said so. /(179) **They** called it a holiday. /(180) **It** was their policy to leave things unsaid, /(181) **THE SAME WAY they** pretended not to notice/(182) *that she and Kainene* no longer spoke/**Source: Half of a Yellow Sun**, pp: 128- 131.

## Extract 2

(1) **Olanna** stood in Richard’s living room./(2)**Its austere emptiness** made her nervous; /(3) **she** wished /(4) **he** had pictures or books or Russian dolls/(5) *that she* should look at. /(6) **There** was only a small photo of an Igbo-Ukwu roped pot on the wall, /(7) *and she* was peering at it /(8) *when Richard* came out. /(9) **The uncertain half smile on his lips** softened his face. /(10) **She** sometimes forgot /(11) **what a handsome man** he was, in the fair-haired, blue-eyed sort of way. (12)

**She** spoke immediately. [‘Hello Richard.’ Without waiting for his response] /(13) *and the lull that* came with greetings, /(14) **she** added, /(15) ‘**DID you** see kainene last weekend?’ (16) *No. No, I didn’t.*’ /(17) **His eyes** avoided hers, focused on her glossy wig. /(18) ‘**I** was in Lagos. /(19) **Sir Winston Churchill** has died, /(20) **you** see.’/ (21) ‘**What happened** was stupid of both of us,’ /(22) **Olanna** said and noticed /(23) *that his hands* were shaking. / (24) **Richard** nodded. Yes, yes.’/(25) **Kainene** doesn’t forgive easily. /(26) **It** would make no sense at all to tell her.’ (27) ‘*Of course not.*’ **Richard** paused. /(28) ‘**You** had you have emotional problems, /(29) *and I* should not have –’ (30a)**What happened** took two, RICHARD,’ /(30b) **Olanna** said, *and* suddenly felt contempt for his trembling hands and pale shyness/(31) *and the vulnerabilities he* wore [so openly] knotted at his throat like a tie.

(32) **Harrison** came in with a tray. /(33) ‘**I** am bringing drinks, sah.’ (34) ‘Drinks?’ **Richard** turned quickly, jerkily, /(35) *and Olanna* was relieved/(36) *that there* was nothing close/(37) *or he* would have knocked it over. ‘Oh, no, really./(38) **WOULD you** like something? (39) ‘**I**’m just leaving,’ /(40) **Olanna** said /(41) **How** are you, Harrison?’ ‘Fine, madam.’

(42) **Richard** followed her to the door. (43) ‘**I THINK we** should keep thing normal; /(44) **she** said, /(45) *before she* hurried out to her car. (46) **SHE WONDERED if she** should have been less histrionic and given them both the chance to have a calm conversation about what happened. /(47) *But it* would have achieved little, digging up the dirt of yesterday. /(48) **They** had both wanted it to happen /(49) *and they* both wished /(50) **it** had not; /(51) **what mattered now** was /(52) *that nobody else* should ever know.

(53) **She** surprised herself, /(54) *then, when she* told Odenigbo. /(55) **She** was lying down /(56) *while he* sat next to her on his bed –/(57) **she** thought of the bedroom itself now as his rather than theirs – /(58) *and it* was the second time /(59) **they** had slept together /(60) *since she* left. /(61) **He** was asking her to please move back to the house. (62) ‘**Let’s** get married,’ /(63) **he** said. /(64) ‘**Mama** will leave us alone then.’ (64) **It** may have been his smug tone /(65) *or THE FLAGRANT WAY he* continued to sidestep responsibility and blame his mother/(66) **that** made Olanna say, /(67) ‘**I** slept with

Richard.’ (68) ‘No.’ **Odenigbo** looked incredulous, shaking his head. Yes (69) **He** got up *and* walked to the wardrobe /(70) *and* (**he**) looked at her, /(71) *as if* **he** could not be close to her at the moment /(72) *because* **he** was afraid of /(73) *what* **he** would do /(74) *if* **he** were. /(75) **He** took his glasses off *and* rubbed the bridge of his nose. /(76) **She** sat up *and* realized /(77) *that* **distrust** would always lie between them, /(78) *that* **disbelief** would always be an option for them. (79) DO **you** have feelings for the man?’ /(80) **he** asked. (81) ‘No,’ **she** said. (82) **He** came back *and* set next to her. /(83) **He** looked torn between shoving her off the bed *and* pulling her close, /(84) *and then* **he** got up abruptly *and* left the room. /(85) *When* **she** knocked later on this study door to say /(86) **she** was leaving, /(87) **he** did not respond. (88) *Back in her flat*, **she** paced up and down. /(89) **She** should not have told him about Richard. /(90) *Or* **she** should have told more: /(91) *that* **she** regretted betraying Kainene and him/(92) *but* (**she**) did not regret the act itself. /(93) **She** should have said/(94) *that* **it** was not a crude revenge, *or* a score keeping, /(95) *but* (**she**) took on a redemptive significance for her. /(96) **She** should have said /(97) (*that*) **the selfishness** had liberated her. (98)

**The loud knocking on her door the next morning** filled her with relief. /(99) **She and Odenigbo** would sit down *and* talk properly, /(100) *and this time* **she** would make sure /(101) *that* **they** did not circle each other without meeting. /(102) *But* **it** was not Odenigbo. /(103) **Edna** came in crying, her eyes swollen red, to tell her /(104) *that* **white people** had bombed the black Baptist church in her hometown. /(105) **Four little girls** had died. /(106) **One of them** was her niece’s schoolmate. /(107) ‘**I** saw her /(108) *when* **I** went back home six months ago,’ /(109) **Edna** said. /(110) ‘*Just six months ago* **I** saw her.’ (111) **Olanna** made tea *and* sat next to Edna, [their shoulders touching,] /(112) *while* **Edna** cried in loud gasps /(113) **that** sounded like choking. /(114) **Her hair** did not have its usual greasy shine; /(115) **it** looked like the matted head of an old mop.

**Source:** *Half of a Yellow Sun*, pp: 243- 245.

### Extract 3

(1) **Richard** walked into the orchard and towards the spot/ (2) *where* **he** had sat to watch the sea. / (3) **His favourite orange tree** was gone. / (4) **Many of the trees** had been cut, / (5) *and the orchard* now had stretches of cultivated grass. / (6) **He** stared at the point/ (7) *where* **Kainene** had burnt his manuscript // *and* remembered days ago in Nsukka, / (8) *how* **he** had felt nothing absolutely nothing, [watching Harrison dig and dig in the garden.] / [‘Sorry, sah. Sorry, sah.’] / (9) **I** am burying the manscrit here, / (10) **I** know/ (11) **I** am burying it here.’ / (12) **Kainene’s house** was repainted a muted green; / (13) **the bougainvillea that had wreathed it** was cut down. / (14) **Richard** went around to the front door // *and* rang the doorbell // *and* imagined Kainene coming to the door// *and* telling him/ (15) (*that*) **she** was fine, / (16) **she** had simply wanted to spend some time alone. / (17) **The woman** who came out had slender tribal marks on her face, two lines on each cheek. / (18) **She** opened the door a crack. ‘Yes?’ ‘Good afternoon,’ / (19) **Richard** said. / (20) ‘**My name** is Richard Churchill. / (21) **I’m** Kainene Ozobia’s fiancé. Yes?’ (22) ‘**I** used to live her. / (23) **This** is Kainene house.’ / (24) **The woman’s face** tightened. / (25) ‘**This** was abandoned property. / (26) **It** is now my house.’ / (27) **She** started to close the door. / (28) ‘PLEASE **wait**’ / (29) **Richard** said. / (30) **I’d** like our photos, please. / (31) CAN **I** have some of Kainene’s photographs? [The album on the shelf in the study?]/ (32) **The woman** whistled. / (33) ‘**I** have a vicious dog, / (34) *and if* **you** don’t go now/ (35) **I** will turn it on you.’ [‘Please, just the photographs.’] (36) **The woman** whistled again. / (37) *From somewhere inside*, Richard heard

a dog growl. (38)**He** slowly turned //and left. /(39) **Ashe** drove, his windows down, the smell of the sea in his nose, /(40)**he** thought about the many times/ (41) **Kainene** had driven him down the same lonely road. /(42)**Inside the town**, he slowed down /(43)**ashe** passed a tall woman, /(44) **butshe** was too light-skinned to be Kainene. /(45)**He** had delayed coming to Port Harcourt/(46)**becausehe** first wanted to find her/(47) **sothatthey** would visit the house together, [look together at what they had lost.] /(48)**She** would try to get it back, /(49) **hewas** sure, /(50) **she** would write petitions //and go to court and tell everyone/(51) **thatthefederal government**had stolen her house, in that fearless way of hers. /(52)**THE SAME WAY she**had stopped the beating of the young soldier. /(53)**It** was his last full memory of her, /(54)**andhis**mind edited it of its own accord-sometimes /(55)**the sleep-tussled wrapper tied across her waist** was flaked with gold, other times with red.

(56)**He** would not have come to the house now/(57)**ifher mother** had not asked him to. (58)‘**Go** to the house, /(59)**RICHARD PLEASE just go// and see.**’ /(60)**Her voice** was small on the phone. /(61)**During his first conversations with her**, [when they first returned from London,] she had sounded so different, so full of certitude. /(62)‘**Kainene** must have been wounded somewhere. /(63)**We** must get the word out. (64)**We** have to do it quickly /(65)**sowe** can move her to a better hospital. /(66)**Whenshe** is well, /(67)**I** will ask her /(68)**whatwe** can do about that Yoruba sheep /(69)**we** thought was our friend. /(70)**Imagine** the man making us buy our own house. /(71) **Imagine** forging ownership paper and everything/(72) **and SAYING we** should be happy/ (73) **he** was not asking for much; /(74)**on top of that** he took the furniture. /(75)**Kainene’s father** is too afraid to say anything. /(76)**He** is grateful /(77)**they** let him keep a house /(78)**that** is his own. (79)**Kainene** would never tolerate that.’

/(80)**She** was different now. /(81) **Itwas** / (82) **asifthe more** had time passed, /(83) **the more her faith** had leaked away. /(84)**Just go //and see** the house, /(85)**she** had said. /(86)**Just go// and see.** /(87)**She** no longer spoke in specifics, in definite. /(88)**Madu** was staying with them in Lagos, /(89)**now that he** had been released from his long detention at Alagbon close; /(90)**now thathe** had been dismissed from the Nigerian army; /(91) **now thathe** had been given twenty pounds /(92)**for all the moneyhe** had before and during the war. /(93)**It** was Madu/ (94) **who** received word /(95)**thata thin, tall, educated woman**had been found wandering in Onitsha. /(96)**Richard** went with Olanna to Onitsha /(97)**andher mother** met them there, /(98)**butthe woman** was not Kainene./(99) **Richard** had been so certain /(100)**thatit** was Kainene-/ (101) **she** had amnesia, / (102) **she** had forgotten herself, / (103) **it** all made sense- /(104)**andwhenhe**looked into the stranger’s eyes, /(105)**he** had felt for the first time a deep hate for a person/(106) **he** did not know.

(107)**He** thought of it now/(108)**ashe** drove to Umuahia, to the centre for displaced persons. /(109)**The building** was empty. /(110)**Nearby**, a bomb crater gaped unfilled. /(111) **He** drove around for a while /(112)**beforehe** found the address /(113)**Ugu** had given him. /(114)**The elderly woman** he greeted looked completely indifferent, /(115) **as though itwas** often/ (116) **that an Igbo- speaking white man**came in to ask about her relative. /(117)**It** surprised Richard; /(118) **he** was used to his Igbo speaking whiteness being noticed, being marvelled at./(119)**She** brought him a seat./(120)**She** told him/(121)**she** was the sister of Eberechi’s father/(122)**and, as soon as**she told him/ (123) **whathad** happened to Eberechi, / (124) **Richard** decided /(125)**thathe** would not tell Uguwu. /(126)**He** would never tell Uguwu. /(127) **Eberechi’s Aunty** had a white scarf tie around her head and a soiled wrapper around a chest/(128)**andshe** spoke /(129)**so QUIETLY THAT Richard** had asked her to repeat herself. /(130)**She** looked at him for a moment/(131) **before**she told him, again, /(132)**thatEberechi** had been killed by shelling, /(133)**thatit** had happened on the day/(134)**thatUmuahia** fell, /(135)**andthat, only days later**, Eberechi’s brother in the army came back alive and well. /(136)**Richard** did not know why, /(137)**buthe** sat down //and told the woman about Kainene.

/(138) **My wife** went an afia attack some days/(139) *before the war* ended, /(140) *and we* have not seen her since.’/(141) **The woman** shrugged. ‘/(142) *One day* you will know,’ /(143) **she** said/ (144) **Richard** thought about those words on his way to Lagos the next day/(145) *and he* became even more convinced /(146) *that he* would not tell Ugwu/(147) *that Eberechi* was dead. /(148) *One day* Ugwu would know. /(149) *For now,* **he** would not break Ugwu’s dream. /(150) **It** was raining/(151) *when he* arrived in Lagos. /(152) *On the car radio,* Gowon’s speech was broadcast yet again: No victor and no vanquished. /(153) **Newspaper vendors** were running around in traffic with their papers wrapped in polythene bags. /(154) **He** no longer read newspapers/(155) *because each one* [he opened] seemed to have the advertisement/(156) *that Kainene’s parents* had placed, [with the photo of Kainene taken by the pool,] under the heading missing. /(157) **It** was oppressive, as oppressive as Aunt Elisabeth telling him to ‘be strong’, her voice warbly over the phone, /(158) *as if there* were something /(159) **she** knew /(160) *that he* did not. /(161) **He** did not need to be strong for anything. /(162) *And Kainene* was not missing; /(163) **she** was just taking her time/(164) *before she* came home. /(165) **Her mother** hugged him. /(166) ‘**HAVE you** been eating, Richard?’ /(167) **she** asked, in a fond, familiar way, /(168) **THE WAY a mother** would speak to a son/(169) **who** had neglected to take care of himself. /(170) **She** held him tightly, leaning on him, /(171) *when they* walked into the sparse living room, /(172) *and he* had the glorious//and uncomfortable feeling/(173) *that she* thought/(174) **she** was somehow holding on to Kainene by holding on to him.

/(175) **Kainene’s father** was sitting with Madu and two other men from Umunnachi. (176) **Richard** shook hands //and joined them. /(177) **They** were drinking beer //and talking about the indigenization decree, the civil servants being jobless. /(178) **Their voices** were low, /(179) *as though being indoors* was not secure enough. /(180) **Richard** got up// and climbed the stairs to Kainene’s old room, /(181) *but nothing of hers* was left. /(182) **The walls** were studded with nails, /(183) **PERHAPS the Yoruba occupier** had hung up many photos. /(184) **The stew**[that was served at lunch] had too much crayfish; /(185) **Kainene** would not have liked it/(186) *and she* would have leaned towards him// and said so. /(187) *After lunch,* **Richard and Madu** went out to sit on the veranda. /(188) **The rain** had stopped, /(189) *and the leaves of the plants down below* looked greener. /(190) ‘**The foreigners** say / (191) *that one million* died,’ /(192) **Madu** said. /(193) ‘**That** can’t be.’ /(194) **Richard** waited. /(195) **He** was not sure / (196) (*that*) **he** wanted to have one of those conversations/(197) *so many Biafrans* had now, passing kernels of blame to others, oiling their own faces with a valour they had never had.

**Source:** *Half of a Yellow Sun*, pp: 426- 429