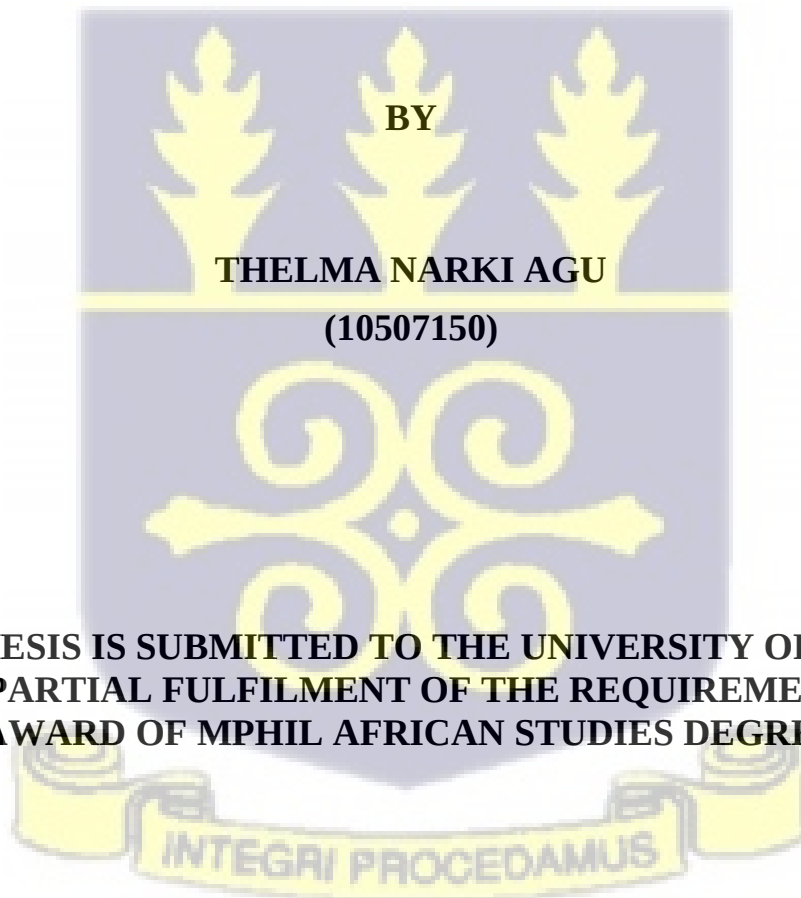


UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN STUDIES

**THE DEPICTION OF WOMEN IN THE STRUGGLE FOR CULTURAL,
POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FREEDOM IN THE WORKS OF SOME
SELECTED AFRICAN WRITERS.**



**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
AWARD OF MPhil AFRICAN STUDIES DEGREE**

JULY, 2016

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own original and independent work, except for references and quotations from the works of others which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that this thesis has not been submitted elsewhere either in parts or whole for any award.

I claim responsibility for any errors and inaccuracies that this work may contain.

THELMA NARKI AGU (CANDIDATE)

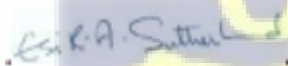
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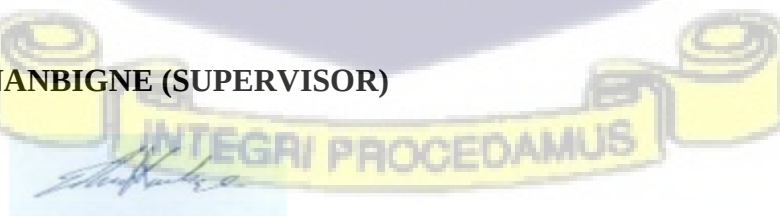
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DEDICATION

To my parents and all those who have contributed to making me who I am today.



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ABSTRACT

Gender stereotypes have existed in African societies for a long time. In these societies, it is generally believed that women are the weaker sex, subservient to men, objects of sexuality, and incapable of taking critical decisions affecting their own lives and those of their communities. Following these assumptions, male writers have often been accused of projecting these stereotypes in their works. Indeed, this is true to a large extent as many male writers seemed to play down the role of women in the African society. While Cyprian Ekwensi presents the city girl as a prostitute, Oyono, in *Houseboy*, depicts Madame and Sophia as beautiful sexual objects fit only for male consumption.

But at the same time that most male authors and indeed some female writers were presenting female characters as second-class human species, others had begun to see the potential in women to assume roles previously thought to be exclusive to men. One of these is Sembene Ousmane. *God's Bits of Wood* (originally *Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu*) is a protest novel that has been given a contemporary political setting, and tells of the strike along the Dakar – Niger railway in 1947/48 in demand for better working conditions. Though they are beaten, murdered and tortured by the white employers, they win in the end with the women playing active roles. There is also Asiedu Yirenkyi's *Kivuli* from which he has *Blood and Tears* which also unearths the wind of change that is blowing with the strong desire of women fight for equality and freedom. We can also make mention of the late Efo Mawugbe in his novel *In the Chest of a Woman*, which also exposes us to the wind of change in issues concerning women from male perspectives. Mention can be made of Wole Soyinka in his *Kongi's Harvest* and Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of The Savannah* which are some of the selected texts for this research.

This study seeks to examine the economic, political and social roles played by the female characters to alleviate the privations of the daily sufferings they encounter in the society. This will be done by library research involving primary and secondary texts.



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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Some critics question the ability of male authors to present feminist ideals or write accurately from female perspectives. Stratton (1990:98) is one of these critics, claiming that characters who happen to be females have been depicted in a number of ways in male authors' works, some of which portray gender roles and disparities. She claims that in male writers' works, the majority of female characters are depicted as mothers who are confined to their homes and responsible for their husbands. She also accuses male authors of encoding female characters as morally corrupting and contaminating cultural agents on a regular basis. According to Stratton (1994), female characters are frequently depicted as goddesses who attract men to their deaths, "but they are frequently depicted as murderers and extremely suicidal in texts written by male authors". Stratton (1990:111-126) blames female political disempowerment on what she calls the "Ghettorization" of female characters in male literary texts. African literature, according to Ogunyemi (1988:66), is "phallic," dominated by male writers and critics who deal almost exclusively with male issues and aimed at a predominantly male audience. How do they then present true feminist values or correctly write from the viewpoint of women? These critics tend to imply that many male authors are clearly sexist. Adeleke (1996) explains that the inability of male writers to present women accurately in their works is as a result of the fact that the "African literature is a male-created, male-oriented, chauvinistic art". This is due to the fact that men and women have different life experiences and society's outlined roles place men mostly in the public, relegating women to the private or domestic sector. Men's abuse of women can be traced all the way back to biblical times, when women were expected to be submissive and obedient to men. (Adeleke, 1996:21-26) "As between male and female, the former is by default superior and ruler, the latter inferior and subject...." says Aristotle, a well-known Greek philosopher. The female is female due to a lack of certification.

These critics make their assumption based on the fact that men have not experienced life as women.

Ortner (1974) argues that universally, culture is associated with men while women, although important, are closer to nature. If the purpose of culture is to rise above nature, then this makes the woman and her subordinate role universal. Other authors, on the other hand, dispute the term's universalization, arguing that gendered traditions have deep roots in traditional cultures, resulting in the concept of gender differing from society to society. Oyeronke Oyewami in her book *'The Invention of Woman'* addresses the concept of hegemonic perspective and external definitions. She addresses the universalization of gender that has been drawn from feminist discourse. She argues that Yoruba language is not gendered and that seniority is the dominant form of organization in disagreement with Western feminist notions that economic roles are gendered everywhere. She argues that the concept of "women" is an alien Western concept and that it is a concept that is inapplicable to pre-colonial Yoruba society.

Women's oppression has long been a source of contention in human society. However, in the twentieth century, a theory emerged that aimed to create a society or community that is free of the exploitation and marginalization of women. Feminism is the name given to this theory, and feminists are those who adhere to it. Julia Kristeva, Elaine Showalter, Simone de Beauvoir, and Kate Millett are among the leading proponents of this idea. Because its major or main proponents are women, some people believe that feminist philosophy is an all-female affair. It is worth noting, however, that some male writers have accepted this approach and have attempted to dig into the plight of women in every manner possible, particularly through their creative works. As a result, part of the work's goal will be to debate the notion that "men do agree that they can never be women, but they can certainly be feminists." Huck, Helper, and Hickman (1989) defines literature 'as the imaginative transformation of life and thought into the forms and structures of language'. The human condition, they believe, is the province of literature. This implies that literature encapsulates the human experience, with all of life's insights, emotions, and feelings. That is to

say, literature reflects the concerns that concern people, and issues of equality are no exception. Since these subjects are also part of the human experience, both male and female writers look at the plight of women in their works. In terms of sex, sex is divided into two categories: male and female. According to Ford (2002), biological functions of chemical hormones are the only factors that determine whether an individual is male or female. It can be extrapolated from Ford's definition that sex is biologically determined, meaning that males and females contribute differently to human reproduction. This is meant to imply that men and women can never be physiologically the same, and that even males who support women's rights feel they will never be women since they can't change their biological makeup. This does not however, take away the ability of some men who attempt to address issues affecting women from doing so and doing it successfully. In the works of feminist writers, both male and female, the idea of women subordination to men is highly discussed since a conscious effort is made by these writers to deconstruct this idea.

The key and major goal of these feminist authors, according to Bressler (1994), is to change the world. He continues, "Feminists aim to deconstruct the illusion that man is the subject, that is, the one who spells out and defines, while woman is the object whose every life is decided and described by her male counterpart." In the quest of feminist writers to arrive at their objective, they make it their responsibility to expose all forms of subordination of women to men. This they do to ensure the valuing of both sexes as being creative, rational beings and capable of contributing meaningfully to the society and the world at large. As a result, feminist authors, both male and female, try to prevent some kind of subordination of women to men as much as possible, and offer their female characters in their works or writings complete social, physical, political, and economic freedom. Adeola James in her work, In Their Own Voices that woman can be understood if more is read on them from a variety of sources and if there are defined approaches for commenting on them. She concludes from interviews with various African female writers that, just like their male

counterparts, female writers are as equally concerned as men to “to articulate and denounce the poverty, corruption and destructive practices that have impeded development in Africa.”

To this Carol Mandi, the editor of Eve, an East African women’s magazine, is quoted as saying, “There are reasons from a hundred years ago that are not relevant today for Africans. Our challenge is to pick the good from the bad....We can’t stop being African women just because we are suddenly thrust into the modern world. What next? They will tell us to stop breastfeeding in public? No way.”

Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye (1996), in addition observes that women have often been presented in literary works as being frustrated and deprived which according to her is sometimes true. On the other hand, she makes mention of the fact that there have been points in history when “some women with outstanding gifts, have made their names in administration, business, or the arts. True, they lacked - and most men also lacked – the opportunity offered in modern times for specialization and publicity.” She is however, silent in her observation, on how the modern woman today utilizes the opportunities she has now, which her other women before her lacked.

Furthermore, to the above Katherine Frank (1987), opines that male writers focus mostly on political, social and historical issues rather than on domestic ones.

It is possible that when writing about women, authors are likely to describe them differently depending on the era in which the writing is done, gender, nationality and culture. When writing about women, women writers or authors portray them from the female point of view. Male authors have also taken on writing on the female perspective just like their female counterparts. These two categories of writers are likely to write differently especially based on gender. Formally, the educated African man had the power of portraying the African woman and “reasserting her presence.” This Anthonia C. Kalu (2001) argues that “because the African’s thought remains significant to his post-independence existence, literature and literary criticism, contemporary African literature must continue to engage viable African literature through continuous

examination and portrayal of the realities of the new dispensation....A major concern here is the re-entrenchment of women and or female-related aspects of selected statements into contemporary discourse.” On the other side, feminist activists think that only an African woman can completely examine her experience. These women who get the privilege to write, when they do actually put women at the centre of their works as a way of portraying the inequalities they go through. They portray the need to emphasize the understanding of African cultures and social systems. Feminism believes that before colonialism, there was knowledge on resolving issues related to gender. Some even blame colonialism for gender disparities in literature. They call for women not to be just the ‘other’ and neither should they also endorse their own subjugation. One thing missing from all this is the fact that, these feminists fail to really acknowledge the gradual trend of male writers who are seen giving leadership roles and roles that exhibit the self-consciousness to female characters. African women did and do produce literature alongside their European counterparts, while receiving less attention from scholars and historians. On the other hand, feminist activists agree that only an African woman will truly explore her experience. Adelaide Casely-Hayford was one of the first women to write in European languages. She was born in Sierra Leone and educated in England and Germany before marrying well-known lawyer Joseph Casely-Hayford. She published a short story in 1961, “*Mista Courifer*”, which is a novel about the collision between African and Western cultures. Moreover, there were other women from elite backgrounds who were well educated in colonial schools. In their article, “African Women Writers: Toward a Literary History”, Davies, Carole and Elaine Savory Fido (1993) opine that about the time when many of their countries achieved independence, women started writing. Mabel Dove Danquah of Ghana, or the Gold Coast, Kenya's Grace Ogot and Noni Jabavu, Nigeria's Flora Nwapa are among them. Since the 1970s, African women have published a wide variety of works that have been well received both on and off the continent. Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, Bessie Head, Mariama Ba, Miriam Tlali, Nafissatou Dialo, Aminata Sow Fall, Zulu Sofola, Fatima Dike, Rebeka Njau

and Micere Mugo are just a few of them. However, in an already male-dominated field spawned by colonialism, the works of these women writers were not given the attention and recognition they deserved. 'The other voices of Africa are the unheard voices of Africa,' writes Lloyd Brown, "rarely mentioned and rarely accorded room in the repetitive anthologies and the predictably male-oriented studies in this area" (Brown,1981). Brown also points out that "male-oriented" and exclusivist criticism by Africans and other black Africanists has shaped what constitutes African literature: "Those critics and anthologists have viewed the African subject as an exclusively male commodity" (Brown,1981).

The exclusion of African women from the African literary canon is due to a variety of factors. The first reason is that in comparison to men, African women writers are underrepresented. Brown attributes the difference to the fact that women have not had the same educational opportunities as men in modern African culture. Then, only a few fortunate women acquired formal education and even to the university level, and acquiring this level of education has been one important prerequisite for writing in European languages. In her essay "Feminist Consciousness," Carole Boyce Davis also mentions African women's position as victims of intertwined oppressive systems, such as colonialism's racism and indigenous and international dominance structures. According to Davies, African women's lack of access to education is due to a mixture of colonial practices and indigenous prejudices. Early critique of African literature, according to Davies, came from European male academics who viewed it through the lens of their western male-oriented point of view. African women's voices have gone unheard, so representations of African women in pre-colonial and colonial times were often portrayed by African men in charge of writing African literature, who used their patriarchal perspective to tell the stories of their female counterparts. It's important to remember that "much of this early literature deals with the social and political ramifications of colonialism, as well as man's struggles both inside and beyond its confines." Women are normally pushed to the margins in all of this, serving as either indicators or

instruments for the male hero's problem-solving' (Davies, 1986). Some women against all odds crossed over these limitations and found themselves writing to give visibility to African women's voices. They tackled political issues from the domestic sphere and this is why writings by women were not given recognition because they were had been considered apolitical in an era where most writers, especially male writers were busy tackling political issues on nationalism. Female novelists' proclivity to tell domestic tales, on the other hand, has traditionally correlated with the affirmation of nationalism (Andrade 2011). It is evident that works by women writers were not given due attention and recognition due to the assumption that they tackled domestic issues rather than political. However, it can be made without equivocation that publicizing colonialism is not the only way to tell a political tale. Reading allegorically, it can also be argued, allows for the clarification of new ideas in domestic realms of existence and interpersonal relationships (Andrade 2011). Some of the first women writers in English in West Africa, such as Flora Nwapa, Emecheta Buchi, Mariama Ba, and Ama Ata Aidoo, were involved in a reclamation project, attempting to reconstruct an African historical history before the colonizers, no matter how different the method, and by doing so, to somehow strip away the biases and prejudices of the African culture as has been presented by the colonizers who invented it. These female writers were not only concerned with this reclamation project, but on a project that questioned both the colonizers and their own male contemporaries. This is because just like colonialism, their male folks misrepresented the image of the African woman in their writings and they resorted to changing these misconceptions. These male authors portrayed and continue to portray female characters from a ferociously male perspective, evoking male stereotypes of female sexuality or, more accurately, male misconceptions about female sexuality. Male authors frequently exaggerate the sexuality of their female characters, giving the impression that women have no identity outside of their sexual roles. This is because, according to Njabulo (2003), "the fact of women is determined by society. We have to admit, in this case, that society is that human entity created by men with the compliance

of women. Men have made the laws and prescribed conditions for breaking them with impunity as long as they benefitted from the situation.’’ These female writers have taken up the challenge and preoccupied themselves with their writings with subjects that pertain particularly to the African woman’s experiences. They try to correct certain erroneous impressions created by their male counterparts about the African woman. African women undoubtedly suffer a great deal of injustice and inequalities such as lack of recognition, denial of their right to education and employment into certain categories of jobs and into certain institutions. By virtue of their shared gender experiences, women writers are entrusted with the task of changing the misconceptions that society and male writers hold against African women through their literary works.

Female authors portray female characters in more realistic ways, with greater perspective, and in more positive and respectable interactions with their surroundings. They also intend to create a woman’s world where women can take decisions on their own and live successfully outside the standards set by traditions formulated by men meant to place limitations on the rights of women and to submit them under the power and rule of men. These female writers usually use female characters whom they give voices to and empower to speak against certain vital social issues and misconceptions about the African womanhood. They mostly wrote on themes about issues that militate against the freedom of women and infringe upon the rights of women like rape, incest, widowhood rites, bride wealth, motherhood etc.

It may be claimed that these women offered their thoughts on national concerns through the domestic sphere or family, which is only a minor part of the national. According to Andrade (2011), male writers' stories were often told in allegories of colonial resistance or national consolidation, whereas female writers' stories were not. Their female writers often used the family to address issues of resistance to colonialism's biases and the works of their male counterparts, issues that affect womanhood in society. According to Njabulo (2003), a human entity formed by men with the consent of women is described. He goes on to say that men created the laws and set

the conditions for breaking them with impunity as long as they benefit from the situation. Domestically, female authors addressed political concerns by often using the family as a symbol of body politics. Female journalists, who have historically been seen as unable to engage both nationalist and feminist politics at the same time due to their exclusion from national political hierarchies, have often used one fiction to expose another, according to Andrade. Women use the sphere in which they are most comfortable, namely the domestic, and write from that perspective where they stand and have better understanding. It's no surprise that the family is often used to represent the country in the writings of many female writers. Andrade goes on to claim that historically, female writers' proclivity for telling domestic stories has coincided with nationalism's affirmation of a separate "domestic sphere." She argues that 'as a result of the dominance of nationalist reading paradigms, readers have not been alert to either the literal or the allegorical relations between private and public spheres and forms of power in their fiction', Andrade (2011). From the above argument of Andrade, one can confidently say that the works of women writers contributed to nationalism discourses because the public and the private lives thus, domestic and national spheres are related with the domestic labour as part of the public.

One of the main tasks of African female authors after they finally began to gain a wide audience was to revise literary portrayals of African women. Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, a Nigerian feminist journalist, claims that African women writers' contributions to the empowerment of African women are to deconstruct stereotyped representations of African women and struggle against the various types of oppression that women still face in Africa. The de-mystification of certain male conceptions of the African woman as a goddess or Supreme Mother, self-sacrificing and suffering gladly and silently, according to Ogundipe-Leslie, is the first step toward a politics of empowerment for African women. This is because some of the male writers like Leopold Senghor who were influential poets of Negritude Movements in the 1930s often portrayed the African woman symbolically as the essence of the earth and of the physical, and above all as the great

mother. Some others like Ngugi Wa Thiongo used the woman and mother character in their work to symbolize womanhood. In the works of these male authors, the African woman is frequently depicted as the nation's fertile mother, an image that African male writers have helped to perpetuate. The role of motherhood in Africa adds to the mystification of African mothers. Because this theme is so important to African cultures, it will appear in the majority of African women's writings. Despite the fact that motherhood is not solely a concern of black women, the imposition of motherhood in Africa has given it a different meaning to African women. The question is what effect is expected to come out of creating strong central characters. No wonder Mary E. Modupe Kolawole (1997) states that “whereas most female writers embody some aspects of feminine consciousness, others are not emphatically interested in projecting strong female awareness and viewpoint.” Most of the early African writers as explained above were men and they chose to present a patriarchal world. This emanated from the fact that these men lived and dealt with a traditional society that was a patriarchal one. However, recently, there are some exceptions of men who are sympathetic to the cause of women. Some go to the extent of creating a central space for women but they do not necessarily reveal their strengths. There are others who understand and show some “sincerity in the need to portray female characters as active heroines making meaningful contributions to their societies” according to Mary E. Modupe Kolawole.

One such male writer is Chinua Achebe. It could be said without mincing words that, in his earlier works, the female characters he created lived in a world of “male chivalry and macho heroism.” This is not surprising since novels such as Arrow of God and Things Fall Apart dealt with and were based on a traditional society where wives cowered before their husbands, which is evident in the lives of Okonkwo and his wives. Due to male prowess and invincibility of men, they handled women roughly. Women in these eras as portrayed by Achebe were only feared in such roles such as priestesses, as clearly exhibited by Chielo. In these traditional eras women were portrayed basically as presented in society, in the works of male writers, as ‘voices’, ‘ears’, and ‘eyes’.

Contrary to this, in Achebe's No Longer at Ease, we see him beginning to give some attention to women. This is evident in his creation of Clara, a female character who is delicately interwoven with that of Obi Okonkwo. With this, he brings out her strength of character. She is portrayed as a woman who exhibits self-esteem in her refusal to be an appendage to Obi Okonkwo's dream.

It is evident from the above discussion that colonial rule did not only bring an imbalance in the political, social, religious, and economic lives of the African but also marked the beginning of the end for the traditional roles and statuses of African women.' Before colonialism, the contributions of women to the community were recognized and the differences between men and women were appreciated and it was accepted that each gender had different needs. This implies that there were two distinct but equally strong and autonomous political structures that dealt with men's and women's affairs separately.

The problems of outlined gender roles are likely to make men lead and live a life full of privileges where they are considered to be the benchmark for human experience in patriarchal societies. Women live a more subjugated and subservient life in these cultures, where values are established solely in relation to men. As supported by Njabulo (2003), "And so does society determine the fact of women. We have to admit, in this case, that society is that human entity created by men with the compliance of women. Men, have made the laws and prescribed conditions for breaking them with impunity as long as they benefitted from the situation".

Traditions and customs which force men and women to fit into societal gendered roles are threats to society as this leads to the assumption or belief that these demarcations and roles are a true reflection of truth and a healthy breeding ground for gender stereotypes to germinate and to grow into inequalities in society. It is due to this that interventions continue to emerge from women's movement across Africa and other parts of the world as well.

Adding his voice to the works of women's movement, Gwendolyn Mikell opines that, the emerging of women's movement across the African continent is quite the same as its counterpart

in the Western world. This she argues is as a result of the fact that they are both based on the same ideology which is the ideology of the woman as a sexual being. She opines further that some critical events or happenings on the continent like political unrests and cultural diversities have contributed to shaping this ideology. She adds the fact that these critical events as named above have created political spaces in which the woman can act to effect change in her structural position within the society.

In summary, it is worth noting that men, and especially male authors, believe that they cannot and will never be women in terms of their biological makeup, but that they can make an impact in terms of feminism issues by contributing their quota to fighting women's oppression through their writings. Male authors such as Chinua Achebe and Ngugi have adopted feminist theory and gone to great lengths to reveal and challenge patriarchy. This is accomplished by elevating women to positions of power while also attempting to eliminate gender assumptions about women. This write-up would look at the contributions of men feminists in a patriarchal society and to see if their efforts are worth appreciating. Can male writers work extra hard to totally emancipate women so that they can be labelled feminists rather than semi-feminists who appear to be elevating women while failing to truly empower them, as some feminist activists and portions of society claim?

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The last few years have witnessed the emergence of vigorous, critical and scholarly attention on gendered issues and roles in African literature. According to Gwendolyn Mikell, the emerging women's movement across Africa like its counterpart in the Western world has contributed to the change in gendered issues and roles in African literature. Literature has come a long way in terms of its diversity and complexity of its concerns.

The basis for this argument by these critics emanates from the assumption that the images of women portrayed in literature have been exaggerated and are not dignifying and therefore, do not

accurately reflect the traditional roles and the socioeconomic reality of the situation of women.

This is unfortunate considering the tremendous contributions the cultural, socioeconomic and political advancement of women has done in Africa to their societies and the continent at large.

Such criticisms seek to put across the fact that, women and the course of womanhood have not been adequately secured and acknowledged by African writers. Adeola James (1998:36-39) opines that more and more women are getting involved in medicine, social issues, politics and other leadership positions. According to her, these women are venturing into domains previously known to be male-dominated. She continues to argue that, as women access rights formerly denied them, they also protest against any move to take away from their rights. According to her, the world is coming to terms with the 'intrusion' of the female in a male-dominated world, as women play more active roles in the society, the economy and on the political scene. This change in the roles of women has affected the depiction of women in literature.

The genre of writers who have particularly come under scathing criticism for not portraying women positively in their literary works are male writers. In support of this assertion, Stratton (1990:98) argues that, female characters have been projected in various ways by writers, some of which are gender stereotyped in nature and full of inequalities. She further supports her claim with the explanation that, writers and especially male ones usually present their characters who are females as mothers who are entrusted with the role of taking care of their husbands, children and their entire household while confined within the home. She further opines that, male writers over the years have presented women in their literary works as being morally corrupt and are often portrayed as goddesses who are guilty of luring men to their death.

According to these critics, the limitations placed on women or female characters in male literary texts, such as Stratton's, is a factor in the political arena aimed at disempowering women. Another critic, Ogundipe-Leslie (1987:15), adds to the debate by defining female characters in literary works as "the all-accepting creature of fecundity and self-sacrifice known as the "sweet mother"

This mother figure is "often conflated with mother Africa, with timeless and abstract beauty and inspiration," according to the author "Ogundipe-Leslie believes (1987:15). She emphasizes the difference between seeing her as a figure of beauty and seeing her as a romantic and sensual lover, a perspective that, according to Ogundipe-Leslie, transforms females into feminine archetypes as well as sexual objects desired by men. Many male writers, according to critics like Stratton and Ogundipe-Leslie, are hesitant to portray female characters in their entirety and in the true complexity that they deserve. A situation that has, according to them resulted in male writers resorting to the use of stereotypes. This they argue results in the domination of male writers of African literature thus: "African literature is a male created, male-oriented, chauvinistic art", as opined by Adeleke (1996:21-26)

This is supported by Cuddon (1992:54), who claims that the literature area is dominated by men, resulting in many male phallogocentric philosophies, patriarchal behaviours, and male interpretations of concepts and ideologies. Cuddon debunks masculine assumptions regarding female character representation in literature by critiquing male authors' representations of female characters in literature. She accomplishes this by focusing on women and explaining how they feel, act, and think, as well as how they respond to life and living in general. As a result, many male authors' prejudices and assumptions about women are called into question.

1.3 AIM OF STUDY

The goal of this dissertation is to conduct a comparative analysis of women's images in a number of literary works. The goal of this research is to look at how female characters are depicted in some carefully chosen African writers' works to see how important female status is in comparison to male status.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Achebe declared during a speech he delivered to a convocation audience at the University of Ife in 1978 that “art is man’s constant effort to create for himself a different order of reality from that which is given him; an aspiration to provide himself with a second handle of existence through his imagination”. Also, Ngugi, in his book, *Home Coming* opines that, “literature does not grow or does not develop in a vacuum. It is given impetus, shape direction and area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society... There is no aspect of our life which has not been affected by the social, political and economic needs”. Mudimbe, V.-Y (1991) also adds his voice to literature as an art by writing that “The literary world could well be a mythical space which unveils the concrete experiences of human communities”. From the above observations two things are worth noting;

The first is the inventive and reorganizational function that art plays in the community from which it emanates and the second, the fact that art can be said to be the product of the author’s imagination and the concrete experiences of human societies. In other words, art and literature for that matter, reflects even if in a minimal way, the place from where the writer is writing. With this explanation, considering the peculiar circumstances in which the African writer, whether male or female finds himself or herself, the question of the inventive and reorganizational function of art becomes fundamental and this must manifest or be seen not only in the immediacy and appropriateness of the author’s concern but, more importantly, in the portrayal of characters who live in the mythical space created by the author. This means that the writer must within the framework recognize and portray the importance of both sexes in the development of society. The image of women then becomes very important just like that of men, in view of the fact that women are confronted with numerous debilitating and stress-related problems and this cannot further be compounded by literature.

Some critics are of the view that since men and women have different life experiences, it manifests in their writing as well. This is the issue and the foundation for this research. As a result, male authors are not likely to be able to write accurately when presenting feminist ideals in their literary work or give an accurate portrayal of women in their works from the female perspective because they have no experience in this field of women. This research is to explore into the claim that, men who write about women in their works face the possibility of describing women differently depending on gender, nationality and culture and that it is only female writers who succeed in portraying the life of the woman accurately in their works since they write from the female point of view.

Do male writers only concern themselves with giving much attention and glorious moments to male characters and fail to present the African women in her totality but only resort to the use of stereotypes as some critics argue? In their treatment of issues like polygamy, childbearing, motherhood and other issues that concern women, do these male writers only appear to be creating a stereotyped picture of the African women as they are accused of doing? To investigate these issues, I would like to examine how women are depicted in the struggle for political, economic, and social liberty in the works of a few different authors, and see if the author's gender influences how he writes or depicts women in his literary work. I would like to investigate whether some African male authors, in their attempt to see life through the eyes of a woman, are able to do so correctly by portraying women accurately, or whether prejudices exist in all male writers' works.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

This work will make use of primary and secondary sources. The study is essentially through library and internet research involving primary and secondary texts. The primary texts which will be used for this research are novels selected because they portray women in various perspectives. They portray female characters in their struggle for political, economic and social freedom

The secondary texts will also comprise critical works on the image of female characters in various texts especially that of men writers. The emphasis of this thesis will be on the examination of some novels written by African writers in order to achieve the study's goals and objectives, which include examining how some male writers attempt and succeed in presenting the importance of females' or women's status in their literary works by making their status equal to or above that of their male counterparts. My decision was influenced by Myers (2009:242), who discusses why qualitative analysis is the best approach for studying social and cultural phenomena. This, he explains, is due to the fact that this approach is more concerned with people's perception of themselves and the social-cultural background in which they reside, as well as their comprehension of why people behave the way they do. It also reveals people's views, values, and fears in a culture. My decision is again influenced by Taylor (1984:141) who opines that the best way for a researcher to interpret and analyse primary and secondary resources is through the use of the qualitative approach. He states that this is the only option or solution that can assist the researcher in producing high-quality, reliable results or outcomes. The qualitative method of study is the most appropriate for my research because it will be focused on the use of primary and secondary sources.

The research will again employ the use of some literary theories which will be the lens through which the texts will be analysed. The feminist literary approach will be used to investigate how gender power imbalances are expressed in or questioned by literary text in a given culture. (Guerin 1999) This approach will be applied in the text analysis to examine the perception of the subordination and oppression of women in the literary works of male writers through their portraiture of women and how they describe them in their novel. Gynocriticism, a second wave feminism pioneered by Elaine Showalter with her book *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), which includes three major aspects, will be one of the lenses through which the chosen texts will be examined. The first will be about female authors and their place in literature. The second element of gynocriticism will be the consideration of the portrayal of female characters in books by both

male and female writers, and the third will be the discovery and exploration of a corpus of women's literature. Elaine Showalter does some feminist identification which will be very helpful in the use of the feminist theory as a tool for analysis of the texts of this research, namely-the biological model, which examines if the text under study somehow mirrors the body, that is, whether it reduces women merely to bodies. The second is the linguistic model which will be used in the textual analysis to test for language of sexism. Showalter's psychoanalytic model would also be useful in this study to recognize gender disparities as the foundation of the psyche, with an emphasis on the relationship of gender to the creative process. Finally, we use the cultural model, which, according to Showalter, places feminist issues in social contexts, recognizing class, ethnic, global, and historical differences among women, but provides a common experience that unites women through time and space and acts as a binding force. (Showalter, 1979) These ideologies will be the basis for our textual analysis. It will act as the lens through which an examination of the primary and secondary sources will be done in this study. We'll also look at feminist critique, which sees cultural and economic barriers in patriarchal societies that have hampered or discouraged women from realizing their creative potential, as well as women's cultural identity as a merely negative object, or "other" to man as the defining and dominant "subject."

The textual analysis will be conducted once more using the historical criticism literary approach proposed by (Guerin 1999), which, according to him, is very useful in determining whether the social, political, economic, cultural, and/or intellectual climate of the time an author writes influences the way issues are presented in his or her work. This is to examine if the system of patriarchy and the absence of feminism, in any way influenced the portraiture of female characters in the works of early male writers to juxtapose their later works. Such works are thought to be devoid of autonomous female role models, leaving the female reader feeling alienated or encouraging her to identify with male ideals of perceiving, feeling, and acting. The selected text will be used to test this hypothesis.

Another literary theory that will be employed is the psychological and psychoanalytic criticism. This will focus on how the state of mind of the author, his or her feelings and desires reflect the write up of the author in fictional forms. The work is seen more as a literature, primarily as an expression, in frictional form, of the personality, state of mind or feelings of the author more than a reality. (Guerin, 1999)

In this study, we will use the aspect of Marxist criticism that focuses on human consciousness in any era. Human consciousness in a given age is defined by an ideology, which is a body of concepts, beliefs, moral standards, and ways of thinking and feeling through which humans experience and justify what they believe to be true. The Marxist critic's goal is to expose the economic, class, and ideological determinants of an author's writing style, as well as to investigate the text's relationship to the social reality of the time and place.

The representation of female characters in their struggle for political, economic, and social freedom in the works of some selected male writers across the African continent guides the research to look at the understanding of some aspects of gender equality, contrary to some critics' claims that male writers only use stereotypes in their literary works.

1.6 RESEARCH PROCEDURE

This study focuses on reading novels by a few select authors as well as other similar studies that have previously been conducted in this area. In this study, literary theories such as gynocriticism, a second wave feminism championed by Elaine Showalter in her book *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), will be used. The study would also look at patriarchal ideology in the context of feminist critique theory, which pervades works that have been deemed great literature. Another literary theory that will be employed is the psychological and psychoanalytic criticism which deals more with how the state of mind of the author, his or her feelings and desires reflects the write up of the author in fictional forms.

The Marxist criticism, as a literary theory which focuses more on human consciousness in any era will be employed in this research. It will be employed to mainly examine or to contest the perception that the undesirable and unacceptable effects of tradition which is caused by patriarchal perceptions influence the way male writers depict their female characters in their works. They are often accused of denying female characters their fundamental human rights in their literary works. The most important aspect of this research is to determine whether there are character differences in African writers' works that contribute to gender stereotypes, and whether these stereotypes in turn lead to social, political, economic, and cultural inequality in the novels under investigation. The selected novels will be analysed using some of the literary theories named above, and some texts or write up related to the topic under discussion, sourced from academic and public libraries. Some literacy theories will be used as the foundation for evaluating these texts written by African writers. This study aims to investigate how women are depicted in the struggle for cultural, political, and economic freedom in the works of African authors, especially writers who are males.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following words are established because they are important to the study's understanding. Before diving into the subject, it's critical to define and clarify these main concepts because they're the foundation for a thorough understanding of the topic at hand.

1.8.1 Stereotypes

A stereotype is a collection of psychological and social distinctions to which a person has already adhered. Stereotypes may also be described as a pattern of behaviour in which people believe they must do, think, and act in a way that is clearly stated and appropriate in their culture or society. Stereotype is described by Sekhukhune in Mtuze, (1994:3) as being exemplified by proverbial and idiomatic and expressions. He goes on to say that prejudices have reduced women's social status

to that of a nonentity. This is apparent in the conventional roles and positions allocated to men and women, which favour men over women because men seem to have total control and authority over women while performing their duties.

As a result of the above finding, gender role stereotypes depict contrasting behavioural patterns in males and females, with men expressing social superiority and females expressing submissiveness and helplessness. In terms of their own emotions and those of others, men are generally considered to be non-expressive and emotionally stable. Women, on the other hand, are historically associated with emotionality, nurturing, dependency, and obsessive concern with their physical appearance. These preconceptions and stereotypes seem to give men the idea that they have the power to control women.

1.8.2 Gender

Gender can be described as the socially formed roles of males and females, as well as their relationships. In most cases, gender is defined by unequal authority, which often grants men exclusive rights and obligations. It is socially formed, not biologically determined or as a function of sexual characteristics of either women or men. There is a common misconception that gender is concerned only with the advancement of women. Men and women's relationships, roles, access to resources, division of labour, expectations, and needs are all studied in gender studies. According to Bravo-Baumann (2000), gender relations have an effect on household cohesion, family well-being, planning, development, and many other aspects of life. Gender relations, he continues, are the ways in which a community or society decides what men and women's rights, obligations, and identities in relation to one another should be.

However, as Scott explains in Zinsser (1993:54), "gender" refers to a concept of gender that has long been a cause of disagreement for many people around the world. She goes on to suggest that

the term "gender" has been abused to refer to the social, cultural, and psychological components of male and female identity.

Gender may be used to determine a person's "amount" of masculinity or femininity based on the factors mentioned above. Gender is, without a doubt, the perceptual package to which a culture has assigned each sex's position, such as females as family keepers. Men, on the other hand, have traditionally been assigned the roles of protectors and caregivers for their families.

1.8.3 Feminism

Feminism is a feminist movement that advocates for men and women to be treated equally in social, political, and economic matters. This is due to the fact that society treats women and men differently, and has done so in the past. Women have traditionally and systemically been unable to fully engage in all social arenas and institutions, according to the report.

According to Billington (1985:158), feminism is a movement that aspires to rebuild the world on the basis of gender equality in all human connections, a movement that rejects any gender distinction. This would strive to eradicate gender privileges and obligations, as well as establish the common humanity of women and men as the foundation of law and tradition. From the above, it is clear that feminism is an idealistic viewpoint that seeks to drastically reduce male-female disparity.

1.8.4 Feminity

Kramarae and Treichler (1985:157) claim that this is a reasonable portrayal of the female object, or "female eunuch," as they refer to her. Femininity is described by "delicacy, gentleness, girlishness, womanhood, and womanliness," according to them. Femininity is a concept that contrasts with the patriarchal view's machismo masculinity stereotype. As a consequence, the term has a definition.

Patriarchy is a patriarchal structure in which men rule over women. It demonstrates that men wield more social influence in almost every significant institution of society, while women have no real access to these structures. Patriarchy, according to Rich in Kramarae and Treichler (1985:323), not only prevents women from holding positions of power in society, but it also fosters men's negative social perceptions of women. A patriarchal society is one in which men have more status than women.

1.8.6 Sex

The biological traits that distinguish humans as female or male are referred to as sex. Sex can be classed in two ways, according to Kramarae and Treichler (1985:409), however, Tim Newman as written in his article published in the *Medical News Today*, on May, 2021 defines sex as the physical differences between people who are male, female, or intersex- which is an umbrella term that describes bodies that fall outside the strict male or female binary. To begin, sex is the attribute through which organisms are divided into male and female divisions based on their reproductive capabilities. Second, it applies to both males and females as a group. The term "sex" will be used in this analysis to refer to both men and women, as well as a specific gender.

1.8.7 Image

It is very important to undertake a terminological definition of image which will become increasingly relevant in our understanding of the issues at stake. Such a definition is important because it will define the parameters of our study and at the same time eliminate any ambiguity that might arise from the use of the word image in this work. According to the New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language, College Edition, 'image' among others is "(a) a picture drawn by the memory or imagination: (b). the mental picture created in a poem or story by descriptive wording". In our analysis of the images of women emphasis is on what picture we derive from the

situations and actions women are involved in and how integrated they are into the main plot of these novels.

1.9 LITERATURE REVIEW

SOME CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMAGES OF WOMEN IN AFRICAN LITERATURE

“If human beings were not divided into two biological sexes, there would probably be no need for literature. And if literature could truly say what the relations between the sexes are, we would doubtless not need much of it then. It is not the life of sexuality that literature cannot capture: it is literature that inhibits the very heart of what makes sexuality problematic for speaking animals. Literature is not only a thwarted investigator but an incorrigible perpetrator of the problem of sexuality”. (Johnson, 1980)

Whatever one may think about Barbara Johnson's critical censure of literature there is no doubt that it encompasses the views of most literary critics, largely feminists, that gender informs and complicates both the writing and reading of literary texts. A survey of critical literary writings on African literature, particularly the novel indicates that one of the dominant issues in contemporary criticism is the image of women in literature especially in the works of male writers. Literary critics, whose views will be examined below, have drawn attention to the dichotomous relationship between the social and economic reality of women in African societies and the image of women in literature. We will, therefore, in the subsequent pages of this chapter take a closer look at some of the prevailing opinions or perspectives of literary critics on the question of gender roles in African literature. Such an approach we believe will serve as an appropriate scaffolding from which we can look at the images of women in some selected literary works by African writers.

However, it is important to emphasize, even before taking a look at the various opinions that the literary approach of looking at gender roles as portrayed in literature is relatively new to Africa.

In fact, the systematic approach of looking at the issues of women and the female point of view in literature broadly called feminist criticism, has its origins in Britain and America. It is a literary approach that has been added to other established critical orientations like Neo-Aristotelian, Freudian, Structuralist, Post- structuralist, to mention a few.

According to Elaine Showalter, the feminist approach to literature everywhere can be categorized into two. The first category is concerned with "woman as a reader" and to Showalter "this is a historically-grounded enquiry which probes ideological assumptions of literary phenomena". (Showalter, 1981) Photos and perceptions of women in writing, as well as omissions and myths about women in criticism, are all part of this method. The second approach, dubbed "Gynocentric" by Showalter, is concerned with women as writers: "as producers of literary definitions, themes, styles, and frameworks of literature." (Showalter, 1981).

Both approaches to the issues of women in literature as enumerated by Showalter are found in African literary works and the novel in particular. Exponents of the first category called feminist critique have concentrated on delineating the various images and stereotypes that are dominant in African literature particularly the novel. Apart from this there have emerged female writers like Flora Nwapa, the late Mariama Ba, Buchi Ernecheta, Bessie Head and Ama Ata Aidoo to mention a few who are committed to presenting the female point of view in their novels.

"If at this stage our analysis seems to have veered into feminism and its ramifications, it is simply because an objective analysis of the images of women in the selected works of African writers is predicated on a valid comprehension of what feminine criticism entails. Without this we cannot understand the views of the critics on gender roles in African literature. In any case, the idea of the image of women in literature stems from the feminist recognition that literature is not only a thwarted investigator but an incorrigible perpetrator of the problem of sexuality". (Johnson, 1980)

As noted above, the question of gender roles has provoked several critical perspectives. According to Molaria Ogundipe Leslie the images of women one finds in African literature are not realistic

but stereotypes. One of the dominant stereotypes argues Ogundipe, is the “all-accepting mother of fecundity and self-sacrificing”. Closely related to this is the figure of mother Africa which one finds in many novels and poems for instance in the poems of Birago Diop, L. S. Senghor, and Dennis Brutus. Under this kind of stereotype, it is difficult to delineate the African women as flesh and blood from the rather romanticized transformation of the continent into a feminine entity. (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994-29)

Another stereotype Ogundipe identifies is the sophisticated city girl and her popular antithesis, the naive rural girl. The sophisticated city is portrayed as the embodiment of all the destructive tendencies of modernity. The result is that the sophisticated city girl is couched as a prostitute, a sex object. A very good example of the portrayal of the city girl can be found in Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* (1961). In this novel, the city girl, *Jagua Nana*, is portrayed as a sex symbol and as Helen Chukwuma notes, “in the city novels of Cyprian Ekwensi, characteristically, a woman's individuality is asserted only through prostitution”. (Chukeman, 1981)

The naive rural girl or woman on the other hand is portrayed as the upholder of traditional values and therefore adamant to change. The naïve rural girl or woman is portrayed as one who steadfastly and whole-heartedly takes on the roles assigned her by society without complain. Molar Ogundipe describes this stereotype as a 'lobotomised idiot' not found in the real African situation. For women cast in this stereotype, motherhood is almost the accepted norm and they appear as mere appendages of men.

Literary critics have condemned such images of women as dismal and retrogressive and do not reflect the cultural, social, economic and political realities of women in Africa. Consequently, various theories have been advanced to account for the predominance of these stereotypes in literature.

In her article “Second Sex”, Simone de Beauvoir (1949) attributes the stand male writers take on the issue of womanhood and motherhood to the position of African women in the society.

According to her, African women are seen as inferior to men, which she opposes, stating, "There is no natural excuse why women should be treated or consider themselves as inferior to men in society. Because of a mode of thinking in which man is seen as the standard and ideal, and woman is the defining 'other'; the being who validates his value due to her difference from him, women are seen as lesser in almost every known society"

Prominent among the various theories is the conceptual matrix that traces the issue to the dominance of African literature by men. Hence Femi Ojo-Ade (1983) argues that "African literature is male-created, male-oriented, chauvinistic art... the woman is supposed to be relegated to the gilded cage: she is not a contributor to, creator of, civilization. In fact, this writer goes further to assert that writers like Achebe, Ngugi and others have portrayed women who complacently continue to fulfil roles expected of them by society and to accept the superiority of men".⁶ It is partly in the same vein that Palmer (1983) laments that the "African novel has been remarkable for the absence of what might be called the female point of view"⁷. For critics like these, the crux of the problem is the dominance of literature by men who portray women in images that fulfil their own biases.

Men are often portrayed as writers who share universal experiences. Women novelists believe that "only a man can stand for the full spectrum of human experience, moving by action and search to success or failure," according to Carolyn Heilburn (1979). As a result of this stereotype, many women writers will believe they are incapable of writing stories about life and meaning, and will not attempt to do so. Gender roles will never evolve if readers believe the assumptions made in novels. This is because stereotypes cause readers to form preconceived notions about a text and the author's ability.

Ruth Robbins (2000), in her book Literary Feminism, on her take about the image of women in literature especially early female writers, opines that, "self-expression was mediated through the lens of whatever ideologies of femininity were current at a given moment". Robbins' point is based

on the social construction theory, which argues that everything, including one's personal identity, is shaped and created by experiences with other members of society. This she explains further to mean that a female writer who had never been exposed to feminism will not have feminism being part of her identity and therefore, is not likely to portray it in her writing. According to her "the images we see or read about are part of the context in which we live". It only makes sense according to her judgment that novels written in the past would reflect different ideas about women than modern novels with the various interventions that have influenced feminism. The story would be different if modern feminists focus more on contemporary novels by male writers than concentrating on past works. This turn of attention, one can assume will produce different conclusions than what is heard today on the way women are portrayed in the works of male writers. In a nutshell, the growing trend of feminist issues has influenced the works of many writers. Male writers in patriarchal societies are likely to exhibit elements of this concept in their literary works. Others have advanced a mythological theory to explain the problem. Myths, it is believed, contain the truths and dogmas by which a people live. Therefore, myths embody the people's attitude to and cognition of the ethereal and the mundane. That these have continually influenced and shaped people's thoughts and perception have been acknowledged since the beginning of the century. (Levi-Strauss, 1990) Literary critics, Mineke Schipper, for example, have pointed out that a close study of the myths of origin or creation of various African societies, and in particular, Christianity and Islam, two religions, that have had much influence on the continent, shows that myths are perhaps the starting point for looking at the less than significant images of women in literature. In the Christian myth of creation recorded in Genesis, for example, woman was created from a part of man who was created first. In this myth and many other passages in the Bible the woman is relegated to the background. Beyond this, when we come to the question of original sin, woman is portrayed as the destroyer of the primeval paradise situation. This image of the woman in Christian

myth is no different in Islam. For example, the Quran says: “Men are the managers of the affairs of women for that Allah has preferred in bounty one of them over the other” (Sura 4:34).

Mineke Schipper notes that while the Akan myth emphasized “that man and not women committed the first transgression, he made his way to the woman's camp”, (Ibid, p. 34-52), yet it is woman who is unjustly punished. The point being made by exponents of the mythological theory is that the religious and cultural mythologies portray women in images that are dismal and undignified and therefore what we find in the literature is a perpetuation of something that has its origin in the sacred beliefs of the people.

To conclude that the image of women in African literature is not well portrayed because it is dominated by male writers would indicate an inconclusive and parochial assessment of the literature. A critical appraisal of male novels and plays reveal that some male writers, at least, have portrayed women who play significant roles. We would take a look at Ousmane Sembene and Wole Soyinka to substantiate this point.

A classic paradigm of a male writer who has shown his recognition of the potential of women as agents of socio-political change in society is Ousmane Sembene in his novel God's Bits of Wood. Written against the background of the strike on the Dakar-Niger railway in October 1948, the novel questions the issue of male dominance. Ousmane portrays women who play prominent roles in the struggle for economic, political and social survival. The novel seems to make the point that the struggle for the change requires the involvement in both sexes in the society. This is shown with the role played by women during the match of the strike against the white authorities. For example, Maimuna, the blind mother of twins, in spite of her physical handicap, is portrayed as a woman with great strength of character, imbued with strength and dignity, a source of inspiration and, a symbol of endurance and capacity to survive. Another woman with sterling qualities is Ramatoulaye who is given real moral stature as she rebukes the police and the Imam. It is this recognition of the significant role Ousmane gives to women that leads Eustace Palmer to write;

“one can say, in fact that his world is one in which women seem to be supreme. They are always much more powerfully portrayed and demonstrate much greater moral courage than men”. (Palmer, 1974)

Wole Soyinka cannot be left out as far as gender role in literature is concerned. In Kongi's Harvest for example, Soyinka sees a specific role for women, that of catalyst in revolutionary socio-political change. In Kongi's Harvest, Segi, a woman, plays a very central role in plot and thematic development. She is portrayed as resourceful and energetic. But, above all, she is intelligent and through her political struggle she identifies with a progressive force like Doudu to overthrow the dictatorship of the power drunk and selfish, Kongi.

All the above paradigms seek to show the issue of gender roles in much broader, in fact, than we seem to present in this study. The use of Ousmane Sembene's God's Bits of Wood and Wole Soyinka's Kongi's Harvest as paradigms is to illustrate the fact that it would be symptomatic of gross over generalization to conclude that the predominance of stereotypes, as far as women are concerned, in the literature stems from male dominance of African literature. Nevertheless, the fact remains that women have been portrayed in stereotyped images.

Again, Katherine Frank in documenting “Women Without Men: The Feminist in Africa” also gives credence to some African male authors who have gone past these stereotype characterizations of the female to create female characters who have destinies of their own. She also cites Sembene Ousmane's God's Bits of Wood and nearly all the novels of Nuruddin Farah as examples. This of course depicts that there are some male authors who are quite appreciative and recognize the female species and their contributions in their communities and are willing to project them in a more considerate limelight.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1.1 INTRODUCTION

The goal of this chapter is to employ the essential literary theories as a guide for interpretation in order to make practical reading of settings easier and to expose the true meaning of the literary texts under discussion. This will be achieved by applying these concepts to a sample of a few African authors' works. The ideas that will be explored in connection with this research have been accessed as resources that will be used by this research in an effort to help us understand how female characters or women in the struggle for cultural, political, and economic freedom are depicted in the works of some selected African authors.

Culler (1997:145-149) claims that literary theories are used not only to enrich and extend understanding of research work, but also to demonstrate a new approach to literature analysis. These theories, according to Eagleton (1983: viii), are a collection of interconnected literary studies. Theories can also be used to guide research and provide some textual validation.

2.1.2 THE LITERARY DEVELOPMENT OF GENDER THEORY

The systematic compilation and study of data on gender inequality and social interactions propelled gender theory to prominence in academia. It was important that vital facts be made public in order to understand gendered social imbalances. It started out as a feminist theory that sought to use a diagnostic approach to streamline gender roles.

It has, however, gone beyond that, including the investigation into both gender and sexual identities as part of its initial agenda. The impact of political feminism on gender theory can be traced back to specific concerns such as women's rights in western societies, female roles, and

women's inclusion in literary texts and cultural contexts. It's a theory that arose in the 1960s after the resurgence of political feminism in the United States and Western Europe. According to Showalter (1986:134-138), the theory converged with early literary feminist practices, which emphasize the study and inclusion of works by female writers, as well as the portrayal of women in male-authored canonical texts.

Gender is not a principle with which humans are born, according to various schools of thought. Eckert and McConnel – Ginet (2003:10) agree with this statement and add that gender is something people do, not something they have. This view is supported by Butler (1990:19) who supports her claim with a scenario of a young man who follows his father proudly. According to her, "As he swaggers and sticks out his chest, he is doing everything he can to be like his father". Butler succeeds in showing that, despite his father's lack of swagger, the youngster is creating a character that reflects the qualities he admires in his adult male role model. She illustrated her point with a drawing of a young girl donning her mother's high-heeled shoes, applying make-up from her mother's make-up kit, and scurrying around the room. A thorough examination of both cases reveals a high likelihood that both children will swagger and mince as they mature.

However, elements of childhood performances will undoubtedly appear in adult male and female behaviour patterns. Adults are prone to assume it's not "cute" if the girl swaggers every now and then, and will have the same opinion as the boy who tries a little mincing. They consider the boy's swaggering and the girl's mincing to be natural and sweet.

To put it another way, the above implies that a gender expression is open to all, but it is limited by social restrictions on who can openly perform which personae. Gender and sex overlap when society tries to balance or spell out desired ways of behaving with biological sex assignments. Gender development, according to Moser (1989:112), does not end with childhood activities. He claims that as people advance in their careers, such as secretaries and managers, their gender tends to shift. The transition continues as people's family situations change and they adopt the various

gender roles established by society, such as wives, mothers, husbands, children, and so on. Growing older means discovering new social behaviours that are dictated by one's status as a man or a woman. Gender education teaches people not only how to be males and females, but also how to behave and look in some ways. It also teaches them how to engage in relationships and cultures in specific ways. It also teaches how to see the world from different angles.

Gender, according to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003), is a social system in which each person's gender is embedded in the social order. This supports the notion that gender interacts with other socially defined hierarchies such as ethnicity, colour, age, class, and grades, among others. Gender is profoundly ingrained in higher education teaching, clothing and movement, art work and literary works, in reality, in every aspect of society, according to Molyneux (1998:93). This demonstrates that gender-based activities and spheres wield much more power and prestige than non-gender-based activities and spheres. A division of labour, in other words, may be linked to a division of social values. This is due to the fact that the division of labour entails various levels of power and prestige.

In most civilizations, men have more access to positions of power, public power, and influence than women, according to McDonald (1994:131-135). Females in these communities, on the other hand, have exercised significant power in their homes and non-public spheres. It's not surprising, then, that the assigning of female roles to areas of domestic or private concern is heavily emphasized in most literary works, such as being depicted as child bearers, caring for the family, raising and nurturing children, and so on.

This, according to McDowell and Pringle (1992:15), has resulted in females being relegated to the home sphere, and might be used as a universal explanation for female subjugation. This is based on the premise that depictions of female characters stem from the idea that they are close to nature, and hence are limited to domestic duties and reproductive functions. Ortner (1974) argues that universally, culture is associated with men while women although are important participants in

culture are more closely to nature. If the purpose of culture is to rise above nature, then this makes the woman and her subordination role universal. However, other scholars question the universalization of the concept arguing that gendered practices have deep roots in traditional societies resulting in the concept of gender being different from one society to another.

Gender theory has been labelled as post-modern because it questions Western thought's paradigms and intellectual premises. It is often seen as taking an activist approach, promoting regular interventions and actions aimed at potentially changing the current social order. One of the most well-known gender theorists, Butler (1990:13-14), stated that gender is a human construct based on a large duplication of social behaviours. However, since gendered traditions have deep roots in traditional cultures, it could be argued that gender is defined differently in different societies. However, in support of Ortner's argument, despite the diversity, cultures still possess shared values which may exhibit some common features of the concept of gender in different cultures. There is the need for researchers to make analysis which is grounded in a deep sense of historical and cultural diversities that exist and avoid making a generalization. In sum, it is misleading to draw a conclusion that what constitutes gender from one culture is the same as that of another despite the similarities because gender means different things to different people since it carries the ideologies of the culture from which it is constructed.

This backs up the idea that the gender theory is solely concerned with exploring the biological distinctions between men and women. This same tool was ultimately scrutinized by the same scholars who had come to the same conclusion that sexual distinctions are cultural products. The representation of gender relationships and other gender distinctions in literary works, particularly those produced by men, is the subject of gender theory. The primary focus of the research is on supposed gender-specific authorship concerns, as well as literary gender-specific reading and reception behaviour.

2.1.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FEMINIST THEORY

The feminist criticism theory was formed when powerful women like Cooper (1892:149) questioned the customs and trends of their period in order to speak out openly against gender inequities and in favour of women's rights. Despite the fact that the majority of these women did not identify as feminists, their attitudes and actions helped to establish a history of anti-sexism agitation and philosophy that has come to define Black American feminism.

Due to the inspiration derived from these actions of these women, most Black American women have and continue to work and fight towards the eradication of gender inequalities. In addition to these inequalities are the eradication of systems of oppression which has long subjugated women, black women especially. Over the years, these Black women's right movements have continued to seek to have a voice in various liberation struggles.

Black feminist criticism, according to McDowell (1995:56-58), is influenced not only by gender but also by cultural attitudes. She continues, "It is mainly made up of Black feminist critics who have looked at the works of Black female writers from a feminist perspective.". One male specifically addressed men who write from a female viewpoint. In the introduction to his novel, "Almost a Girl: Male Writers and Female Identity," Allan Williamson ((2001), discusses his thoughts. He reflects on the challenges that many male writers face while writing from the viewpoint of a woman. He mentions the possibility that male writers who write from the viewpoint of women might feel self-conscious or not be recognized as "true men" because of their decision to identify with women. He also states the problem of these male writers having to deal with backlash from female feminist. These backlashes result from feminist ideas from men in the past which was normally seen serving as propaganda. This is what produces suspicion from women which has resulted in what male writers experience at the hands of feminists today. (Williamson, 2001)

Williams denounces feminist critics by arguing that "feminist criticism has felt the need to emphasize how hard it is for men really to imagine what women experience. It has been quick to smell pre-emption, rather than legitimate empathy, whenever male writers attempt to represent a female point of view. They fear that will perpetuate stereotypes, offer up straw men, or rather straw women, so that the patriarchal side can have the last word, or, at best, steal insights women writers deserve the chance to express for themselves". (Williamson, 2001)

Male writers today, according to Williamson, are still being held responsible for past male authors' use of feminist concepts against women. This, he condemns as a depressing thought, because, in his opinion, it is past time for today's feminist critics to go beyond the blunders of early male writers, or else they will miss out on the possibility to read and study literature that would offer new perspectives on the sexes, separate from the biases they have established in the past. He goes on to say that feminist opponents' unwillingness to embrace change simply serves to maintain gender stereotypes that can be as harmful to males as they are to women. He warns against guys viewing themselves just as what they're supposed to be, patriarchal and sexist, and always rejecting change, seeing it as fruitless based on how they're perceived or what they're said to be. Feminist goals, on the other hand, might be understood as efforts to actually improve women's quality of life by developing unbiased literary texts in which women and men succeed equally and without discrimination. Feminists seem to have looked at multiple aspects of social issues and come to differing conclusions about how to accomplish their goals. One of which is through their literary works. Dr. Helen Chukuma proclaims in an editorial that the diversity of current African writing, particularly those written by women, is a very welcome phenomena since it bridges the gender divide between male and female portrayal and reveals the other side of the coin, in her opinion. She goes on to say that the place of the rural, passive, subservient, drab, illiterate and naive woman has been successfully replaced by her urban counterpart, who is "a full-rounder human being,

rotational, individualistic, and assertive, fighting for, demanding, and holding her own" (Chukwuma,1997)

2.1.4 FEMINISM AS THEORETICAL CRITICISM

Feminist theory is a multifaceted field of research that incorporates a variety of critical theories such as psychoanalysis, gender, and anthropology. Feminist literary theory's main purpose is to understand the role of women and gender conflict in works by male authors. It contains art from a variety of disciplines. Females are not the only ones who are encouraged to lift their voices in unison by feminist philosophy. It not only inspires women to struggle for their rights in order to end the long-standing myth of female protagonists in male literary works being portrayed as inferior, but it also emphasizes women's equality. It also has a role to play in assisting women in achieving gender equity in the workplace and in achieving equality in their societies. Traditional literature portrays females as individuals who have made little to no contribution to literary works, according to the belief and interpretation. These are the problems that feminist theorists address by laying out their campaigns at all stages.

Many female scholars, according to Blain (1983:47), do not offer reasons for male authors, claiming that male literary texts portray females living in a time marked by gender differences, where they are forced to remain subservient to male characters who are portrayed as superior to them. Susan Gubar's (1981) essay "The Blank Page" claims that male writers frequently use literature to create women in the way they want them to be created; women are the "blank page" on which the male writer writes. To put it another way, the female author isn't finished until the male author is. When a man sees a woman as a "blank screen," she is never the author and never has the power to create herself. For example, Judith Kegan Gardiner's gender theories in literary criticism are based on the differences in men and women's life experiences. She acknowledges that finding differences between the works of male and female writers is unsurprising, considering that

men and women have different life experiences. She attributes the difference in men's and women's portrayals of women to the fact that men and women live differently as a result of their gender, and thus their writing will reflect these gender disparities. "Women's perspectives vary from men's in profound and frequent ways," writes Gardiner (1981) in her essay "On Female Identity and Writing by Women." "In a male-dominated culture, being a man means not being like a woman," she continues (178). As a result, the behaviour that each gender considers acceptable becomes severely limited and polarized" (189). According to many female critics, men authors are more likely than female authors to write ineffectively from a masculine perspective. As a result, it's unsurprising that they conclude that female authors are better at writing from a female perspective. When it comes to addressing female authors, many theorists believe that identity plays an important role. Susan Gubar undoubtedly believes that women are portrayed by male writers as blank pages", but it could be said and proven without mincing words that, not only men see women as "blank pages" but women sometimes also see themselves as such through their attempt to re-create themselves and to re-shape themselves. This explains the reason for the female author's deeply involvement in her work. This is contrary to the male author's position of creating something outside of himself.

Judith Kegan Gardiner is one theorist who believes in the major role identity plays in the literary works of female writers. She opines that identity plays a vital role in gender issues and literature. She explains that, "Female identity formation is dependent on the mother-daughter bond, the maternal metaphor of female authorship clarifies the woman writer's distinctive engagement with her characters and indicates analogous relationship between woman reader and character (179).

A woman writer is likely to recognize this and easily relate same with the created character who shares her identity and with whom she bonds easily. She argues further that, "The woman writer uses her text, particularly one centering on a female hero, as part of a continuing process involving her own self-definition and her empathic identification with her character" (187).

It is evident from the above that female writers are more attuned to their works or writings and to their female readers because their work and female characters are true reflections of themselves.

In conclusion, it could be said that feminist movements have succeeded in arguably influencing women in a more positive way. These feminist theorists through their work have helped to define women as being the more morally refined between men and women. This has placed women as the better and suitable guardians and custodians of morality and social cohesion. They have succeeded in doing this by using their portrayal of women positively in their literary works.

This Bennett (1929:67) confirms in her argument that “social transformations, that are largely biased and responsible for the female’s status being defined in terms of domesticity and morality, have also worked to provoke gender consciousness and reform, as the roles assigned to females become increasingly at odds with social relatives”. She explains that women are often depicted in contradictory roles literary works, culture, and society placed on them. They have given themselves as a mouthpiece and have used their works as a medium to share the thoughts of many females who are unable to speak, bringing attention and encouragement to these women's concerns.

However, the act of focusing on the past mistakes of some male writers by some female writers or critics and closing their eyes to the changes in modern works and even some traditionally literary works of male writers have blinded these feminist movements into accepting the fact that some male writers have indeed against all odds and critics in society chosen the stance to write from female perspectives and have succeeded in doing it perfectly. This effort made by these male writers can be appreciated should feminist critics attempt or adopt a different lens through which they view works of male writers contrary to using stereotype lenses since such lenses may portray gendered related biases which may not be present.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 FEMALE PORTRAITURE IN THINGS FALL APART BY CHINUA ACHEBE AND FACELESS BY AMMA DARKO

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the portraiture of female characters in the works of Chinua Achebe and Amma Darko, Things Fall Apart and Faceless respectively. As mentioned earlier in the methodology, these two books are carefully selected based on their differences in eras of writing by the two authors. This enables textual analysis to be carried out using the historical criticism literary technique proposed by (Guerin 1999), which, according to him, is highly useful in determining whether the sociological, political, economic, cultural, and or intellectual climate of the time an author writes influences the way topics are portrayed in his or her work. This is to examine if the system of patriarchy and the absence of feminism, in any way influenced the portraiture of female characters in the works of early male writers juxtapose their later works. Such works are thought to be devoid of autonomous female role models, leaving the female reader feeling alienated or encouraging her to identify with male ideals of perceiving, feeling, and acting. This assumption will be examined using these selected texts.

This chapter will also use the component of Marxist criticism that focuses on human consciousness in any era. Human consciousness in a given epoch is defined by an ideology, or a collection of ideas, beliefs, norms, and mindsets and feeling through which human beings experience and justify what they believe to be true. The Marxist critic's goal is to expose the economic, class, and ideological determinants of an author's writing style, as well as to investigate the text's relationship to the social reality of the time and place. This is why these two literary works from two different periods, eras, and places were chosen.

The chapter seeks to examine the way female characters are portrayed so far as the perception of gender discrimination in literary works according to happenings in a particular time is concerned. In terms of this chapter, the investigation will begin with a look at female characters in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The purpose is to examine African male writers' cultural perceptions of females, as well as gender discrepancies in literary texts. The analysis will examine the portrayal of women in their quest for political, economic, social and religious freedom and further examine the recognition of the roles and role of women to the development of the plot.

The chapter will also examine the portrayal of female characters in Amma Darko's *Faceless*. Just like with Achebe's novel, female characters will be examined in their quest for political, economic, cultural, religious and social freedom. The plight of women as portrayed by a female writer juxtaposes that of male writers.

The last section of this chapter will compare the portrayal of women in the two novels under discussion with emphasis on feminist and gender issues using the feminist literary criticism which uses the principles and ideologies of feminism to critique the language of literature. The comparison will be based on the role of women, their political, social, cultural and economic freedom so far as their position and contribution to society is concerned. We will look at some similarities and differences so far as the female characters in the novels under discussion in this chapter in concerned and factors that have influenced this. The study begins with an analysis of female characters in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

3.2 FEMALE PORTRAITURE IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S THINGS FALL APART.

The story that Chinua Achebe tells in *Things Fall Apart* though written in the twentieth century tells of the pristine culture of the Igbo people in Nigeria and its subsequent rupture by the Europeans who came to settle and colonize the people there. Firstly, Achebe portrays a society in which polygamy is accepted without question. The male, therefore, is permitted to marry as many

as his financial status can allow him. In fact, it is witnessed that Okonkwo even during his first year in exile began planning for his return and he had as part of his plans to marry a fourth and fifth wife.

“Even in his first year in exile he had begun to plan for his return. The first thing he would do would be to rebuild his compound on a more magnificent scale. He would build a bigger barn than he had before and he would build huts for two new wives”. (Achebe, 1958: p. 121)

This attests to the fact that Okonkwo is entitled to as many wives as his wealth can allow him. Achebe fails to portray the feelings and emotions that these females have for being in polygamous marriages. He is unable to describe their dissatisfaction or satisfaction with the state in which they find themselves. The impression that is gained upon reading this novel is that the females concerned in the novel accept their lot and fate without question. It portrayed women who had no voice or whose opinions and views did not really matter.

Again, Achebe portrays females who are physically abused in their marriages. For instance, Ojiugo, Okonkwo's third wife forgets to return early from braiding her hair in order to prepare her husband's lunch. When she finally returns, she is beaten mercilessly by Okonkwo to display his displeasure of the behaviour of his wife. A move meant to punish and correct his wife.

“...he walked back to his obi to wait Ojiugo's return. And when she returned, he beat her very mercilessly”. (Ibid, p. 21)

This particular event of physical abuse emphasizes the superiority of the male over female and again the tendency on the part of the men to see the female as some object he has acquired, meriting his abuse and maltreatment.

Okonkwo would have gone scot-free had it not been for the fact that it was the “week of peace”. This made his move an offence because it was a crime committed against the earth goddess and he had to pacify her to increase farm yield. But for this, he would have gone free for beating his wife.

"the earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase ...you will bring to the shrine of Ani tomorrow, one she-goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries. (Ibid, p.22)

This further exhibits the unimportance attached to the physical abuse of women and also exhibits the superiority of the male over the female. This is the reason for which an offense against her would have gone unnoticed and unpunished had it not been a week for honouring the gods by living in peace with one's neighbour.

Another situation of physical abuse is witnessed when Uzowulu sanctions his in-laws for keeping his wife; little did he know that he was rather going to be sanctioned. Uzowulu subjects his wife to constant beatings for the nine years that they have been married. His wife's family feeling for their daughter and sibling keeps her in their home when she runs to them for safety. The family refuses to return the bride price as custom demands and argues that the abused woman had a cause to save her life which was threatened by the constant beating of her husband, Okonkwo. "Last year, when my sister was recovering from an illness, he beat her again so that if the neighbours had not gone in to save her, she would have been killed. We heard of it and did as you have been told. The law of Umuofia is that if a woman runs away from her husband her bride price is returned. But in this case she ran to save her life." (Ibid, p.65)

Uzowulu's treatment of his wife further suggests that gentleness towards a woman is considered unmanly. The interesting point here is that, even in this situation, the woman, who is the victim in the middle of this misunderstanding is not heard, she is only seen. Her view is not sought neither is she allowed to express her emotions. Her situation is deliberated upon by her brothers, the Council of Chiefs and Elders who are all men, while she sits through the whole arbitration without saying a word, because she is not permitted to. A decision is finally reached; Uzowulu is to send a pot of palm wine to his in-laws who will in turn bring back his wife.

Another point worth noting is the fact that Achebe portrays women who are not very active so far as the governance of their communities is concerned. He portrays how women are left out of the organization of the society. It is realized in Things Fall Apart that the Council of Chiefs and Elders is made up of only males. For instance, during the arbitration of Mgbafo's case the titled men and elders who settled the dispute were all males. “ . . . the titled men and elders sat on their stools waiting for trials to begin”. (Ibid, p. 64)

This further portrays the dominance of the male over the female and which transcends into law making and political administration of the land.

Still on this very point, the "egwugwu", the masked spirits of the ancestors who come from the spirit world to give judgements on very important issues are all males.

"Okonkwo's wives and perhaps other women as well, might have noticed that the second 'egwugwu' had the springy walk of Okonkwo. And they might have also noticed that Okonkwo was not among the titled men and elders who sat behind the 'egwugwu.' But if they thought these things, they kept them within themselves". (Ibid, p. 64)

This depicts again the importance that is attached to the male. It further suggests that the society is a male dominated society.

These two points discussed above attest to the fact that the female characters that Achebe represents in his novels are portrayed as passive and therefore do not partake actively in the politics of their land.

Again, the females that Achebe represents in Things Fall Apart generally fit into their primary roles and responsibilities. The older ones are concerned with marriage, bearing children and the upkeep of the household in general. In the same vein, the younger females in Things Fall Apart at an early age are brought up to fill the roles of their mothers. At an early stage, they are assigned duties and responsibilities meant to help them fill such roles with ease and without question. From the novel for instance, in Okonkwo's household, the younger females help their mothers in the

preparation of meals. An instance is when the author recounts the preparations that Ekwefi and her daughter Ezinma make before they go to see the annual wrestling match. He recounts that it is their responsibility to cook the meals before they depart to see the match. “Ekwefi turned the hen over in the mortar and began to pluck the feathers. ‘Ekwefi’, said Ezinma, who had joined in plucking the feathers, ‘my eyelid is twitching’.” (Ibid, p.29)

From this quotation, it can be deduced that Ezinma's association with her mother during such times serves one purpose which is to train her in the running of the household in general.

Furthermore, a spiritual role is given to a female character who Achebe presents as a priestess to a shrine. This is in line with the belief of spiritual superiority that the Igbos attach to the female. An example is Chielo who is a priestess for Agbala, a goddess. Her status as a priestess is especially seen when she comes into Okonkwo's compound one day and requests to take Ezinma to see Agbala since according to her Agbala wanted to see Ezinma.

“Ekwefi, she called, Agbala greets you. Where is my daughter, Ezinma? Agbala wants to see her”. (Ibid, p.71)

This particular characterization fits into the socio-cultural roles of the female in the Igbo society. Achebe again enlightens his readers on the worthiness of the female virginity, marriage and bearing children. In this light, therefore, he describes the situation in which these elements are of great importance and that is only in marriage. This is evident in the marriage ceremony of the youngest of Uchendu's five sons, Amikwu during whose marriage ceremony, the young lady, who is his wife to be is made to swear her innocence, that is the fact that she has not been with a man in her life. The contents include curses which evoke death on her if this is found to be a lie. “Remember that if you do not answer truthfully, you will suffer or even die at child-birth. She began. How many men have lain with you since my brother first expressed the desire to marry you?

None, she replied”. (Ibid, p. 93)

Amikwu, on the other hand, is not questioned on his state of chastity. This lays emphasis on the fact that purity of the female before marriage is a requirement in traditional cultures. Furthermore, the emphasis on conception and child bearing is especially revealed through Ekwefi's experiences in connection with childbirth. Ezinma is her tenth child. Her babies die a few weeks or months after birth. The only surviving child Ezinma is a source of constant worry to her mother since she fears the same fate may befall her. This is evidenced during a conversation that Ekwefi has with Chielo in which the latter asks of Ezinma's health. "...and how is my daughter, Ezinma? She has been well for some time now. Perhaps she has come to stay... I pray she stays". (Ibid, p. 34-35)

From this, Ekwefi's fear of losing her child to death is made known to the reader. Ekwefi is especially worried that this possible death of her child will not only be a loss of a dear child but also a loss of her opportunity or chance of ever being a mother perpetually.

Though historically, females were given opportunity in the political administration of the Igboland, this is not represented in the novel. He again does not represent titled females in his novels. The titled females that the reader sees are those who wear the equivalent titles of their husbands. And even when done, this opportunity is given to the first wives of these men.

This therefore implies that Achebe in Things Fall Apart centres his story on only the males. Again, males who are unable to attain titles are called weak and this insult does not end there but it goes on further. The male in question is also called a woman. A situation of this nature is recounted in the novel where Okonkwo calls a man who contradicts him at a kindred meeting, a woman. "Only a week ago a man had contradicted him at a kindred meeting which they held to discuss the next ancestral feast. Without looking at the man Okonkwo had said: 'this meeting is for men'. The man who had contradicted him had no titles. That was why he had called him a woman". (Ibid, p.19)

By this reference, Achebe does not only distort the historical events that prevailed at the time but also, he fails to portray the events that concern the female's capabilities in the society at that time. Aside this, females are portrayed as weak. This is because showing emotion and weeping are

associated with a female and a male who finds himself showing emotion equivalent to weeping is called a woman. This is because women are associated with showing incessant emotion but real men of valour are supposed to bear every pain and difficulty like the men they say they are. Okonkwo after aiding in the murder of Ikemefuna is overwhelmed by his death and in his obi, he orders himself to stop thinking and shivering like an old woman over the death of the poor lad whom he loved with passion and whose death was painful to him. “When did you become a shivering old woman”, Okonkwo asked himself, you are known in all the nine villages for your valour in war. How can a man who has killed five men in battle fall to pieces because he has added a boy to their number? Okonkwo, you have indeed become a woman”. (Ibid, p. 45)

It is evident from the above without question that tears and emotion are equated to weakness and therein lies the strength of a female. It can also be concluded that being emotional is considered unmanly by the males.

In conclusion, Achebe's representation of females in his novel cuts across passivity to the political administration of the land, acceptance of their lot, playing the roles of priestesses and generally falling into line that is into their primary roles as women which is their roles of motherhood and wifehood. Achebe could be accused of portraying a patriarchal world in his novel which reflects the era in which the novel was written. He was dealing with a patriarchal society and it is evident in the roles played by his female characters and their position in society. The wives cowered before their husbands, like Okonkwo's wives. The rough way the men handled women in the novel showed male prowess in a typical patriarchal society. Achebe, however, portrayed an instance where the woman is feared by giving her the role as a priestess, as exemplified by Chielo in the novel. Achebe, so far as the woman is concerned does not interestingly portray the mark of pre-colonial Igbo society, which was the strong outgoing Igbo woman. The imbalance in the political, religious, social, and economic lives of the woman is exhibited in Things Fall Apart. Achebe does not fully recognize the contributions of women to the community in the era in which the novel was

written though they did contribute immensely. The struggle of women for freedom in their political, social, economic and cultural aspects of their lives is not very well discussed and portrayed by Achebe. The subsequent paragraphs will look at the female portraiture in Faceless by Amma Darko.

3.3 FEMALE PORTRAITURE IN BY AMMA DARKO IN FACELESS

This aspect of the chapter will start with an analysis of Amma Darko's Faceless. The section will examine some female characters portrayed by the novelist in her novel and their roles and position in contributing to the development of the plot. The female character in her relationship with the society and how she struggles for her political, social, economic and cultural freedom will be examined as well. The position of the woman, despite the limitations placed on her by society as a result of her sexuality will be examined to see if against all odds, she is able to keep reclaiming and reconstructing her own private space, her own freedom, and her financial independence or freedom. Another issue this aspect will analysis from the novel is whether the modern female faces similar challenges in the patriarchal society as her counterparts in the pre-twenty-first centuries. It seeks to examine if it was possible for women in the pre-colonial era to make positive contributions in spite of patriarchal hegemonies. Factors that stop the woman from rising above 'mediocrity' and refusing to be the 'other' woman will be examined as well.

Faceless is written fifty years after the independence of Ghana by a female writer. It is worthy of note that African female writers who emerged after the independences presented the complete course of the female through their writings. An example could be cited of Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter (1981), a novel which discusses polygamy and the consequences it has on a once monogamous family. She highlights the emotion of utter dejection, pain and heartbreak the female is subjected to whenever a second wife is introduced into the home the former has created with love. In Ama Ata Aidoo's Changes (1994), the pressure and burden on the educated professional

female are portrayed. The pressure is intensified by the conventional roles that a female of that status is expected to balance with her professional duties. The novel further depicts the structures in society that hinder the female from towing the path of her ambitions and succumbing to the conventional demands placed on her life. Though the story is set in Accra, a Ga Adangme society, it does not necessarily depict the traditional organization of this society. This is partly because at the period of her writing, the society and its culture had undergone so many changes from the western lifestyle. For instance, monogamy, western education and urbanization which she portrays are all influences from the western culture. This portion of the essay discusses the various ways in which the female is portrayed in this novel.

In the first place, there is a representation of females in monogamous marriages and the difficulties of managing their professions with their first responsibility as mothers and wives. Kabria is a married woman who has to shoulder the responsibility of caring for her home together with being competent at her work place. “The mother, wife, worker and battered car owner that she was, no day passed that Kabria didn't wonder how the good Lord created a day to be made of only twenty-four hours, because from dawn to dusk, domestic schedules gobbled her up; office duties ate her alive; her three children devoured her with their sometimes realistic and sometimes very unrealistic demands; while the icing on the cake, their father, needed no more than be your regular husband, and she was in perpetual quandary”.(Darko, 2003: p. 34- 35)

This is not the end of her woes but then again, she has to content herself with her insufficient salary because a decision to go in search of a better job would mean her not having the flexible hours that her present job at MUTE, an NGO gives her and which allows her to be there for her children. This is witnessed when such thoughts fill her mind upon dropping her children off at school one morning.

“...There had to be another way. Maybe she could find a new job that paid better. But the thought filled her with horror. A new job could mean a better pay cheque; but it could come with a stringent

work schedule. Her job at MUTE was flexible and enabled her to be there enough for the children. And the office's relaxed and informal atmosphere suited her fine. She couldn't eat her cake and have it''. (Ibid, page 61)

This therefore, brings to light the fact that the female has to contend with her lot and withhold pursuing her dreams if she actually wants to be there for her family. The male on other hand is not required to make such decisions, the sky is his limit. Again, the author brings to light the reason for which Kabria could not continue her education at the time when her husband was pursuing his which landed him a good job with a good salary. The reason was that she was busy making babies. “If I had time to study further like you did, I would also have been reaping the benefits of a better salary. But I was busy making babies then. Remember?” (Ibid, p. 39)

This therefore implies that she could not continue her education at that moment since it would have put her children at a disadvantage.

Furthermore, the plight of an illiterate female in a developing urban society is emphasized. The problems which range from rape, homelessness, juvenile delinquency to ignorance are discussed in detail in the novel. Fofo and Odarley are friends. They are both street children. The history leading to Fofo's life on the street is given in the novel. The streets that welcome her with open arms do not promise her a bed of roses but rather the more bitter side of life. She does not only have to struggle with making ends meet daily, but also faces the street bullies like Poison who tries to rape her at a point. This near rape occurs when she spends the night on a piece of cardboard in front of a provision shop one Sunday evening. “She was still smiling in her dream and doing it comfortably in the toilet with a roof when she felt the light pressure on her breasts under the weight of a pair of hands that were definitely not the Lord's. The hands began to play around her bosom... She felt a squeeze, which jolted her very rudely into full awakenment ... it was a man ... it was the no-nonsense street lord Poison of the streets all right”. (Ibid, page 27)

The ability of Poison and his friends to bully these females and also become feared street lords demonstrated one fact; that even on the streets the female is subjected to maltreatments from her male counterparts. Rape is not the only problem that Fofo deals with. She and Odarley struggle daily with joblessness and homelessness. “She chose to spend the night on the old cardboard laid out in front of the provision store at Agblogbloshie market place because it was a Sunday. It had nothing to do with Sunday being a church-going day. The reason was simply that if she hadn’t, she would have stood the risk of losing her job of washing carrots at the vegetables market”. (Ibid, p. 25)

“It was fairly illuminated inside the wooden shack because the door was never shut. It had no windows and they would all have sweated and suffocated to death if the door was ever shut. Paying two hundred cedis a day each to the owner, it was what they could afford. There were regulars like herself and until a week ago, Fofo”. (Ibid, p. 29)

All these portray the difficulties that females of the streets go through in a developing country like Ghana. Fofo and Odarley's sleeping place depict again their socio-economic status in society of which same could be said of other women on the African continent who find themselves in the similar situations.

In the same light, Darko portrays the need for the empowerment of the female through the creation of characters like Maa Tsuru who is portrayed as very ignorant. When the kenkey seller whom the latter works with dies, she is not able to put her life back together especially after her boyfriend leaves her. She accepts and believes that it is as a result of a curse that her life is going the way it is. “It's the curse!” Maa Tsuru wailed from inside. ‘It's the curse.’” (Ibid, p. 119)

It could be concluded that Maa Tsuru's acceptance of her situation is merely due to ignorance. After this incident of the death of Maa Tsuru's employer, she is practically unable to help neither herself nor her children. Had she had a little formal education, she would not have bought into the belief that because her mother cursed her father during her birth there is a great possibility of her

being affected by the same curse since it was pronounced on her father and his generation, making her a victim.

“....and all Tsuru's mother could think of was her hatred for the young man who had dishonoured her before she could be purified and properly initiated into womanhood... by the time the baby's shoulder burst through her and tore to shreds the lining of her womanhood, the curse was on her lips., she yelled that may her lover and descendants after him suffer in more ways and in more forms than he had made her suffer... she lay there dead, while they took the child away... a child cursed by her own mother’’. (Ibid, p. 122)

“So Maa Tsuru thinks her situation is a result of the curse? Kabria asked.

Who knows? But something robbed her of her sanity.’’ (Ibid, p.122)

The empowerment of characters such as Maa Tsuru would not necessarily be to give them a formal education but rather being sensitised and trained in the field of a particular vocation may be the answer.

Again, the reason for which the male is able to take advantage of the female is revealed. In this novel, it is attributed to ignorance. Maa Tsuru, ignorant of the law and the punishment it gives to rapists does not only allow Onko to go scot free when he violates Baby T but also gives herself to him thinking if she rather sleeps with him, it would stop him from violating her daughter. This is seen when she goes to Onko to talk things over with him.

“Maa Tsuru rose abruptly. Onko’s face fell. Then the corners of his lips stretched into a smile as Maa Tsuru untied her cover cloth around her waist; placed the wad of notes in the corner of it and proceeded to slowly tie it up. She did not look in Onko's face. If she had, she would have seen how the initial trace of shame and remorse had completely disappeared from Onko's face.’’ (Ibid, p. 168)

This therefore, emphasises the sexual abuse of some females in society and more importantly the reason for which some culprits escape punishment.

Also, the problem of barrenness that is easily blamed on the female is emphasised in Darko's novel.

Dina, a female character in Faceless is a degree holder. She marries her university sweetheart straight out of school. When there is no conception after four years of marriage, she experiences the brunt of the problem.

“Dina was a graduate of the University of Ghana. Her marriage to her campus boyfriend shortly after graduation, ended in divorce after four turbulent years of childlessness...” (Ibid, p. 62)

She finds a solution to her problem. She divorces her husband and starts a Non-Governmental Organization all by herself and becomes the employer of some other females.

“Finding herself with no child and no husband and plenty of time, she recollected her frustration during her final year research work for her major essay when she found out that regular libraries did not stock the kind of information she was looking for. And with that recollection, came the birth of the idea for MUTE.” (Ibid, p. 62)

A conclusion can be drawn from the action that Dina takes; that there is more to life than just marriage. Life can be better or worse depending on how one may want to look at it. This strengthens the point that the issue of barrenness is blamed on the female and again, that this status quo has not changed even in twenty-first century Ghana.

Finally, some women who are more empowered in this novel come together to help their less privileged counterparts in the society. This is witnessed when Kabria and her colleagues from MUTE come together to expose the culprit behind Baby T's death. The helping hand they choose to offer does not only expose the culprit but also opens the doorway for Fofo and her mother to be helped. Fofo especially is sent to a rehabilitation centre where she recovers from the harsh realities of her life and also is instructed in some vocation. “Fofo by then had reported to the organisation to begin her rehabilitation. The test results from Korle-Bu were still not in, but she knew MUTE would be there for her. That was consoling. She could also mourn her sister openly. That felt good.” (Ibid, p. 229)

This particular action is worth emulating since it shows that humans live a life of interdependence and the more privileged ones should always come together to help the less privileged ones.

In Faceless as discussed above, the novelist presents female characters from diverse backgrounds and experiences. We are introduced to females from the rural and humble background as well as females with a more determined outlook on life. In sum, though there are diverse problems encountered by these females with different backgrounds, their stories connect to paint a picture of a society that seeks to exploit the female, depriving her of her moral, political, financial and economic freedom. This emerges from her deprivation of moral, political and financial support by using familial disintegration as a threat. Women are seen fighting against a form of patriarchal that could be defined as a “pattern of oppressive governance by men with little regard for the wellbeing or personal fulfilment of women, for the more significant values”. As some of the female characters in the novel fight and challenge this system, we are confronted with the emerging African woman, born out of a desire to show her humanity, alongside that of her male counterpart. From the novel, Darko presents a woman who learns not to let her humble background or sexuality prevent her from becoming emotionally, financially, politically, psychologically, morally and socially matured. This level of maturity earns her the respect of her male counterpart.

3.4 ANALYSIS OF THE PORTRAITURE OF THE FEMALE CHARACTERS IN CHINUA ACHEBE’S THINGS FALL APART AND AMMA DARKO’S FACELESS

From the analysis made on the two novels discussed above using a historical criticism lens, the female portraiture in Things Fall Apart shows how Achebe excludes some important functions of women as portrayed in reality in the history of the Igbo people and society. In the Igbo society there were associations for both sexes. The association of women which is not portrayed by Achebe set to deliberate the issues concerning the market place and also women. They were thought to possess superior spiritual well-being and therefore represented many cults and shrines; this role of

women is acknowledged by Achebe in his novel. By so doing he acknowledges the religious role women play in the society. They also gained wealth through farming and could even marry other women and 'father' children. They could also attain titles. The female children began their lives as apprentices who grow to fill the shoes of their mothers this Achebe notes in his novel and is worth mentioning acknowledging the economic strength of women. Women are therefore not totally portrayed as being docile in Achebe's novel, Things Fall Apart.

However, in the other aspects of life, Achebe is guilty of the accusation of excluding some important functions of women portrayed in the history of the Igbo people and society which seem to be the setting of the novel. This includes the representation of the women as passive to the politics of her land, the inability of him to give in record detail the perceptions of the female characters concerning polygamy. This particular concern is to verify whether they have any misgivings towards their polygamous state. Faceless on the other hand has revealed this among others plight of the woman. The difficulties that come with managing a profession with a family have been represented. Female characters that are empowered who are able to help change the destinies and impact the lives of others have also been represented. Again, the issue of ignorance and barrenness and their effects on the female has also been described in Faceless by Amma Darko but not Achebe in his novel Things Fall Apart.

The subsequent paragraphs in this chapter will attempt a feminist comparison of the portraiture of the female character in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Amma Darko's Faceless using the Feminist Literary Theory to analyse and describe the ways in which the texts under study portray the narrative of male domination by exploring the economic, social, political and psychological forces embedded within the texts. Again, using the Historical Criticism Theory as a tool for analysis the comparison will factor the era in which the novels were written and how that has contributed to the way female characters are portrayed. The woman in the discharge of her roles will also be examined. This will be based on the political, economic, cultural and social roles in

connection with the woman and how well she is able to express and exercise her freedom in these aspects of her life so far as the two novels under discussion are concerned. The plight of the woman in her quest to fight, to think and reason for herself through her life experiences, rather than being crippled by it will be examined in both novels to meet the demands of the research which sought to examine the portrayal of women in their quest for political, cultural, social and economic freedom.

This section begins with a comparison on the eras in which the novels were written and how that may have contributed to the portrayal of female characters. Things Fall Apart is set in Umuofia. The period for writing this story is the nineteenth century. The story is set within the Igbo culture in its original state. It is therefore, not surprising to find that the setting is a typical rural community. The system of inheritance then was patrilineal in this society and the male tended to have dominance over the female. There is also the absence of western education and its impact on the indigenous culture. Faceless, on the other hand, is set in twenty-first century Ghana and more importantly, in a vibrant urban community. This period has seen the introduction of western education and the influence of western culture on traditional cultures. It is again a period where both sexes have had contact with formal education. These influences have shaped the world view of the women in the novel. This is evident in Ruth Robbins' assertion in Literary Feminism, Robbins (2000) in which she claims that if past works by female authors did not often have feminist themes, then past works by male authors would most likely not have such themes as well. With the many interventions that have influenced feminism, it only makes sense, in her opinion, that past novels will represent different ideas about women than today's novels. "Self-expression was filtered through the prism of whatever feminist philosophies were current at the time," she says. Robbins' point is based on the social construction theory, which argues that everything, including one's personal identity, is shaped and created by experiences with other members of society. She illustrates her point by claiming that a female writer who has never been exposed to feminism will

not have it as part of her identity, and therefore will not reflect it in her fiction. The photos we see or read about, she claims, are a part of the context in which we work. Robbins' claim explains why there are so many feminist literature theories on the picture. The periods that Chinua Achebe and Amma Darko wrote their novels have influenced the representation of their characters. In comparing the portraiture of the female in the two novels, it is realized the authors reveal the female in the following ways;

First, the female characters in both novels are concerned primarily with the running of the household. For instance, in Okonkwo's household, the female's concern is with the daily upkeep of the home. This is witnessed when the household prepares to go and watch the annual wrestling match. Ekwefi instructs her daughter to bring in the yams so they can quickly prepare the meals. “Go and bring our own yam then, we must cook it quickly or we shall be late for the wrestling. Ezinma ran in the direction of the barn and bought back two yams from the dwarf wall. Ekwefi peeled the yams quickly.” (Ibid, p. 31)

In Faceless, Kabria is concerned with rushing through her chores each day and ensuring that there is food on the table and that children are fed and the home in general is without blemish.

“Kabria's household was up to the chin in their routine Monday morning chaos. She was up with the crow and still running around.” (Ibid, p.54)

All these situations attest to the preoccupation of the female with the running of the household.

Secondly, comparing their struggle for political freedom of females in the two novels, whereas the female is portrayed as passive to the political and sometimes social issues in Things Fall Apart, in Faceless, they are not only concerned with the political issues but also certain social issues. It is the reason for which Kabria and her friends unravel the mystery behind Baby T's murder. This is particularly evident when at a meeting, they discuss what they want to achieve by looking into Fofu's situation.

“Okay. Then let me ask you. What do you want us to achieve with her? Dina asked Aggie. But it was Kabria who cleared her throat and replied, ultimately her rehabilitation. While simultaneously getting to know what pushed her into the streets. In short, her story as a whole.” (Ibid, p.105-106)

This extract from the novel portrays the interest of women in social issues.

In the area of their struggle for social and cultural freedom, especially on the social issue of polygamy and their positions and roles as wives, while Achebe fails to discuss polygamy and the effects it has on the female, Darko, on the other hand, reveals a monogamous marriage and the responsibilities that have become a burden hanging around the female’s neck. She further discusses the effects of these responsibilities which is the fact that they prevent the female from following and pursuing her dreams completely. This fact is brought to light when Kabria seeks help from her husband Adade to re-spray her car since she could not squeeze the amount from her miserly salary. Adade retorts by asking Kabria if she doesn’t receive a salary. She replies; “Don’t get sarcastic with me. If I had had the time to study further like you did, I would also have been the benefits today in terms of a better salary. But I was busy making babies then. Remember?” (Ibid, p.39)

From this, one realizes the reasons for which she could not better her education and could not as a result of that have a higher professional qualification that could earn her a substantial salary.

Also, in the novel Faceless, the females are portrayed as capable of taking charge of their lives. This is evident especially in the life of Dina. She breaks off her marriage when she is blamed for being barren and begins a new life for herself. It is recounted that this situation led her to establish her company.

“Finding herself with no child and no husband and plenty of time, she recollected her frustration during her final year research work for her Major essay when she found out that regular libraries did not stock information she was looking for. And with that recollection, came the birth of MUTE.” (Ibid, p. 62-63)

This is exactly the opposite in Things Fall Apart where Mgbafo could not just break from the marriage when her husband abuses her physically and rather needs the males in her family to speak for her. Her voice is not heard throughout the whole deliberation. The reader is only told of where she sits amongst the males.

“There were three men in one group and three men and one woman in the other. The woman was Mgbafo and the three men with her were her brothers.” (Ibid, p, 62)

This lays emphasis on the relegation of the female to the background and her silence.

Again, both authors emphasize the importance of the purity of the female in their novels. In Things Fall Apart, it is witnessed during the marriage of Amikwu where his bride is quizzed to know whether she had been with a man before. “How many men have you lain with since my brother first expressed the desire to marry you? None, she replied simply. Answer truthfully urged the older women. None she answered. Swear on this staff of my fathers, said Uchendu. I swear, said the bride”. (Ibid, p. 93)

After this interrogation Amikwu is not queried in his status of purity. This further suggests that purity and chastity are only required of the female.

In Faceless, Kabria upon realizing her eldest daughter is reading books related to sexual health wonders if her child has begun dabbling in sex. She laments about how so much has changed and how in the past, keeping one's virginity was taken for granted and yet every woman knew of its importance.

‘... A few pamphlets were strewn about. The title of the Ghanaian Association for Planned Parenthood smacked her in the face like hot steam. She flipped over the first one. Is Sexual Health Important for a Happy Life? Her heart was racing. What is the state of your sexual health? Was Obea involved in or about to get involved in... Oh, my God! Please, God, help me! Please don't let it happen! “ (Ibid, p. 58).

This further suggests that even in twenty-first century Ghana, the traditional attitude towards chastity on the part of the female has still not changed.

Comparing what defines security to the woman and her relationship with her environment so far as her total freedom and security is concerned in both novels, since Achebe writes of a period before independence, it is seen that the female characters he portrays are all in the security of a home. For instance, Obiageli and Ezinma are all together in their father's compound. The relationship they have with their father is especially shown when an account is given of their presence with him when he takes supper one evening.

“Okonkwo was already eating his first wife's meal while sitting on a goatskin. Obiageli sat on the floor, waiting for him to finish bringing it from her mother's hut. Ezinma sat with Obiageli after placing her mother's dish in front of him. 31-32) (Ibid., p. 31-32)

In Faceless where the setting is in an urban area in Ghana, the situation is different. Darko therefore represents those who are in the security of a home as against those who are more or less on their own.

“The entire three hundred and sixty-five days of the previous year, Fofo had visited the house not more than twice, even though her abode at Sodom and Gomorrah was only some few kilometres away.” (Ibid, p. 44)

From these representations therefore, it is realised that those in the security of a home show promises of a better future than those who are not. Comparing Obea to Fofo, it can easily be told who has the likelihood of ending up better in life. Fofo's place of abode serves to throw more light on her socio- economic status in the society.

So far as the issue of the abuse of the right of women is concerned, hindering her quest to attain social and political freedom, both Achebe and Darko present females who are abused in their novels. The abuse of women, being it physical, sexually, emotionally or psychologically goes a long way to affect her right to total freedom politically, economically, socially etc. as portrayed by

both writers. In Things Fall Apart, the reader is enlightened on the fact that some females are physically abused through Okonkwo's treatment of his wives and again through Uzowulu's treatment of Mgbafo. Okonkwo's abuse of his wives is evidenced when he beats up Ekwefi one afternoon for cutting some leaves of a banana tree to wrap food.

“Okonkwo's second wife said that she had only cut a few leaves to wrap some food. Without further ado, Okonkwo thrashed her and left her and her only daughter in tears.” (See *ibid.*, p. 27.)

This depicts the physical advantage of males over females and their subsequent abuse of this advantage. Uzowulu emphasizes this point when he beats his wife every single day for all the nine years they lived together. “My in-law, Uzowulu is a beast. My sister lived with him for nine years. During those nine years no single day passed in the sky without his beating the woman.” (*Ibid*, p. 65)

By this, it is evident that males feel superior to females and again see their wives as objects they have acquired. In Faceless too, sexual abuse of the female is portrayed. An illustration is where Baby T is sexually violated first by Onko and later forced into prostitution. Her stepfather and her own mother contribute to her exploitation. “Baby T was in obvious pain. Maa Tsuru held her by the waist and made Baby T place her one arm over her shoulder for support because she was limping.... Maa Tsuru laid Baby T down on her mat and made her to spread her legs. She gasped at what she saw. She should as a matter of fact have asked Baby T who did this to her.” (*Ibid*, p. 167)

Darko makes a strong case for female empowerment when she creates characters like Dina, Kabria and all other workers in MUTE who come together to contribute to giving a better life to Fofu by her helping her out of her deplorable situation.

This is in opposition to the situation found in Things Fall Apart where the only form of unity and self-empowerment that can be witnessed among women is when they come together to help cook for a marriage ceremony.

“As soon as day broke, breakfast was hastily eaten and women and children began to gather at Obiereka's compound to help cook for a whole village.” (Ibid, p. 78)

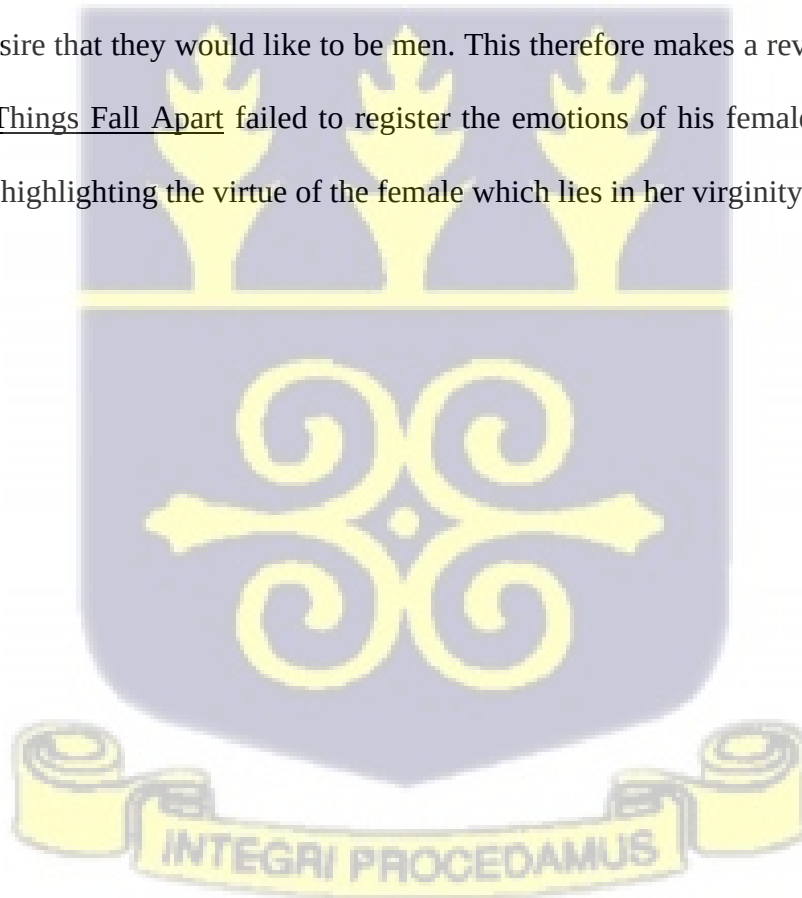
Darko through her novel, however, calls for the collaboration of females which will later lead to their individual and collective empowerment.

In conclusion, Darko delves into the life of the female and thoroughly discusses some of the problems that she identifies as burdensome on the female such as issues of sexual abuse of the female, the problem of the management of the household in addition to executing the responsibilities of a professional female, the emphasis on the chastity of the female and the need for collaboration of females in order for them to empower themselves.

3.5 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter has attempted to do a comparative analysis of the portraiture of the female in Things Fall Apart and Faceless. Comparing issues like the role and position of women and their struggle for political, economic, social and cultural freedom, as portrayed by the writers of the novels discussed in this chapter, it is evident amongst other things that Darko delves into serious issues affecting and placing limitations on the total freedom of women like monogamy and the strain such issues place on the life of a female whether single or in any profession. It has again been discussed in this chapter the ways in which such feminist issues hinder the dreams of the female. The female characters in the Darko's novel are also portrayed as strong and capable of earning a living should they choose to emphasize their right to economic freedom. The chance of having a better life and future is also emphasized when Darko creates female characters who are raised in the confines of a home as against those who are not. Images of females who are sexually abused are also seen in the novel portraying the limitations such abuses place on women and their security. The females are also portrayed as very much interested not only in the political situations but also in social situations that affect their lives as a whole.

In Achebe's Things Fall Apart on the other hand, the females are first portrayed as passive to the politics and certain social issues of their land. They are again shown as weak and incapable of taking charge of their own lives. The females again are portrayed as concerned with the general upkeep of their households. There are also images of physically abused females in the novel. The females are again presented as accepting their lot without question since their views on their polygamous state for example is not represented in the novel. Of course, it will be argued here that Achebe's representation of female characters is in line with the situation at that time. But Ifi Amadiume (1987) writing on the social set up of the Igbo society argues that females could acquire lands, titles, inherit properties and 'father' other children. They were influential and respected. The females and for that matter women wanted to be identified with power and privileges and so expressed the desire that they would like to be men. This therefore makes a revelation of the fact that Achebe in Things Fall Apart failed to register the emotions of his female characters. Both authors are seen highlighting the virtue of the female which lies in her virginity.



4.1 FEMALE PORTRAITURE IN ANTHILL OF THE SAVANAH BY CHINUA ACHEBE AND WOLE SOYINKA'S KONGI'S HARVEST

4.2 THE PORTRAITURE OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN ACHEBE'S ANTHILLS OF THE SAVANNAH

In Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah, Beatrice Okoh, the heroine of the book who most of her friends called BB, was the fifth child of her parents. She grew up in a secluded Christian environment and was baptized with the name “Nwanyihuife” meaning “Female is also something.” She works for the Ministry of Finance as a Senior Assistant Secretary. She is the only person, male and female for that matter, who has a first-class honour in English from Queen Mary College in London, rather than a nearby university. In the book, Beatrice Okoh is seen standing up to the socio-cultural pressures of womanhood and speaking out for women's rights, often against the government. Through the privileged positions she occupies in the novel, she is able to play significant roles to portray the changing trends in the life of the African women today.

First of all, she is depicted as an independent career woman. In contrast to the African former perception that a woman is not to be educated and even if she is educated, must not get to the highest level in formal education. Beatrice's intellectual capability is demonstrated in the first-class honours in English degree she acquires. Very often such accomplishment has been associated with men. As a result of her career, she is financially independent and earns much money to even have a maid and takes care of Elewa after Ikem's death. The role played by Beatrice seems to fulfil the plea of Nnu Ego in the Joys of Motherhood, by Buchi Emecheta.

“God, when will you create a woman who will be fulfilled in herself, a full human being, not anybody's appendage?”

Her plea seems to be answered by Chinua Achebe through the creation of Beatrice Okoh, a woman who does not depend on her fiancé (Chris Oriko) in any way. She is rather self-fulfilling. We find a similar portrayal in Changes, where Ama Ata Aidoo presents Esi as an independent woman and makes her refute certain prejudices held against women by displaying their inherent capabilities in the society. She refutes the notion that a woman is weak and even in her field of career, she is found competing with her male counterparts for travelling opportunities and positions and she wins. Nikki Giovanni says, “Changes is, a wonderful novel that shows the more things remain the same, we (and society) go through changes.” (Giovanni, 1989)

Achebe also portrays Beatrice as an intelligent young woman who has foresight. This is a special trait which makes her perform her role in the novel as a kind of a priestess or a prophetess. Her intelligence is manifested in the way she is able to ask pungent questions which finally help to uncover certain hidden truths. This is evident when Beatrice had a conversation with Chris about the fortunes of Sam, Ikem and Chris and through her intelligent questions she reveals certain facts about the three friends which were indeed true about them. This makes Chris confess that “BB is such a good listener who at the same time has a quick mind and such a knack for asking inconvenient questions like a precocious child” (Achebe, 1987 p.67)

This is unusual of Achebe to put women in positions to ask their husbands or fiancés inconvenient questions. Women in Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God are distinguished by the fact that they do not play any significant roles in the plot and actions of those novels. While Beatrice can ask questions Okonkwo's wives dared not because Okonkwo saw that as a challenge to his authority by a woman and therefore subjected such women to beatings.

Achebe puts BB in a position of having a strong fortune-telling foresight. This is shown when early in the novel much is not said about the three friends. BB tells Chris about the tragedy ahead of Chris and Ikem. Even though Chris did not believe it and told her she was exaggerating, we found out the truth in the latter part of the story where she repeats it to Chris at her house. “You

called me a prophetess. No, a prophetess, I think . . . as a matter of fact does sometimes feel like Chielo in the novel, the priestess and prophetess of the Hills and the caves ... Yes. It's on now. And I see trouble building up for us. It will get to Ikem first. No joking Chris. He will be the precursor to make the straight way. We are all in it, you, me and even Him. The thing is no longer a joke. [...] You and Ikem must quickly patch up this ridiculous thing between you that nobody has ever been able to explain to me.” (Ibid, p.14)

Again, Beatrice's achievements portray the African woman who excels beyond society's level expected of her gender. She is seen as being very intelligent and in other ways very compatible with Ikem, her male alter ego. This notwithstanding, Ikem sees BB's creative style purely in the sexist terms of “muscular” and “masculine” (Ibid, p.91). Beatrice accuses Ikem of being a chauvinist, the reason being that he had no clear role for women in his political thinking. (Ibid, P.91) She is seen expressing her dislike for the tradition of “assigning women the role of fire-brigade after the house has caught fire and has been virtually burnt.” (Ibid, p.97) Beatrice is depicted so powerful and affable that at the presidential soiree, she is the only one who is able to summon enough courage to confront the president on his drunken misconduct, including his sexual overtures to Miss Cranford, a heady American journalist. As a result of her patriotism, she is seen rising to the national embarrassment, thus: “I put myself in the way of this adversary and him. I launched myself at him like a dedicated batman, shielding his wounded commander with his own body and taking the mortal's bullets in his place. I did it shamefully, and I cheapened myself in the process. Thank you, God! Like a Hindu temple dancer, I did it for your glory. For my long-suffering friends, like Esther, oh yes, like Esther”. (P.81, *ibid.*). Beatrice's decision to eventually confront the president portrays her as a woman who not only understands but also exercises her rights. This may be a way of expressing what true democracy entails. As a result, Beatrice has a right to choose who should have power over her body and life, and it was most certainly not the president.

Achebe uses the female characters especially Beatrice and Elewa to depict his understanding of women's role in a postcolonial nation. Achebe expands the shifting status and positions of women to those of decision-making power and control through these two female characters. He depicts Beatrice as a female icon of principle and determination to succeed through political harassment and a male-biased culture. Beatrice and Elewa, two powerful female characters, escape their male counterparts, whose views and ideals make them rivals of His Excellency. The novel's depiction of Beatrice's life establishes an image of a modern woman living in modern times, rather than a modern woman bound by conventional constraints and norms.

Beatrice's strength is exhibited in the weakness of her male counterpart. When Beatrice shamefully comes to the realization after almost forgetting her resolve to rise above the norms, that is, the behaviour of expecting young ladies to be parasites, who are always thinking of what profit they can make out of their male host, and initially taking advantage of the president by arousing him sexually, she is walked out of the Presidential Retreat disgracefully. She attempts to warn His Excellency to refrain from letting his weakness and strong desire for women lead him to commit such blunders. It is possible to believe that Sam's inability to listen to her advice is the cause of his death. We see Beatrice's (female) power through the president's (male) vulnerability.

Beatrice is used by Achebe to refute society's perception as argued by Eustace Palmers in the journal, The Female Writer and Her Commitment: Women in African Literature Today. Palmer (1987) maintains that men of careless thought are prone to say: "oh we know what a woman is. She is a being with breast and female genitalia." According to him, this misconception is only an aspect of womanhood since there is more to being a woman than this. She goes on to say that while a woman's biology is an integral and vital part of her, it is not everything she is, and it should not be used to restrict her. She bemoans the fact that not only has a woman's genetics become her destiny over time, but that it has also given rise to stereotypical ideas about women's existence. Beatrice's interest in politics represents a lady who is interested in more than just beauty, marriage,

and children. When Ikem and Chris debate over the forty million Naira spent on refurbishing a twenty million Naira structure (the Presidential Retreat), Chris together with Ikem believes that the President is "retreating" from "the people and their basic necessities of free water.... and forgetting about the very people who legitimize...authority". She is seen assisting Chris in hiding as he defies the President's orders, which put his life in jeopardy. She also appears to be acting as a mediator, attempting to persuade Chris and Ikem to resolve their differences and reconcile with Sam, the country's President. This move by Achebe, especially depicting Beatrice's art of reconciliation as proving futile is observed by Odubogun P.K who opines that "sometimes views of females in political positions are ignored and this attitude restricts the females' ability to influence political, social and economic structural functions". He further explains that it is not enough for a woman to be in a political position, he advises that women should rather work hard towards "a participatory and accountable democracy...if their empowerment is to be actualized." (Odubogun, 1990) It is not surprising that at the end of the novel the rise of Beatrice against the fall of men is depicted. There are a lot of female stereotypes in some works of African literature. Women are sometimes portrayed usually in the works of African male writers as phallic receptacles. They are portrayed either as good lovers, prostitutes, and slaves. There is also the figure of the "sweet mother", all-accepting creature of fecundity and self-sacrifice. Most often the mother stereotypes lead to the limiting of the potentials of women in the society. (Ogundipe, 1987) Beatrice is, however, portrayed as very sensitive and averse to male chauvinistic acts of some men in the society. She is an admirable character whose image will forever linger on in the minds of the reader because of her singular effort in prompting the theme of women emancipation in the novel. She has a strong aversion to 'the crude' insinuation of what most men call 'bottom power'. She is also shown as a character who detests her father's maltreatment of her mother and four other sisters. She goes on to work towards her other name Nwanyibuife which means "female is also something" and says "I was determined from the very beginning to put my career first and if need

be, last. That every woman wants a man to complete her is a piece of male chauvinist bullshit I had completely rejected.” (Ibid, p.91)

It is the combined elements of woman's intuition and charisma that gives strength to BB with the new role of a man who names Elewa's daughter. Achebe ensures that Elewa's mother and uncle delay unduly for the ceremony. Beatrice performs the naming ceremony and does it the right way. Fortunately, she gives the name of a boy to the baby girl 'AMAECHINA': meaning “the path never closes”. Everyone present agrees it is the best name which signifies Ikem's role in the society again. This brings up an interesting conversation at the naming ceremony. The role of men in giving a child a name is not right but rather a woman is the best person to do that. All present at that event including Braimoh confirm that

“Na woman de tell man say na him born the child. Then the man begin make inyanga and begin answer father. Na yeye father he be.” (Ibid, p. 26)

She is depicted as a young woman who does not give in too readily to emotions. Achebe portrays her as such because women readily give in when it comes to emotions concerning their husbands. Beatrice, though she has profound love for Chris, does not betray it physically or openly during Chris's travails, she becomes restless by forgetting her car keys, loses concentration in the office and weeps secretly over Chris' death but still acts strong on the outside. This also proves to us that she puts her career first and not her fiancé's problem or marriage.

In spite of all this, Achebe tries to use her human nature to convey and portray the fact that though the status of womanhood has changed due to modernity coupled with education, women are still caring when it comes to taking care of people. Beatrice's tenderness and courage helps in raising the spirits of Elewa after Ikem's death, and Emmanuel, Braimoh, Adamma, Captain Abdul Medani after Chris' death. The task of unearthing the new role of women in the society is solely placed in the hands of Beatrice. The Beatrice character created by Achebe serves as a platform to portray the new role of women in the society today. He portrays women through Beatrice as women who

struggle to attain their economic, social and political freedom in society and Beatrice is an example used by Achebe to prove a point.

Another female character in Anthills of the Savannah is Elewa. Although she is not portrayed as educated and socially elevated as BB, we recognize that all women are totally equal no matter one's level of education. That was why Achebe intentionally used her to educate the society that the fight for freedom cannot be left to women who are educated only but those who did not get the chance to be educated can also fight back. Elewa is a salesgirl in an Indian shop and lives in the slum area of Bassa. First of all, she epitomizes warmth and attraction, self-respect and her confidence make her win Ikem's love and respect. She is well behaved and mannered. Even though she has no educational background, she makes the whole world believe that education is not the only way for a woman to become who she wants to be. Achebe uses Elewa as a symbol of the down trodden of the society who is content with what she has. She lives with her mother in a one-room house at Bassa.

Although not educated, Elewa rejects certain ideas about women in general and submits that women should be treated with dignity and respect. Interestingly when Ikem tries to be nice to Elewa in an attempt to calm her down, Elewa strikes back and says, “Why you no drive me home yourself...?”

When Ikem tells her, “I can't take you home because my battery is down. I have told you that twenty times already.”

Elewa states her position, “your battery is down. Why your battery no down for afternoon when you come pick me... Take your mouth comot my name, Ojare, tomorrow make you nonsense battery come pick me. Nonsense!” (Ibid, p.39)

This is Achebe's illiterate woman kicking against certain orthodox ideas about women folk. In an earlier encounter, Ikem tries to convince Elewa as to why she cannot pass the full night in his room but must go home. Ikem tells Elewa that he will not want Elewa to be like “the loose women of

Bassa who no de sleep for house... I wouldn't want a sister of mine to do that, you see." But Elewa fires back "Anodatime you wan poke make you go call dat sister of yours, you hear? (Ibid, p 40) It is through Elewa's ideas and actions that Achebe manifests his Women Emancipation Project. She is also portrayed as a strong woman and this is shown when she hears the death of Ikem, she sits down still and silent.

Not much is said about Agatha, an important figure in the novel who is the maidservant of Beatrice. She is very religious; a born-again Christian who even her madam "Beatrice" calls "a prophetess of Jehovah" due to the way she raves and dances about salvation on Saturday and goes to the extent of distributing leaflet on the Saving Blood of Jesus. She is a representative of the so-called "born again" Christians who are outwardly very religious but inwardly very wicked. Agatha was used by Achebe to show to the reader that women can be their own enemies. It is difficult to understand why a Christian would like to be wicked to fellow human beings. Agatha shows this when Elewa comes to BB's house; she does not serve her correctly by not giving her egg and margarine because she thinks Elewa is a servant like her. In fact, by this scene Achebe suggests that differential treatment on the basis of social status is not limited to males in a patriarchal society. Women would do well to promote equality among them before they may be in a position to challenge male chauvinism.

Premarital sex is therefore frowned upon by Agatha. In the past, one had to marry before engaging in any sexual activity, but Beatrice reminds us that such behaviour is no longer frowned upon. She seems to be the model for a modern woman in modern times, rather than a modern woman bound by archaic cultural constraints and norms such as chastity before marriage. However, Achebe brings Agatha in to tell the world how derogatory that practice of sex before marriage is and the importance still placed on chastity even in the modern era despite all the changes. That was why Agatha gets annoyed when Beatrice comes out of the room and said "While you were busy in her your sinfulness" (Page 115)

Achebe uses the female character to depict the fact that there are many different types of women in the real world, but when they get united, they help one another resolve their unique challenges in life, demonstrating the strength of female unity in diversity.

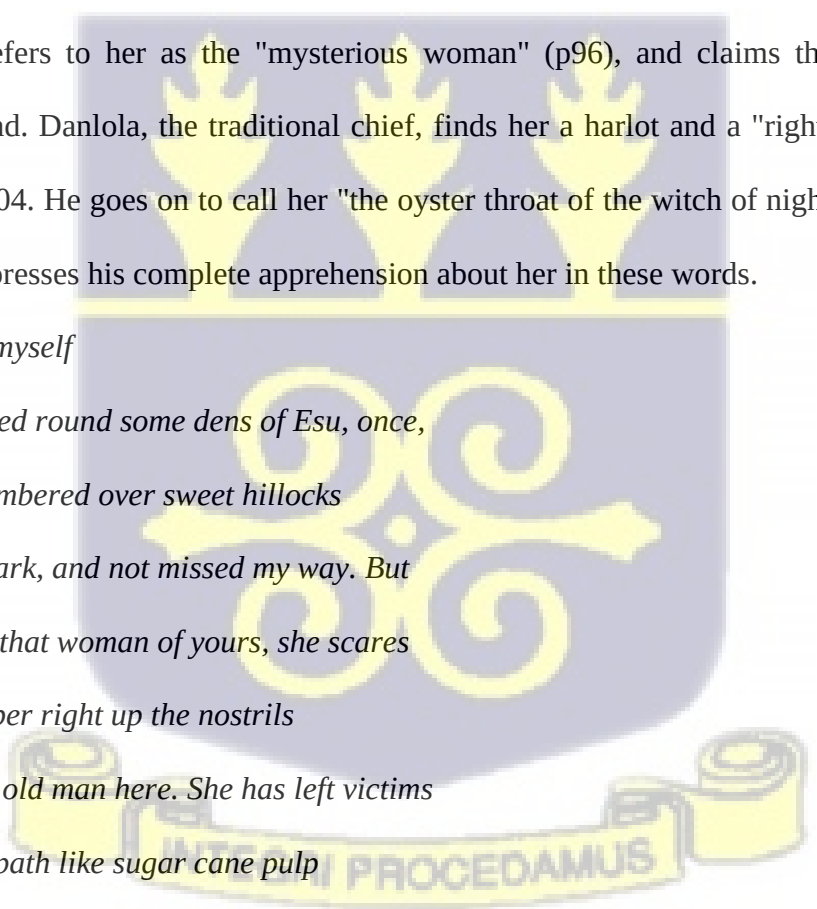
From our analysis it is evident that the portrayal of women in Anthills of the Savannah is a great improvement on Achebe's earlier novels and the era within which the novel is written contributes a great deal to how women are portrayed in his novels.

4.3 THE PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN WOLE SOYINKA'S KONGI'S HARVEST

Wole Soyinka also portrays women positively in Kongi's Harvest through Segi's militant or revolutionary role in helping the traditional ruler Danlola to gain his power back. By situating Segi's actions in the context of nationalist discourse and placing her squarely in the arena of freedom fighters who overthrow the dictatorship of Kongi, Soyinka envisions a crucial role for women in post-independence politics of Africa. (Jones, Eldred 1973). According to Jones, Wole Soyinka cannot be left out as far as gender roles in literature are concerned. In Kongi's Harvest, Soyinka sets a specific role for women that of catalyst in revolutionary socio-political change in Kongi's Harvest. Segi, a woman plays a very central role in the plot and the thematic development of the drama. She is portrayed as resourceful and very energetic. But above all, she is portrayed by Soyinka as very intelligent through her political quest; she identifies with progressive forces like Doudo to overthrow the dictatorship of the powerful and wicked, Kongi.

Segi is portrayed by Soyinka as a very powerful, fearless and daring in the play. She is used by Soyinka to unearth the fact that society needs women to help it develop politically, economically, socially and religiously. In Soyinka's works, Segi is one of the strongest female characters he has made. (Obuke, 1980) She resembles some of Wole Soyinka's female characters in his works. Female characters include Iyaloja in *Death and the King's Horseman*, Sidi in *The Lion and the*

Jewel, Rola in *A Dance of the Forest*, and Sini in *The Interpreters*, to name a few. Segi is portrayed by Soyinka as one who processes so much power in the play that both traditionalist and modernist view her as an evil, harlot and dangerous woman. She is presented to be feared by the male characters in the novel due to the explicit courage she possesses. Segi is an exceptional woman, according to E.D. Jones (1973), who sees her as a “embodiment of sex and therefore theoretically at least of the artistic values”. Soyinka's favorite Yoruba deity, Ogun, is said to be embodied in her. It's no surprise that he gives her such a strong personality. “Kongi's Harvest puts her at the crossroads of politics, forcing her to try her mettle against the autocratic Kongi,” writes Sethuraman (1985). He refers to her as a "mystery woman." It's no surprise that some of the male characters have differing perspectives on her. Segi is a very dangerous woman in the eyes of the Secretary. He refers to her as the "mysterious woman" (p96), and claims that her existence confuses his mind. Danlola, the traditional chief, finds her a harlot and a "right cannibal of the female race." p104. He goes on to call her "the oyster throat of the witch of night clubs" on page 104. Danlola expresses his complete apprehension about her in these words.



*I have myself
Wandered round some dens of Esu, once,
And clambered over sweet hillocks
In the dark, and not missed my way. But
Daodu, that woman of yours, she scares
The pepper right up the nostrils
Of your old man here. She has left victims
On her path like sugar cane pulp
Squeezed dry. P. 104*

Soyinka explains why Danlola is afraid of Segi in an interview. “The Oba would be afraid of women like Segi, definitely because she does not adhere to the kind of women he would hold in

his harem," he is quoted as saying. So, it's understandable that he'd be scared of her.... She's just not the kind of woman he's used to. (Gibbs 1971). Kongi does not express his feelings about Segi directly, but his art at the harvest festival reveals his strong disdain for her. Kongi requests that the Secretary informs her of her father's death after he has been shot. As the news is sent to her, he sees and loves her sorrowful expression. On the other, male characters, such as Danlola, the Secretary, and Kongi, show their disdain for Segi, Daodu, on the other hand, rejoices in her, finds comfort in her, and seeks solace in her. Segi, he believes, has changed, reformed, and now lives a respectable life in society. When she is intoxicated by her passion, he is seen justifying her sexual act of selling herself to others. In the play, he is seen passionately admiring her character and beauty through his songs and finds her a superior human being to all of society's politicians. Daodu seems to say in the song that Segi is a more noble character and a superior being than all of the society's politicians because Segi on one hand sells her own flesh for a living, while politicians and ruthless dictators like Kongi on the other hand sell others' flesh to raise themselves.

The politician

Fights for place

With fat juices

On the tongue of generations....

But Segi

You are the stubborn strand

Of meat, lodged

Between my teeth

I picked and picked

I found it was a silken thread

Wound deep down my throat

And makes me sing p.75

Segi who was the mistress of the President of Isma is now the fiancé of Daodu, the son of Sarumi and heir to Danlola's throne. She is described as beautiful and Daodu confirms that her beauty can turn men into “babies”. She exercises full control over a club and its clientele. Segi is depicted as courageous and bold in her ability to make decisions when laced with dangers or pain. As a woman who is readily eager to get what she wants, she aids in getting rid of Kongi. She insisted that the feast must go on with no changes even though her father had been shot shortly then. Her main plan was to overthrow Kongi's dictatorial regime which the men (Danlola and Daodu) could not do. It becomes clear that Soyinka's conception of women as political activists has become more positive from the above examination of the extract from the drama.

Nevertheless, Soyinka also recognizes that women must still be presented as caring. Therefore, Segi, apart from her militant posture, is also portrayed as representing motherhood. This is evident in her invitation to Daodu to plant the seed of life in her. She cares for people at all times because she knows it is her duty and she needs no one to tell her to do it. For instance, when Kongi's Organizing Secretary visits the bar with some guests he is surprised that they had been served even though he had not ordered anything yet.

Organising Secretary: And make me thirsty, where is the waiter?

Daodu: Just behind you.

Organising Secretary: Where? Oh, get us some beer.

Daodu: It's here.

Organising Secretary: I don't remember ordering any.

Daodu: Segi did. She looks after my guests, especially important ones. Naturally, it's on the house. This makes us aware of her ability to take good care of the house at all times. Soyinka presents Segi symbolically as representing life when others like Daodu were busily preaching about hatred and revenge.

Soyinka portrays Segi as a very strong woman who is not seen getting emotional easily as expected from women to defend the claim of them being passive, docile and weak. She is not portrayed spirit fallen and timid even after her father's death. Segi, on the other hand, is not scared or deterred by her father's death, and she continues to be brave and strong even after his death. Even after her father's death, she has the courage to carry out the mission as expected. She then proceeds to fully dismantle the festival in order to put an end to Kongi's tyrannical rule.

Also, Soyinka depicts Segi as using 'sex' as a source of enjoyment and to help her forget her pains, anxieties and worries, when she realizes her plan to overthrow Kongi is gradually coming to an end. She exclaims: "I wish this plan was made" and in her attempts to get over her anxieties and worries she pleads with Daodu to make love to her.

Segi: Come with me Daodu

Daodu: Now? There is still much to do before you meet us at the gates.

Segi: Come through the gates tonight. Now, I want you in me, my Spirit of Harvest

Daodu: Don't tempt me so hard. I am swollen like prize yarn under earth, but all harvest must await its season

Segi: There is no season for seeds bursting.

Daodu: My eyes of kernels, I have much preparation to make.

Segi: I shall help you.

Daodu: Segi between now and tomorrow's eve, I must somehow obtain some rest

Segi: Let me tire you a little more.

Daodu: You cannot know how weary I am

Segi: I must rejoice and you with me.

From the above discussion we realise from both Achebe's depiction of Beatrice and Soyinka's depiction of Segi that the idea of premarital sex is not frowned upon in this modern era and society

has to accept this notion. It appears that part of the fight for women-empowerment is that women tend to challenge the traditional attitude to sex. Beatrice and Segi have a liberal attitude to sex.

From the discussion above, it is quite clear that both writers exhibit new ways of portraying their female characters. The point must be made that the manner in which the characters have been depicted makes them admirable as well as role models to every upcoming African woman who wants a change in the situation of the African woman, today.

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed female portrayal in Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah, and Wole Soyinka's Kongi's Harvest with the prime focus on feminist issues in relation to the physical, emotional, political, social economical and educational lives of women. It also examined women in relation to violence, education, family and power or wealth in their communities.

The preoccupation of this chapter has been to analyse the depiction of women in Chinua Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah and Wole Soyinka's Kongi's Harvest. Both writers have realized the need for women to be recognized in the society so they place them in central positions in their novels or plays to demonstrate the capabilities of African women such as education, power, wealth, etc., which were overlooked. But Sylvia Bryan, (1987) confidently writes in “Images of women in Wole Soyinka's Work” that Soyinka's drama and novels contain scarcely any domestic scenes such as those found in Chinua Achebe's novels, Ayi Kwei Armah's The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born and Fragments or Ngugi Wa Thiongo's A Grain of Wheat.

4.4 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter dealt with the portrayal of female characters by both Achebe and Soyinka. They clearly wrote specially to portray to the society at large that the era for women was now and that whatever a man can do, a woman does it better through education, power, wealth, and strong economic status as suggested by Achebe using Beatrice in Anthills of the Savannah, and Segi in

Kongi's Harvest by Wole Soyinka. Both writers exhibit these capabilities in the characterization of these female characters which is assumed unusual of them. Truly, when these women were placed in these positions, the society was better and more complete through their utterances, behaviours and reactions.

Soyinka and Achebe's quest to portray female characteristics in their latter novels with dignified comportment have been greatly examined. Their presentation of characteristics reveals deep-seated human emotion and peculiarities and also facilitates our understanding of their portrayal. They make use of both first and omniscient points of view to express the sentiments and portray the character of women to keep us in touch with them in our moments of silence.

One can therefore, say without mincing words that Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka in their works Anthills of the Savannah and Kongi's Harvest, respectively, have succeeded in presenting a positive image of African women and their immense contribution to the continent in their works.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, this research has attempted an examination of the portraiture of female characters in the works of selected literary works by a female writer and male writers. The research has done an analysis on the portraiture of female characters in their struggle for political, economic and social freedom in the works of selected African writers namely Chinua Achebe, Amma Darko and Wole Soyinka. The research made use of primary and secondary sources from the library and internet research. The research employed the use of some literary theories which were used as the lens through which the texts were analysed. Examples like the Feminist Literary theory, Historical Criticism literary theory, the Marxist Criticism etc. Contrary to the belief of some critics, who believe that male authors only use stereotypes in their literary works, the textual review leads the study to look at the understanding of some aspects of gender equality.

The use of the historical criticism literary approach and the Marxist criticism in our textual analysis of the works of Chinua Achebe in his Things Fall Apart and Amina Darko's Faceless makes it clear that the social, political, economic, cultural and the intellectual climate of the time an author writes affect the way issues are presented in his or her work. Achebe's Things Fall Apart, was written in the 19th century under a system of patriarchy where feminism was absent, with a rural setting, while Amma Darko's Faceless was written in the 21st and current century. The latter period has seen the introduction of western or formal education, with opportunities to both sexes and influence of western culture on the traditional cultures. These influences have really gone a long way to shape the world view of women, and their roles in novels are no exception. From the analysis done, it is evident that the different periods in which Achebe and Darko wrote their own novels influenced their portraiture of female characters in their novels. No wonder Ruth Robbins argues in her book, Literary Feminism that past works would present different ideologies and concepts about women than today's novels with the various interventions that have influenced feminism.

Again, the use of the feminist theory used in the textual analysis of Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Darko's Faceless clearly unearths how power imbalances due to gender inequalities in the settings of both novels are reflected in or challenged by the two authors. In this case, Showalter's model of the psychoanalytic theory comes to play where the gender differences of the writers are considered as a basis for the way women are portrayed by the two authors. Based on this, Darko as a woman succeeds in delving into the life of the woman and thoroughly discussing some of the problems that she identifies with as a woman, compared to Achebe who is accused of excluding some important functions of women portrayed in the history of the Igbo people and society as a whole.

However, the research has sought to argue that it will be a biased argument to conclude that only female writers give their fellow women more positive roles since there are some male writers who

equally assign positive roles to women in their literary works. These men actually create women who challenge the status quo in society. These male writers create female characters who represent the voice of women, making it heard in the society. These female characters are given voices to fight and to question certain vices against women like sexual abuse, political, economic and social exploitation of women and to request for women to be seen and heard. These voices request for the contribution of women towards development to be recognized, acknowledged and appreciated, ones that request women to be seen as people with abilities, ambitions dreams, feelings, fears etc just like their male counterparts. Some male writers create female characters who voice out the fact that when given equal opportunities, power and resources, women can perform equally well, if not better, than their male counterparts. This is evident in the textual analysis done on Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah and Wole Soyinka's Kongi's Harvest

Achebe is seen acknowledging the new roles of women in the modern era. The setting and era of the novel affects his portraiture of female characters in Anthill of Savannah compared to his novel Things Fall Apart. Both Achebe and Soyinka create female characters who are seen only rubbing shoulders with their male counterparts, but actually outliving them. We see women who beat the traditional notion of men at war, women at home; emphasizing the fact that to the modern woman, once there is a will, there is a way.

In conclusion, it is an undeniable fact that men cannot be women due to their biological makeup, but men can have a significant effect on feminism by combating oppression of women through their writings. Men may be feminists to a large degree, as this study shows, by attempting to reveal and question sexism by constructing female characters who are well-equipped and strategically placed to combat gender stereotyping.

However, I am of the view that writers (both male and female), males especially could create more female characters who are well-equipped and positioned to reflect modern trends in female participation in the family, society and nation as a whole. Feminist male writers, I suggest should

work extra hard to promote and ensure the total emancipation of women, rather than being seen as semi-feminists who on one side seem to be seen fighting the course of women but at the same time failing to empower them totally. Also, when writing, writers must be very sensitive in their use of the English language by applying feminine gender more effectively than the use of generic forms like “man” and “he” used to represent both sexes.

Furthermore, since gender is socially constructed and embodied in some lifestyles of members in the society through certain assigned roles, writers should give tasks assumed to be socially assigned to males to female characters to prepare society for its application and adaption in real life situations. Also, because most norms affecting women are determined by family, the writers must be familiar with the complexities of family relationships if they are to accurately represent the advancement of women in their respective societies. (Kolawole et al., 1997).

Thanks to modernization, a majority of young people, no matter which part of the society they live in, can now have access to education and since the young people are the future leaders, the works of powerful mouthpieces for African women should be included in the reading lists of schools. These feminist writers paint pictures of what women go through, their plight in the society as well as the inferior status imposed on them and what really is the case, what should and must be done. Their patronage should, therefore, be highly recommended both for academic and entertainment purposes, either as educational materials for students or for leisure. Furthermore, since Africans today prefer to watch movies rather than read for entertainment and stress relief, movie writers should take on the task of adapting story lines from most of African writers' literary works that promote a more positive portrayal of women and girls and speak out against conventional gender stereotyping into entertaining films or movies which follow story lines that attract the youth the most and also the masses as a way of taking the public's attention to the important issues addressed in these novels. Organizations promoting the cause of women could also do their bid by sponsoring publications of books and productions of films that fight for the course of women in the society.

Finally, the efforts made by some male writers to address feminist issues in their novels should be generally appreciated by feminist critics and also these critics I suggest should adopt a different and a more positive lens through which they view works of male writers rather than using stereotype lenses since such lenses may portray gendered related biases which may not be present in the works of male writers.



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