

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

**FEMINISM IN THE WORKS OF AFRICAN FEMALE
PLAYWRIGHTS**



**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research, and that no part of it has been presented elsewhere, and any borrowed material has been duly acknowledged.

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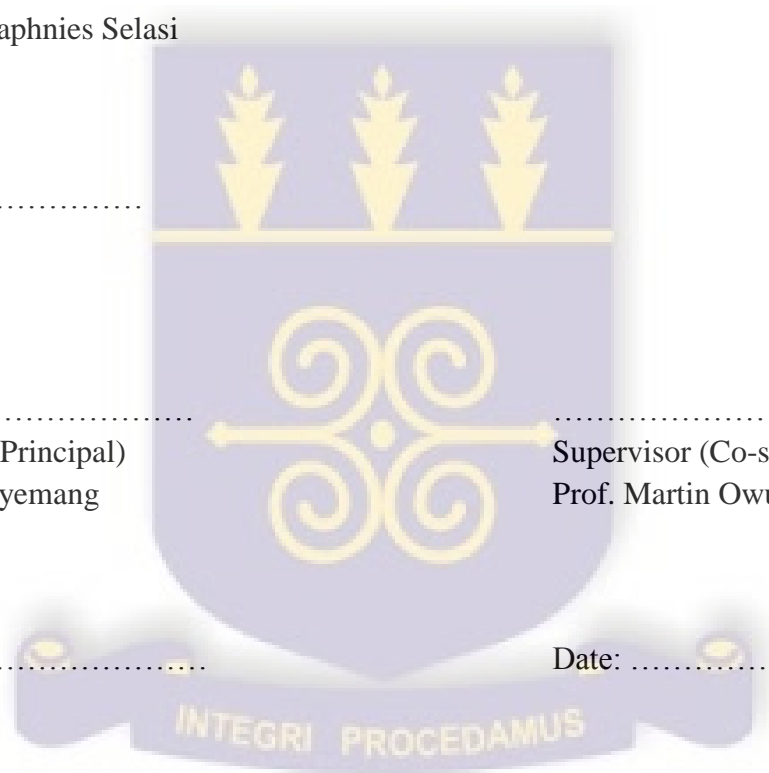
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ABSTRACT

Feminism has been discussed in different contexts with diverse categories and implications. Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie's interpretation of feminism acknowledges the different ways in which it can be understood within the African context. The writings of African women go a long way to reflect the true identity of the African woman and her conditions. Tsitsi Dangaremba and Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh are two such African women writers, some of whose works truly tell the situation of the African woman. This research therefore examines a work each of these women to assess the various ways in which women were portrayed. This research, therefore, examines Utoh-Ezeajugh's *Nneora: an African Doll's House* and Dangaremba's *She No Longer Weeps*, to ascertain how women are portrayed for the purpose of social stereotypes and contracts. Based on these works, the study highlights the meaning of womanhood and stereotypical notions attached to a woman in specific African contexts and its place in the changing world. Descriptive and interpretative methods of research were used to analyse all the plays which results in findings of feminist ideologies in the works of the two playwrights. Furthermore, there are so many controversies surrounding the idea and existence of feminism in Africa. The selected plays were, therefore examined within the theory of feminism and African feminism, to validate or otherwise, these assertions.

DEDICATION

This work stands in honour of some amazing people who, deliberately and unknowingly, have shaped my life, my dreams and the reality of my academic pursuits, especially, this research project. I shall not venture to call names and titles, lest I leave out some and err. One who climbs a good tree, deserves a good push; he who gives the push deserves a part of the fruit. The success or otherwise of this project is the best testament I have to offer.



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The chapter begins with the introduction and background of the study. It outlines the problem statement, states the research questions, and gives the objectives as well as the justification of objectives. The chapter proceeds with the significance of the study and concludes with the scope of study.

1.2 Introduction

The definition and components of a woman might not be so essential since a woman is visible because she has peculiar features which are characteristic to her. Being a woman is not only physical but psychological as well; psychological in the sense that, there are men who believe they are women mentally. Mention must also be made of those who undergo sex change, whereby a male is transformed into a woman. The thoughts and perceptions about women differ from person to person. However, women in the context of this research will focus on people, naturally born women. Outwardly a woman is a being with breasts and female genitalia.

Different people have varying views about the physical appearance of the woman. Simone de Beauvoir says a “woman has ovaries, a uterus: these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limit of her own nature” (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 7). This can be seen as a personal limitation or imprisonment for the woman. All bodies have a limitation whether male or female but the female has an additional limitation. She is saddled with childbirth which makes her completely different from a man. This limitation notwithstanding, childbirth is a joy to womanhood. The concept of

womanhood is complex and differs from society to society. Thus, the biological identity of the female, which is also an important aspect of her, must not be overlooked.

Some men “regard the body of the woman as a hindrance, a prison weighed down by everything” (Beauvoir, 1949). These assumptions resonate with Aristotle’s saying that “the female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities” (Bressler, 1994). This gives rise to questions such as; what those qualities are. Therefore the female body is perceived with some defectiveness. St. Thomas Aquinas is of the view that a woman is an imperfect man; an incidental being” (Bressler, 1994) basing on the formation of the woman from the rib of Adam (Genesis 2:22). Aquinas espouses Christian mythology whilst Bossnet calls it a “supernumerary bone of Adam” (Beauvoir, 1949).

Women over the years have been in the spotlight, in different spheres of life, both for positive and negative reasons; not only in Africa, but all over the world. However, in most of the instances, women are in underprivileged positions. This has generated a lot of reaction from activists, both male and female, to advocate for the cause of women. Many of their causes have yielded positive results such as the promotion of the education of the girl child in third world countries, and empowerment of women worldwide. Thus, before the girl child became the primary focus for example, there had been several burning issues. Prominent among these issues are inequality and marginalization of women.

Feminism came to the limelight to stem some of the issues. It is a reaction to the status quo. Feminism has evolved over the years through different forms and also generated branches to suit specific purposes. Feminism is an offshoot of western civilization but has been incorporated in the general African epistemology on women studies. Consequently, African feminism has brought forth several other theories to drive home

the arguments of the propounders; Womanism (Walker 1982), Stiwanism (Ogundipe 1994), Motherism (Nnaemeka 1997) and Nego-feminism (Nnaemeka 1999) are some of the theories that have emerged from African feminism and feminism as a whole.

1.3 Background of the study

Some women all over the world have contributed immensely to the development and empowerment of their fellow women and the African situation has been no different. In Africa, female writers have also contributed to the endorsement of the female empowerment. Mention can be made of Zulu Sofola (Nigeria), Tess A. Onwueme (Nigeria), Mariama Ba (Senegal), Ama Ata Aidoo (Ghana), Nadine Gordimer (South Africa), and Bessie Head (Botswana). These writers have used their works as a medium to reflect the complexity of the African world view. These women have proven over the years that they are as capable in terms of producing works that truly represent the African situation in a global context.

It is worth noting that some male playwrights have also discussed women in the light of feminist ideologies in their works. Two of such playwrights are Femi Osofisan (Nigeria) and Efo Kojo Mawugbe (Ghana). In Mawugbe's play *In the Chest of a woman*, (2008) he presents the woman as a strong character, not a weaker vessel as some have presented them. He showcased how a woman wants and uses power. In the play, Mawugbe asserts that, "*in the chest of a woman is not only an extension of the breast and a feeble heart, but a strong desire to possess and use power*" (Mawugbe, 2008, p. 36). This is very instrumental in pushing forward the feminist agenda.

He, however, does not regard himself as a feminist, but appropriating the contributions women make to society. Mawugbe knows very well the capability of a woman to transform society.

Others have also portrayed women negatively as stated by Flora Nwapa, “Some Nigerian male writers have in many instances portrayed women negatively or in their subordination to men (Ogundipe-Leslie, 2007)”. Ogundipe-Leslie (1987) states, “many male writers conceive of women only as phallic receptacles”. To the extent that, some men consider the woman as an object that exists to satisfy a need. The contribution of women in their writings has aided in dismissing the stereotypical view of the portrayal of women.

The struggle for the recognition of women as equals with men dates back to ancient Greece, where women were not allowed to vote, nor allowed on stage. Whereas a woman could not be a tragic hero per Aristotle’s definition of a tragic hero, some classical writers such as Euripides, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Aristophanes, etcetera, showed the immeasurable role of the woman in the lives of those around them. An example is the women in the story *Lysistrata* who used their position to bring peace to the feuding countries whilst the men had no remedy for the situation.

Feminism is a theory that seeks the empowerment of women. Regina Ode espouses that “feminism could be described as the organized movement in political, economic and social issues” (Ode, 2001).

One must not lose sight of the fact that before the inception of feminism being human is defined by the male. “Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being” (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 8). Most women think of men as the centre of their world therefore a “man can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man and she is simply what a man defines; thus she is called ‘the sex’; by which is meant that she appears essential

to the male as a sexual being for him she is sex-absolute sex, no less” (Beauvoir, 1949).

Bressler discusses this further and adds,

. . . And ideological stance seeks to understand the place of women in society and to analyze everything that affects women as writers and their writings in what feminists believe is a male dominated-world. In this masculine world, the feminists declare that it is a man who defines what it means to be human, not woman. Because a woman is not a man, she has become the “Other”, the not-male. Man is the subject, the one who defines meaning; woman is the object, having her existence defined and determined by the male. The man is therefore the significant figure in the male/female relationship while the female is subordinate (Bressler, 1994, p. 107).

This disillusion has confined most women not to go beyond their comfort zones to attain greater heights. In my opinion this is contentious. I believe the world of a woman does not revolve around a man, as and when a man comes into the world of the woman, he is drawn into her focus. Some of these assertions have forced some women not to see themselves as female but wish to be counted among males. Others use their association with prominent men in society to gain prominence and material advantage.

Feminists have outlined structures that forge forward their agenda of women empowerment. These structures include style of writing and mode of analysis of a female writer. Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie in her, article *The Female Writer and Her Commitment*, states, however, that “feminists have posited that the woman writer has two major responsibilities; first tell about being a woman; secondly, to describe reality from a woman’s view, a woman’s perspective” (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1987). In describing the reality from a woman’s view two angles must be considered. These are observation and personal experience. This also leads to three questions that need answers. These questions are who is a woman? What is being a woman? What is the nature of

womanhood? These answers are necessary and also needed for analysing the work of a female writer. Charles E. Bressler in his book *Literary Criticism, An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, also says feminists have outlined four models that need to be considered in carrying out a literary analysis on the work of a female writer. These are:

- i. Images of the female body as presented in a text.
- ii. Female language (difference between male and female language)
- iii. The female psyche and its relationship to the writing process
- iv. Culture (Bressler, 1994, p. 109)

Considering the responsibility of the female writer in comparison with the models for the analysis, some similarities can be drawn. Though the models are four and the responsibilities two; they have corresponding parallels. ‘Being a woman’ has an influx with ‘the images of the female body as present in a text’ whereas ‘the reality of the woman draws on ‘the female psyche and its relationship to the writing process’. The two assertions by Ogundipe-Leslie and Bressler are reflective in feminist assertions and writings. Therefore these two assertions by feminists will serve as the bases for the examination of the two selected works.

As stated earlier, the female writer in the bid to achieve her goals with her writing has the right as to how she portrays her female characters. Mabel Evweirhoma posits that “the female dramatist as a member of society, then, has the choice of portraying her women to suit her authorial goals. She has also the prerogative of making her women conform to the active radical group or present her as docile and submissive” (Evweirhoma, 2002). Subsequently, African female writers have made use of these

precepts to diffuse some negative assertions through their works. They have debunked some limitations associated with women.

One of these limitations is, ‘the place of the woman is in the kitchen’. Some Africans and Asians have grown up with this notion so they do not find it enthusiastic to attain certain levels such as academic achievement. A woman is brought up to believe she is inferior to men and as such must obey the man without question. This is due to the patriarchal system. These systems through the generations have made or forced women to the point that, “women are shackled by their own negative self-image, by centuries of the interiorization of the ideologies of patriarchy and gender hierarchy” (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1993).

The patriarchal system is a form of social organization in which a male is the family head and title is traced through the male line. The man is superior in all sorts of ways to the woman. This system has successfully caged some women, although others have managed to break free from this cage. This attests to the popular saying that “it is a man’s world but now that world is ruled by women”. The nature and superiority of men differs from one culture to another as revealed in the works under consideration. “Nevertheless, what these authors seem to share with one another is a concern to portray the processes whereby women are socialized: rather than simply representing the mother as a ‘natural’ woman, or national icon, many of these writers count costs and the benefits of such ideals” (Newell, 2006). Therefore, patriarchy can be seen as an aspect of cultural oppression.

Patriarchy is not the only system in Africa, there is also matriarchy. Patriarchy cannot be discussed separately from matriarchy, which is also another system that exists in some African countries such as Ghana. Two systems operate in Ghana, matrilineal and

patrilineal; the Akans have mainly the matrilineal system whereby inheritance is to the mother's side. The Ashanti culture is basically a matrilineal culture, with its fundamentals related to common blood. The transfusion of blood from mother to child which aids in the continuity of life, this takes place during pregnancy. This goes hand in hand with a popular akan proverb which says “*wo maame wu aa, na w' abusua asa*” – meaning when your mother dies, your lineage is finished. This might not be totally true because the death of a mother does not bring an end to the lineage. Rather it breaks the family cohesion since the family revolves around her. This notwithstanding a woman can step into the shoes of a man to be known as *abusua panin* but a man cannot step into those of a woman to be known as *obaa panin* which in a way has caged men just as patriarchy has caged women.

In spite of this, there must be two sides to a person that: is male and female. According to Mawugbe “a man is not whole until he has discovered the feminine side of himself. . . . The same should be true for women as well” (Asiedu, 2010). Though men are seen as strong characters and women the weaker vessel, there is a level of the opposite in the other.

The African especially the Ghanaian believes that there is a double side to God. It is said that “the image of God is not male or female, it is both; *Ataa Naa Nyomo*” (Asiedu, 2010). This means father mother God, so the creator of the universe is neither male nor female but a blend of both.

1.4 Problem statement

African women playwrights have refuted the label of ‘Feminist’. However, they have been consistently observed to write in the feminist ideology. Though they have produced

a lot of materials with feminist features, most of these materials are either apologetic or reactions to generic situations and to personal experiences. Ogundipe-Leslie affirms this:

African men control the discussion of gender, and male ridicule, aggression and backlash have resulted in making women apologetic and have given the term “feminist” a bad name. Women writers, she continues, must attempt to break free from the limited range of female stereotypes circulating in African popular and literary culture, and reinstate the story of being a woman in the real complex sense of the term (Newell, 2006, p. 149).

African society, like every other, is fast-changing along with most of its indigenous practises. Contrarily, some African women playwrights still hide behind the mask of ‘situational feminism’, to elicit pity from their audience for the female characters, or even for themselves, depending on the convenience of the circumstance.

Tsitsi Dangaremba’s *She No Longer Weeps* is an apt example. She mentions her motivation for writing the piece as her friend’s unpleasant experience of a sour relationship that results in pregnancy. This trend in the works of some African female playwrights is obviously stereotypical, instead of lending a balanced representation of African women and their issues, while proffering innovative interventions.

Furthermore, most African women writers either deliberately or subconsciously do not portray their heroines and generally their female characters with much esteem. It could be that they lack the skill or simply prefer to stick to the conventional image of the African woman, as a ‘lesser citizen’. It seems they prefer to stay in their comfort zone, so as not to portray their female characters and invariably themselves as radical, divergent or rebellious.

It is indubitable that of the three genres of literature, drama is the most acclaimed as a trigger for social change. It is, however, noteworthy that most African women writers

either shy away from the genre, produce a few works, or in the some cases when they do, lack the bite to address their views with the desired force as becomes feminists, thereby lending their works a lot of academic relevance, yet achieving very little desired social impact and consequently, change.

Ghana's Ama Ata Aidoo is one such example of a prolific African woman writer. However, of her numerous works, only two are drama pieces. In both *Anowa* and *Dilemma of a Ghost*, her female characters are not projected beyond the generic representation of the African woman.

In *Anowa* for example, Anowa, the lead character is simply seen to be reacting to the traditional roles that society expects of her. Assumption is made that the absence of children from her marriage, was her fault, without the slightest thought that in as much as a woman could be barren, a man could also be impotent. This is an age old phenomenon common to chauvinistic African traditional societies.

Therefore if female writers are seeking to bring change through their works, will the concerns raise help to achieve that? African female writers have been labelled as feminist and they have found it problematic, this research seeks to find feminist ideology in the selected works of Tsitsi Dangaremba and Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh.

1.5 Research questions

- i. How does the European concept of feminism fit into the African writer's concept, especially with reference to the selected writers?
- ii. How do feminist writers reflect the African view of womanhood?
- iii. How has the African female playwright portrayed women in her works?

1.6 Objectives of study

- i. To identify the distinction between the European concept of feminism and that of the African.
- ii. To trace the influence of feminism on the works of African female writers.
- iii. To interrogate how the African woman is portrayed in the works of selected female playwrights.

1.7 Justification of objective

- i. Many a time Africans have seen feminism as espoused by the west, as problematic thus they have formulated their own feminism known as African feminism. The research will attempt to do a comparative analysis of the two to establish the difference and similarities.
- ii. Feminist are those who concern themselves about changing the stereotypes or reversal of issues about women. Therefore issues of women are not only of concern to women but men as well. With feminism seeking the empowerment of women, how have the works of female writers been able to add their voice through the works and also if feminism was the method used.
- iii. Portrayal of a character is very essential, since the character conveys the message and thoughts of the writer. Analysis of the characters will seek to find out how the female playwright used characterization of the women in her work to forge forward the empowerment and liberation of the woman from the stereotypical perceptions.

1.8 Significance of study

The work will aid further study on the subject of feminism. It will serve as a platform that brings together the scattered issues of feminism as well as the different types. It also discusses both the European view of feminism vis-a-vis that of the African. It puts all the

issues together thereby making findings in these areas or on the concept easily accessible.

The work will provide literary material for the ministry of gender and children protection of Ghana which is set up to promote and work in favour of the marginalised. It will further enlighten policy makers in these areas and aid in their choice and decisions for finding better policies for the promotion of the agenda of women in Ghana and other parts of Africa and the world as a whole.

It will also benefit students and other researchers on women and drama.

1.9 Scope of study

The subject of feminism is very broad and may not be fully exhausted in this research, considering the various types. The focus of this work will therefore look at some aspects of feminism and African feminism and its relevance to the writings of women. These writings will be in the context of feminist writing where plays of Tsitsi Dangeremba and Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh will be analysed. The plays are Dangaremba's *She No Longer Weeps* and Utoh-Ezeajugh's *Nneora: an African Doll's House*. These are not the only works of these writers that have feminist undertones. Feminism in this study refers to western feminism.

Geographical boundary for this work is sub Saharan Africa and not Africa as a whole.

Another scope of this study is culture. Culture simply describes the religious, ethnic, social and behavioural patterns of a group of people. According to Awedoba (2007) "culture is that whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional feature that characterize a society or social groups. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of human being, value systems,

traditions and beliefs". This definition will serve as the parameters for which the culture of Africa will be accessed.

Since the research cannot cover all the issues of women pertinent in Africa; culture will serve as a means that some of the issues will be extrapolated and discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Overview

This chapter presents a critical review of literature on emergence and definitions of feminism; African feminism and feminist writing; African women on feminism, as well as African culture and feminist values.

2.2 Introduction

The theory of feminism has generated a lot of discussion globally; following the different opinions and perceptions about it and its relevance to individuals, organizations, societies, countries and even continents. For instance, Ezeigbo-Adimora says “feminism conjures up visions of aggressive women who try to be like men” (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 1996, p. 1). It is considered as a movement of radical women seeking equality with their male counterparts. Feminism is considered as a tool for women who are anti-male. It should be emphatically stated from this point that the theory of feminism is of western origin and has different types and waves that have emerged over time.

History has it that the theory emerged in three geographical areas (America, Britain and France) before spreading to other parts of the world. They all had diverse views of the theory. American feminist writing for instance, dealt with text and its qualities such as theme, tone and voice. British feminist writing was more on a political level, and advocated for social change by analyzing the relationship between gender and class. French feminism on the other hand concentrated on language. (Bressler, 1994, p. 106)

In recent times, Africa has joined in this world movement of the empowerment of its women. Africa is seeking to change the stereotypical views of people concerning women

as well as their marginalisation. There is the need to promote this course of women empowerment.

Ifi Amadiume argues that:

The need to support the cause of feminism and social justice in Africa has never been stronger than it is under the present condition of chronic neo-colonialism. News about modern Africa today should inspire rage and a desire for revolution, for the sheer enormity of perceived chaos-wars, ethnic violence, famine, poverty, abuse of women and girls, high infant mortality, epidemics of HIV infection, AIDS, corruption of politicians and governments! (Amadiume, 2001, p.47)

Amadium may have all the good reasons to make this statement but for Africans, to “inspire rage” is a strong statement with different interpretation. A wrong interpretation could cause mayhem. The motivation to move beyond the limitations is better, than to inspire rage. This and other issues relating to feminism have given room to activists to be up in arms about the situation of the African woman.

2.3 Emergence and definitions of feminism

Feminism emerged in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries by female activists. Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755-1842), Mary Cassatt (1844-1926), Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855), and Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861), were the four women who started the move, though on the low note till its height in the Nineteenth Century (Koubek, 2012). These women were nationals of America, France and United Kingdom. Before the commencement of the movement, women were not allowed to vote, were denied property rights and their personal rights of womanhood belonged to men

(Bressler, 1994). Consequently, the movement was formed to promote the course of women rights.

However, Newell is of the view that feminism is a cause to promote lesbianism, utopian women-only communities. Irrespective of Newell's assertion, she still believes that the feminist movement won for women, the right to exercise their franchise (Newell, 2006). The drive for feminism is to bridge the gap that existed between men and women, where women were considered second place to men. Virginia Woolf (1919), one of the early feminists, declares that "men have treated women, and continue to treat them as inferiors". This is so because before the inception of the movement, being human was defined by men as well as what is female. Men regard women as the 'other' and in some cases the 'non-significant other' (Bressler, 1994, p. 104).

The dominance of the man over the woman is as a direct result of the society that exists; the patriarchal society. This dominance is, however, not the same everywhere. Society is dynamic; therefore what may seem as a problem in one society may not be the same in another. In accordance with nature, places of both sexes make the man head over the woman. Beauvoir is of the view that a woman must break the bonds of patriarchal society and define herself to defy male classification as the 'other' (Beauvoir, 1949).

This break from the bonds of patriarchy has led many women on this advocacy for the equality of both sexes. In their quest to achieve this, varying definitions have emerged to promote the agenda of gender equality and consequently, feministic ideals.

Adrienne Rich argues that "feminism means finally that we renounce our obedience to the fathers and recognize that the world they have described is not the whole world . . . feminism implies that we recognize fully the inadequacy for us, the distortion, of male created ideologies, and that we proceed to think, and act, out of that recognition"

(Womens History Feminism Slides). This is advocating for rebellion against men using feminism as the medium. As discussed earlier, a man defines who a woman is. In renouncing obedience to the ‘fathers’ by women, Rich (1976) has called for a social discord – physical strife - between men and women in order to advance a feminist ideology. To the extent that Rich’s assertion aims at advancing feminism, it harbours an inherent flaw that stands to obstruct itself.

To this end Estelle Freedman has advocated for a more structured system – a socio-political movement – to advance the course of feminism. Freedman (1947) asserts that, “feminism is a belief that although women and men are inherently of equal worth, most societies privilege men as a group. As a result, social movements are necessary to achieve political equality between women and men, with the understanding that gender always intersects with other social hierarchies” (Womens History Feminism Slides). Freedman’s stand is more encompassing and less dis-according when compared with Rich. The call for a socio-political movement to address the inequalities suffered by women in men dominated societies will among other things; provide a safe environment for the individual women against any attack from men. Freedman’s assertion hinges on the mantra and as the adage goes “there is strength in unity”, therefore a unified body will not be easy to ignore.

While Freedman’s socio-political approach is more welcoming as compared with Rich’s renouncing of the fathers, Millicent Garrett is of the view that, women are at best using their “natural faculties” to push for a firmer recognition amongst patriarchal societies. By patriarchal natural understandings, men and women are different with unique qualities. Garret advances that women should use this natural division to point out the need for them to be recognised by men. She opines that feminism should have as its goal, to give

every woman "the opportunity of becoming the best that her natural faculties make her capable of" (Womens History Feminism Slides). Among the numerous definitions that the study reveals, the researcher agrees with Garret that our natural faculties can be our innate qualities, our natural environment, and education etcetera, to aid one to become the best that he or she could be. It could also mean a woman relying on her inner strength. In another breath, these natural faculties might have deeper meaning which this work might not be able to get into.

One of the policies of Action Aid International, an NGO championing the cause of women looks at feminism as an ideology which:

“advocates for the transformation of all social relations of power that oppress, exploit or marginalise any set of people (on the basis of their gender identity, age, ability, race, religion, nationality, location, class, caste, or ethnicity)...and one that seeks gender equality between men, women and all other oppressed gender identities in the public, private and intimate spheres” (*Transformative Feminist Leadership workshop for ActionAid International and led by Srilatha Batliwala*) (Hilton, 2015).

Action Aid argues about laws and conventions that make women servile, including all religious demands on a woman, making her submissive to her husband. They advocate for a social transformation for women.

The above definitions clearly show there are different opinions on the theory. However, the basis for the numerous theories of feminism is equality for both men and women. The equality is geared towards political, social and economical terms; not considering the differences or similarities between the sexes.

The branches of feminism include cultural feminism, eco feminism, individualist feminism, gender feminism, amazon etcetera. These numerous branches have different definitions which show diversity that result in some level of conflict amongst feminist proponents. Despite the conflict or diversity amongst them, their primary focus is equal rights with men, for women. Bressler (1994) accounts that with all the differences with feminist theories; they all seem to be on a journey to self-discovery to define the woman. Until then, they are unable to change their world.

The different branches also carry with them different waves. These waves are divided into three; the first wave feminists are the beginners of the move. The second wave started during 1960 whilst the third wave is the twenty first century feminists. First wave feminists are out of existence but second wave are still active and on the go, along with the members of the third wave. These branches and waves denote the theory as a revolution which has taken centre stage (Eze, 2014).

The goal of feminism is to change the view of women as being the “non significant other”. The theory is advocating for women to see themselves as valuable people possessing the same privileges and rights as every man. Hence, feminists want to encourage women to “define themselves and assert their own voices in the arenas of politics, society, education, and the arts. By personally committing themselves to fostering such change, feminists hope to create a society in which the female voice is valued equally with the male (Bressler, 1994, p. 103)”. In order to achieve this target, many women have taken up roles in various sectors to drive home their empowerment and also to serve as a source of motivation for the others to emulate.

Bressler’s version of feminism perhaps fosters such change. He takes it from a different approach; looking at the woman as a significant and valuable being in her own world. In

this instance, women need not battle for recognition with, and by their male counterparts but to have their own recognition and standards.

2.4 African feminism and feminist writing

In place of feminism, African women, also known as ‘third world’ women have proposed the term African Feminism as best explains their situation of women empowerment. Filomina Chioma Steady defines African feminism as “emphasizing female autonomy and co-operation; nature over culture; the centrality of children, multiple mothering and kinship” (Steady, 1981). Steady’s understanding of African feminism, and to a large extent, the understanding of many other African (female) theorists, the idea of African feminism is an all-inclusive concept for men, women and children.

Unlike western feminism, African feminism seeks to involve men in its discourse, since they are also essential to the transformation needed by the woman. According to Pinkie Mekgwe,

The rationale is that, if African feminism is to succeed as a humane reformation project, it cannot accept separatism from the opposite sex. Eschewing male exclusion becomes one defining feature of African feminism that differentiates it from feminism as it is conceptualized in the west (Mekgwe, 2008, p. 16).

In affirming this, Boyce Davies and Greaves conceive African feminism as a phenomenon that ‘recognises a common struggle with African men for the removal of yokes of foreign domination and European/American exploitation’. (Davies & Greaves, 1986, p.8) Thus African feminism is not naive of the antagonism towards and subjugation of women by men, but rather enlists them (men) to aid in the liberation of women from chauvinism and to empower them (women) (Mekgwe, 2008, p. 17).

Oppression in this instance differs from culture to culture and from society to society, within the African framework.

Like western feminism, African feminism also has branches: Womanism, Stiwanism, Motherism and Africana Womanism. These branches came about as a result of the different classes of women and their peculiar needs. Hudson-Weems as quoted by Newtona Johnson justifies the need for the African to name her own idea of women empowerment.

Feminism, under any nomenclature, cannot serve the purpose of black women. In her view, feminism as a mode of thinking named and defined by women of European descent adheres to western values and attitudes; it also promotes the agenda of white women, which, on the basis of differences of experiences, differ from those of black women. She therefore proposes that black women create their own name, and define themselves and their critical perspectives and agenda in ways that reflect their particular experiences and African culture (Johnson, 2008).

The quest to ‘define’ themselves has given birth to the various terms that have been defined as African feminism. In pursuance of the Black woman defining herself, she must have her own agenda, just as that of western feminism, which must be peculiar to the African woman and her situations, including the issues of race, gender, and class. The essence of this is for the empowerment of the African, both male and female, unlike western feminism, which is female-centred.

Womanism, according to Alice Walker, an African–American writer, is the lived experience of “women of colour” and also bases on the struggle of the African woman”.

Hence womanism:

Is the philosophy of daring black daughters on the well – being of the entire Africa-African and African-American communities, (fe)-male, adults and children, canvassing support for the importance of the African woman's trajectory by challenging the madness of all oppressive forces impeding Black woman's struggle for survival, which will include unacceptable stance of poor quality of life of the African woman and family freedom. Basically, it is black feminism against racism, sexism, classicism, sexual preference, physical disability, and caste (Alkali, et al, 2013, p. 3)

This standpoint varies from other upheld views on feminism as it does not seek to turn women into men, thus, may not promote lesbianism and sex change, but seeks to fight against the widespread patriarchal system in Africa.

Womanism made a lot of positive impression since it was first propagated, and most African women prefer to be associated with it because they want 'to avoid the distractions attendant with the term feminism'. Womanism has been adopted by some African female writers such as Ogunyemi, for the same stated reason. Ogunyemi defines womanism as "black-centered; ...unlike radical feminism, it wants meaningful union between black women and black men and black children and will see to it that men begin to change from their sexist stand". By so doing, they will embrace women as partners and not as competitors, due to their gender. Kolawale (1997) conceives "African women . . . are not seeking to be like men, look like men, or necessarily act like men". She has rebranded womanism and affirms that it is neither linked to lesbianism nor radicalism. This view debunks the assertions of radicalism and lesbianism, related to African feminism as a whole.

Regina Ode indicates that "womanism is the result of the black African-American women's agitation to emancipate themselves from the double enslavement of both their

white male owners and their black male spouses. The black African-American woman initiated this movement to address their peculiar state of subordination” (Ode, 2011). The primary focus is not just for the women in Africa but for those in the Diaspora as well, who were born in slavery.

Ama Ata Aidoo is of the view that “womanism adds the added understanding of our position in history to the discourse” (Aidoo, *Facing the Millennium*, 1996). Therefore she wishes African women activist would be womanist rather than feminist. Another prominent female writer associated with womanism is Buchi Emecheta. She says “I do believe in the African type of feminism. They call it womanism”. Flora Nwapa cannot be exempted from this crop as she is also an ardent follower of this concept.

Stiwanism, another branch of feminism, emerged as a solution to the numerous denials by African women, refusing the tag of feminism. Stiwanism was propounded by Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie. STIWA is an acronym for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa. It is a theory advocated to analyze women in the African context. The theory does not stand in isolation but considers feminism and its relevance in the African context. Ogundipe-Leslie in describing the theory, states:

My agenda for women in Africa without having to answer charges of imitateness or having to constantly define their agenda on the African continent in relation to other feminisms, in particular, white Euro-American feminisms which are unfortunately, under the siege by everyone (Ogundipe-Leslie, *Stiwanism: Feminism in an African Context*, 2007).

She said this in reference to feminism and the negative notions that have been attached to it. Ogundipe-Leslie considers feminism as foreign to the African, a negative model for the African woman seeking empowerment. She further opines that “the African woman needs to be cautious not only of the fact that she is a woman but that she is both an African and a third world person” (Ogundipe-Leslie, *The Female Writer and Her Commitment*, 1987).

The woman from Africa and some third world countries has grown up with similar stereotypical knowledge about being a woman. Mythology has it that the place of the woman is the kitchen; this notion has caged some women. This does not give them room to explore the opportunities and avenues available to them.

Several critics have said feminism speaks against men. In propagating stiwanism, what Ogundipe-Leslie is seeking is not an uprising against men but rather the support of men, in advocacy for women to be inclusive in the process of development. The basic concept of the theory is simply to include African women in the current social and political transformation in Africa, regarding them as equal partners in the steady progress of Africa. She said in an interview:

I wanted to stress the fact that what we want in Africa is social transformation. It's not about warring with the men, the reversal of role, or doing to men whatever women think that men have been doing for centuries, but it is trying to build a harmonious society. The transformation of African society is the responsibility of both men and women and it is also in their interest (Adebayo, 1996).

Social transformation, in the above context, is, changing society through a systematic process over a period of time. Stiwanism thus considers a partnership with the male counterpart rather than regarding them as oppressors in the light of development. The brain behind the theory, according to Ogundipe-Leslie is that, "African women do not need liberation or feminism because they have never been in bondage" (Ogundipe-Leslie M., 2008). This assertion might not be entirely true because feminism has different reasons why it exists in different regions as well as countries of the world. For instance, in Nigeria; it is "formed on the position that women especially in developing regions are oppressed as they have been left out of development plans" (Ode, 2011).

In this regard it seems the western women are seeking empowerment, whilst African women are seeking development. This brings to bear the difference that has existed between the western women and African women in various facets of their lives. Though Stiwanism may be ideal for the African situation, in my opinion; it has not been widely accepted as much as womanism.

Ode (2011) defines: “Motherism as an African feminist theory sees the relationship of a woman in terms of reproduction and child-care. The relationship in the family and duties of mother in the home is the main focus of this theory”. (p. 90) Child up-bringing in the African context is regarded as the sole responsibility of the mother. Catherine Obianuju Acholonu’s thought on Motherism, is simply, “equal rights” for mothers. It draws the comparison of the mother-child relationship and its benefits as well as struggles, in the African perspective juxtaposed to that of the western world. In Africa, a woman lives for her child (Alkali, et al 2013). They want to be present when the child wakes up in the morning; when the child returns from school, and when the child is going to bed. Currently, this is an issue in most homes in Africa, as the mothers are also pushing for their careers, which gives them little or no time to provide the full care they would wish to give to their children, especially in their formative years.

Most mothers fear to leave their children in the care of others. Acholonu further affirms that “the traditional role of the African woman has essentially been that of a matriarch and social nurturer. Motherism would refer to an Afrocentric feminist theory: . . . anchored on the matrix of motherhood . . . (Acholonu, 1995). She says this about the ability of the woman to nurture a child into adulthood and also her ability to manage a home.

Most women believe the best person to care for a child is the mother who gave it life: not forgetting the umbilical bond that exists between mother and child. This bond gives the woman an edge over the man, in relation to the child, and also fosters closeness between mother and child. The concern of mothers towards their children is not because they are in competition with their husbands over their children. The mother is not only a mother unto the child but also unto the husband and the society as a whole. Awo Asiedu provides an interesting perspective in this regard, in her review of *Nneora*, one of the plays under study. She discusses some of Nneora's actions which demonstrate her extended mother figure. Nneora gets her husband a job and also secures his medical package, without disclosure to her husband. In a typical motherly fashion, she endures Ikenna's sermons on not wasting his money; she never refers him to how she transformed his life. She does all of these, because of sympathy which grows into love. Love for Ikenna and for their children, even those unborn (Asiedu, 2011).

The mother notion in this instance can also be widened to include other areas, beyond the relationship between a mother and the child. Reference can be made to the earth figure, popularly called in Akan as 'Asaase Yaa'. This same mother figure can be likened to a country or, continent which symbolically addressed as 'she'.

This analogy is interesting, as it reflects the true African situation for example, of oppressive politicians versus the people and the land, yet 'Mother Africa' does not fail in providing her natural resources, food and the basic necessities of life for her children, including these corrupt and oppressive leaders.

The broad scope of 'Mother' as represented in the person of Nneora is highlighted further by Asigbo Alex's review of *Nneora*. Here, he observes that the playwright "appears to be calling on women not to forget their feminine virtues, but to see themselves as mothers of the world..." (Asigbo, 2002)

Another essence for mother according to Acholonu “dismisses the terms “patriarchy” and “matriarchy”, which she considers Eurocentric and opts for *patrifocality* and *matrifocality* because, to her, men and women are complementary opposites in traditional African societies, such that no gender dominates the totality of the social life of the people” (Maduka). She considers patriarchy and how it’s paramount over women as well as the level of suppression it brings to them. As discussed in chapter one, not every African country practices patriarchy. It’s more dominant in Europe than in Africa. In her quest to drive home her theory, she takes out on other African women who are pursuing a similar agenda as her but in different ways. She calls some of them individualists, radical lesbian feminists, amongst others. She says Buchi Emecheta, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie and Ama Ata Aidoo “have misunderstood feminism to be synonymous with violent confrontation, militancy and aggression . . . And Alice Walker’s brand of womanism is unsatisfactory because her womanist is first and foremost a lesbian” (Acholonu, 1995). From this quotation, a dissention can be seen among African women and their association to feminism. If Acholonu understands feminism in the light that it needs to be understood, then why did she come up with motherism which she wishes would replace some of the systems that exist in Africa? She may also be doing this as a form of character attack since the works of these women do not have “violent confrontation, militancy and aggression”, as she says. Many African female writers identify themselves with womanism. Therefore to say “her womanist is first and foremost a lesbian” is not entirely true.

Also, one must not forget that African women writers are shying away from the negatives associated with feminism. I would suggest Acholonu studies these women further before making a definite assertion about them. Motherism for instance, seeks cohesion between men and women. Other African feminisms such as Womanism and

Stiwanism also advocate sustainable partnership with men. Therefore, I am of the view that all these theorists (African feminists) are all promoting a similar agenda. Instead of a division, unity is needed to strengthen their agenda and to advance their cause. Chidi Maduka says her theory “still diffuses and needs some refinements” (p.18). Therefore instead of launching attacks on others, the theory of Motherism should rather be reworked to make up for what it was originally intended to be.

Acholonu lashes out against Walker’s Womanism, but Motherism and Womanism have a common enemy which they have to eradicate. The enemy in this context is the patriarchal system that exists in most parts of Africa.

Nego-feminism is defined as “theorizing, practicing, and pruning Africa’s way” as “the feminism of negotiation; no ego feminism”. This kind of African feminism does not centre on the woman, but rather deals with the uncertainties associated with feminism. It also advances the “issues of peace, conflict management and negotiation, complementarily, give-and-take, and collaboration”. It is therefore not out of place to say that this form of African feminism is not tailored to personal ends, but with a balanced and broader view of enhancing advocacy for women on every front, not disregarding the role of their male counterparts.

Nego-feminism defined by the theorist, Obioma Nnaemeka (2003) as “the feminism of negotiation; no ego feminism”. This branch of African feminism is different from the others. It concerns itself with issues of peace, negotiation, collaboration, conflict management and resolution and the likes. Nego-feminism is about a homogeneous world for all to dwell in. It is seeking a peaceful world for all after all the hassle of gaining equality for both sexes. This brand of feminism can be used to solve parochial systems with negotiations and resolution to create a uniform or harmonious environment.

Africana Womanism is a theory put forward by Clenora Hudson-Weems; it emerged in the late 1980s. It is an ideology which is applicable to all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture and Afrocentrism. It focuses on the experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women of the African diaspora. Africana womanism boldly theorizes black women's existence across nations and cultures (Johnson, 2008).

Africana womanism is situated in the middle of Africa, blackness and feminism. It is of the view that feminism does not do justice to the plight of the African woman since it is western. It therefore conjures Africana and womanism to propagate its ideology.

Africana womanism is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture and, therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and the conflict between the mainstream feminist, the black feminist, the African feminist, and the African womanist. The conclusion is that Africana womanism and its agenda are unique and separate from both white feminism and black feminism; more over to the extent of naming particular, Africana womanism differs from African feminism (Hudson-Weems, 2007).

African womanism includes women in the Diaspora. Its aim is to negate everything feminist and assert the unique identity of the African woman as well as those in the Diaspora, feeding from their holistic experiences, instead of the myopic lens the feminists employ. The theory seeks to revolutionise women literature, by proffering organised parameters for writing and analysis. In the words of Tendai Mangena, Hudson-Weems came up with the African-centred African-Womanist theory, to inform the writing and understanding of African-American and African women literature, in response to the inadequacies of both Feminism and Black feminism and the subsequent need for proper naming and defining of the woman of African descent (Mangena, 2013, p. 8).

Hudson-Weems is of the view that, women are forced to take up labels that do not deal with the African situation. Furthermore, that her theory is grounded in African culture and it focuses on the experiences, struggles, needs, and the conflict of the African woman. Thus a theory that better, if not best, defines them, is African womanism.

African feminist writing since its developed in the 1960's, has evolved over the years across the various genres. The academic discipline of women's writing as a discrete area of literary studies is based on the notion that the experience of women, historically has been shaped by their gender, and so women writers by definition, are a group worthy of separate study. Female playwrights have emerged at the forefront of the literary movement to restore the African woman to her proper place in the study of African history, society and culture.

The writings of women have been relegated to the background though they emerged some few years after the liberation from colonization in some countries such as Ghana.

Nfah-Abbenyi cites an editorial by Gloria T. Hulls where she espouses:

One of the dramatic changes in the literary world over the last decade has been the blossoming of a large corps of female writers, poets, critics. It is not that black women writers did not exist prior to this period, but the black literary scene had historically been predominantly a male preserve. On the one hand, a white male-dominated publishing industry hadn't seen fit to publish the works of black women writers, on the other hand, even though among the intelligentsia, only the male articulation of the black experience had been viewed as worthy of literary expression. In conjunction with the growth of a movement for women's liberation, however, this situation has dramatically been reduced in recent years (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997).

The above issues discussed by Hull tell vividly the situation of the female writer in Africa: the many factors that serve as hindrances to the progress and acknowledgment of

the works of women. It has not only been an issue of male dominance but race as well. Presently the works of women are gaining the full attention they deserve, I believe.

Female writers have played an instrumental role in changing the negativity connected to women and feminism. The medium of writing has been greatly utilized by women, just like the male writers. There is the thought that there is a difference in the creativity of men and women, which determines the input in their writing, with its end result being influence on society. Mercy Amba Oduyoye in her book *Daughters of Anowa: African Women Patriarchy* (1995) and cited by Newell has said, “until now, I have isolated women’s creativity from men’s, preferring to set men and women’s writings in the context of a wide range of different – ‘scapes’ and topics” (Newell, 2006, p. 136). It is believed that women have particular themes they discuss in their works, such as marriage, barrenness and witchcraft, but it can be said that the issues and circumstances are varied. Mabel Ekwierhoma quoting Home says: “A close look at the various images of African womanhood...recalls that to considerable extent depictions of African women in literature by African women writers differ from the images presented by their male counterparts” (Ekwierhoma, 2001, p. 26).

Flora Nwapa says, “In African literature, there have been female portraits of sorts presented by men from their own point of view leading one to conclude that there is a difference between the African male writer and his female counterpart” (Nwapa, 2007).

It becomes necessary then, to ask how differently men portray women in their works. Nfah-Abbenyi says men have portrayed women “as passive, as always prepared to do the bidding of their husbands and family, as having no status of their own and therefore dependent on their husbands” (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997, p. 4). Therefore the projections of images vary from male to female. As discussed in chapter one, the perception about

woman varies from person to person, likewise from male to female. Methuselah is of the view that female writers project women mainly as a prey and the men the predators. Mainly men are projected as some evil being that is wicked towards the women. They tend to make the women very frail and the man a monster that leaves the woman in helpless situations. Comparing this instance to real life, it is not all realistic (Methuselah, 2010).

African women do not mainly write about their personal experiences, but rather the realities that serve as a focus which is also true for the male writers as well. Ama Ata Aidoo is of the view that:

If anyone protested that none of this was any different in any way from what male African writers had to confront, my response to that would be: but of course not. There could not be any earth-shaking differences. Indeed, if we thought that anyone was providing us with a platform from which to prove that African women writers were different in any way from their male counterparts, or that they faced some fundamental problems which male African writers did not face, some of us would not really want to use such a platform. How could there be? Did we not all suffer the varied wickedness of colonialism, apartheid, neo-colonialism and global imperialists and fascism together? What we are saying though, is that it is especially pathetic to keep on writing without having any consistent, active, critical intelligence that is interested in you as an artist (or creator). Therefore, it is precisely from this point that the African writing women's reality begins to differ somewhat from that of the male writer. (Aidoo, 2007, p. 514)

Some believe that women write about their fantasies and not the reality that they have faced. What Aidoo simply wants to say is that the significant hardships that have ever hit Africa were suffered by both male and female. So the classifications of the works should not be seen as men superior over women. Her humble plea is that both works should be viewed in the same light.

Flora Nwapa says “the woman’s role in Africa is crucial for the survival and progress of the race: and as such women have started to redefine themselves; they have started to project themselves as they feel they should be presented” (Nwapa, 2007), this they are doing through their writing. Considering the earlier point made by Aidoo and that of Flora, there is a level of similarity that exists. Hence, in the same light similar regard for their works, women must lead in the crusade to champion their course.

Moreover, reference must be made to the fact that the theme of a work may not only be derived through observation, statement, criticism and moral/lesson. Therefore writing in isolation of the above would make the work less factual. Thus we can say the writing of women is motivated somewhat by the ills written about them. Some of the texts that have been written “have tried to project an objective image of women, an image that actually reflects the reality of women’s role in the society” (Nwapa, 2007). In whichever light the woman is projected, her invaluable role to society cannot be undermined. Being given a balance of heroine and antagonist versus society, the dynamics of the African woman’s story is being reshaped.

The woman writer cannot fail to see the woman’s power in her home and society. She sees her economic importance both as mother, farmer, and trader. She writes stories that affirm the woman, thus challenging the male writers and making them aware of woman’s inherent vitality, independent of views,

courage, self confidence, and, her desire for gain and high social status (Nwapa, 2007).

Aidoo in an interview with Azodo spoke widely on the literature of women. When asked how she would define good literature from a feminist perspective. She said:

I wish it is something that I can deal with in a more substantive way. Literature that deals with women's issues, I mean, with women and our position in history, but goes beyond just being about women. First of all, we have to decide what a feminist would consider literature and good literature. But, I think that a literature that affirms women, representing us as articulate, three dimensional beings, not flats, not caricatures, a literature that doesn't portray us as being dumb or inactive. You know what I am saying? A literature that affirms women, that for me is good feminist literature.

The interviewer asked further if she would characterize the African feminist novel as radical, Marxist, liberal or militant. Aidoo was of the view that if it is a feminist novel, then it is bound to be radical. It is probably bound to be militant. It should be socialistic. I don't know about Marxist. If it is socialistic, it is probably Marxist as well. There is some level of class consciousness among women and she thinks the fact that a novel is written by a woman doesn't make it feminist. A book written by a woman is just a book written by a woman. It doesn't make it feminist, because feminism is a specific category, it is an ideology. Feminism is an ideology. So a woman writer is just a woman writer. A book written by a woman is just a book written by a woman. When we say that literature is feminist, then we are speaking specifically of a literature produced from a feminist viewpoint. And that means that literature, if it is feminist, has done more; it affirms women. If you write a book about women, which portrays women as being silly, giggly, ineffectual characters, that's not feminist (Aidoo, *Facing the Millennium*, 1996).

From the above interview and response between Aidoo and Azodo the interviewer, literature has canons that it observes. These canons are what define intellectual writing. The writing of women has been viewed in a different way as having to be in favour of women. A good feminist literature is a work that has women as its focus. Therefore any play that portrays women in this light can be termed as a feminist play. It is worth noting that not all works written by women is feminist. So we can say a work is a feminist work whereas the writer is not. It must be emphasized that a feminist can be male or female.

The discourse between Aidoo and the interviewer explains why some female writers, write with female as their central focus but refuse to be tagged with the label, feminist. Literature projecting the cause of women, even if written by a male, qualifies to be called feminist literature. Examples of such works are *In The Chest of a Woman* by Efo Kodjo Mawugbe, *A wreath for Udoma* by Peter Abraham, *God's Bits of Wood* by Sembene Ousmane among others; these works recognize the woman as full and complete in her God created state. When the projection of the woman is positive then it's a feminist literature. Likewise if the literature projects the woman in a silly manner, then it does not qualify. Examples of such writers are Chinua Achebe (*Things Fall Apart*), Cyprian Ekwensi (*When Love Whispers*), Wole Soyinka (*The interpreters*) and Ngugi wa Thiong'O (*Petals of blood*). These writers focused more on the physical sexual attributes of the woman, her subordination to men among other negative issues (Nwapa, 2007).

Similarly, the two female playwrights under study also tried to make the projections of the situation of their women known. In bringing the plight of women to the limelight, female writers chose to write against their situation as they did not have any

other means to use. Therefore, they engaged the power of the pen to bring to the knowledge of all their disapproval of the treatment meted to them. In a review to make known the situation in Zimbabwe and how Dangaremba portrayed the women in her plays, Mangena says, “Zimbabwean women have peculiar elements of oppression that affect them and that the women writers are forced to protest against in their writings. Primarily, Zimbabwean women writers write against patriarchal dominance and history that glosses over existence and sensibilities” (Mangena, 2013).

He further gives a brief analogy of what the playwright wanted to promote as her theme.

In *She No Longer Weeps*; Dangaremba interrogates what it means to become a woman in the Zimbabwean post independent context. On the attainment of independence, women were promised emancipation, especially in the passage of the Legal Age of Majority Act. This was meant to give women the right to contract their own marriages, represent themselves in court, and be guardians of their children. Since most of the promises were not seriously honoured with the attainment of independence, in *she no longer weeps* we witness a daughter’s struggle to define her own identity as a woman, independent of her father and the Zimbabwean society to assert their own understanding of adulthood (Mangena, 2013, p. 10).

With reference to the play, one can say the Zimbabwean culture do not accept feminism. Though it is used as a medium to create awareness of the plight of women, it does not have a stronghold. Female playwrights put women as the centrality of plays to deliver a message. These messages especially using drama as a medium reach out quickly and easily.

At the core of every work of literature is the theme and setting which women writers have in common with their male-counterparts. Though African women have been writing since the early 1960s, most of their works have not received much acclaim and recognition as those of their male counterparts. This has served as a source of great worry to most of these writers because male writers write it is received with open arms despite its content and sometimes it is blown out of proportion. Yet when a woman writes, often times its content is seen through a critical lens.

This form of criticism has made most women withhold their work, especially feminist literature, with the exception of a few daring known ones and recently, some emerging African Women voices. An example of such a woman is Nwapa; she had a simple and quite life until she wrote her first major work *Efuru* which received diverse criticism and made her wonder what she had done wrong. She thought she was just writing. She is one of the women who has stood firm in the face of this adversity. Another example is Ama Ata Aidoo who had to apologize for writing a love story (*Changes*). Aside the overarching theme of love in the novel, sight must not be lost of the fact that her subthemes are all relevant social issues pertaining till date.

Therefore I believe women do not only write about their fantasies but rather make use of the medium they have to reach out to the entire world through their writings about what issues of women have been through the decades.

Literature educates, entertains and informs. The information given out has helped in the formation of some national policies. Reference can be made to the Intestate Succession Law of Ghana.

It identifies areas such as politics, marriage and the family, and employment, where women suffer discrimination, and spells out specific goals and measures that are to be taken to facilitate the creation of a global society in which women enjoy full equality with men and to fully realize their guaranteed human rights (Interstate Succession law of Ghana).

The law could be inspired by writings of women, opinions, and commentaries on advocacy for women, novels, fiction and the likes.

Aidoo avers that “the stuff we write deserves to be looked at and judged, seriously, like those by our male counterparts, because the very act of creating has cost us too much” (Aidoo, *To Be an African Woman Writer- an Overview and a Detail*, 2007), thus, the works of female writers being canonized as feminist to drive the argument of women empowerment.

Chidi Maduka elucidates how Ogundipe-Leslie in her article the female writer and her commitment “repudiates the strategies used by men to stereotype women as beings with identity and urges women to rise up and vigorously change these images with the power of their pen” (Maduka). This is in resonance with Mariama Ba’s empowerment of women to use books as weapons, a peaceful weapon, she calls it.

Consequently, African female writers have made use of their works to defuse some hitherto held notions about women and their roles in society. These works can also be cited as the voice of the entire women folk.

Since African feminism is not exclusive of western feminism, it cannot be said that it has not made any impact despite the denial of some African women. Its writings have made some impact on the lives of some African women.

2.5 African women on feminism

This section will go a step further to focus, not only on African women writers, but on African women in general and their reactions to feminism. Reference would be made to some earlier cited opinions and definitions.

Ogundipe–Leslie opines that feminism is an ideology of woman; anybody with social philosophy about women is a feminist. Therefore a feminist is not only woman working on issues related to women, but anyone (male/female) can be classified as one (Ogundipe-Leslie, *Stiwanism: Feminism in an African Context*, 2007). A feminist can also be defined as one who believes that men and women should be equal politically, economically and socially (sascwr org, 2008). Deducing from the definitions of feminism, I will say a feminist is anyone (male/female) promoting a positive agenda of both sexes in advancing a peaceful socio-cultural and economic environment.

With the definition of Ogundipe-Leslie of a feminist, any work with women as the central focus makes the writer a feminist. With this assertion in mind African female writers who have women as the central focus of their works must be known as such but many of them have refused to be acknowledged as feminist.

The refusal of some of these female playwrights to be known as feminist though their primary focus is women seem problematic. Ogundipe–Leslie wonders if it's a crime to be a feminist. "Many of the African writers like to declare that they are not feminists, as if it were a crime to be a feminist" (Ogundipe-Leslie, *The Female Writer and Her Commitment*, 1987).

Also Asiedu in her opinion says, women who write to project women should be known as feminist. "People can say they are not feminist but if by their writing projects women

and seeking the well-being of women, they are feminist without realizing they are feminists” (A. M. Asiedu, Personal Interview, June 17 2015).

The ability to find what troubles an individual helps to find a quick remedy to the problem. Therefore I believe feminism is finding what suppresses women and provide or find the necessary solution to it. Consequently, feminist goal is to change the perception that women are the non significant other but rather they are valuable, possessing the same privileges and right as every man making use of their faculties. (Bressler, 1994)

Some critics are of the view that the theory is not necessary for the African woman especially with the history of the theory and its origin. Ogundipe-Leslie submits that “the socialization of women is certainly very important here. The European notion of femininity is even less applicable to Africa where women have adopted all kinds of roles not considered feminine in Europe” (Newell, 2006).

This focuses on some of the reasons for which the theory emerged. The theory seeks to promote the course of women whiles others viewed it as to promote lesbianism, utopian women-only communities (Newell, 2006). This might not be entirely true, they want to be free from the marginalization towards them as well be able to progress in every sphere of life. Regina Ode affirms:

Some measure of agreement seems to exist among Western feminist scholars that women are subjugated, marginalized and therefore need to be liberated but African scholars are still engaged in a battle of deciding whether African women are really deprived. As a matter of fact they argue that the strength of a woman lies in her womanhood and therefore should not be tampered with. To them, African women are only 'faithfully' attending to their naturally ordained responsibilities. As the battle rages it becomes more and more difficult to begin to tackle the women question in our society. For the western world, the

different approaches all target one end; liberation of the woman (Ode, 2011, p. 82)

If the target of western feminists is the liberation of the woman, then the African feminists must also define their target clearly. African women according to Ogundipe-Leslie do not need feminism because they have never been oppressed. Unity of thought and agenda is seen at the western front whilst a different situation exists in Africa. Ideas may differ from person to person; that is the African situation.

Harsh thoughts and sentiments are associated with feminism. Some say feminists are women who are unhappy because they cannot find husbands as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie outlined some of her experience.

Some critics have also tagged feminists as rebellious. This notion has made people to brand feminists as women who are sex starved and haters of marriage since the institution did not treat them well (Newell, 2006). These are some of the stereotypical views attached to feminism, which also give an urge to research into the area.

Female writers like Tess A. Onwueme, Florence Abena Dolphyne, Aminata Sow Fall et cetera, have all debunked this assertion that they are feminist, but rather that they just seek to write about issues concerning women. These women can be classified as second generation writers. Some third generation writers are Sefi Atta, Lola Shoneyin, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Unoma Azuah, and Chika Unigwe. Unlike the generation of women before them, they embrace feminism without apologies. They are also historically informed about their place in their struggle to right the wrongs done to women's bodies in their cultures (Eze, 2014). These wrongs done to women have given them a reason to embrace feminism. The latter set of women is known as the third generation writers. (Adesanmi & Dunton, 2005)

Some African women have defined the theory of feminism to suit their purpose thus calling it 'African feminism'. Buchi Emecheta calls herself a feminist with a small "f". Florence Abena Dolphyne says 'I have never considered and still do not consider myself a "feminist"'.

The majority of African feminists do not agree with most western ideologies about the rights of the woman but rather what nature and culture has demarcated as the place of the woman which when observed by all involved will bring an end to the struggles and ideologies of these founders. Western feminism by most African female writers is comprehended as radical, and they do not want to be associated with such radicalism which is not the nature of the African woman.

Zulu Sofola a Nigerian female playwright is of the view that "in the European system there is absolutely no place for the women', in the African traditional system the roles are clearly demarcated". These roles she is talking about, positions the woman in the African home as one who is the fort of every home. Unfortunately, her voice is limited to the home but not heard in the public domain. African women have been regarded as invisible. In that, they do not appear in certain "traditional" settings when discussions are going on. They are also said to be voiceless, in that they do not have a say in some issues when they are being discussed, even if it concerns or affects them. Their views are not sought in the decision making process, and their voices could be said to a large extent, to not be their own.

Tess Onwueme, also a Nigerian female playwright whose plays revolve around women and their liberation, also "expressed strong dislike for western type feminism; labelling it a man-hating, family-wrecking ideology". (Newell, 2006, p.150) Family-wrecking in the sense that these women do not have time for the home; everything is left on the man.

Children are left in the care of surrogate mothers. Abena Dolphyne again says, “the word feminism evokes for me the image of an aggressive woman who in the same breath, speaks of a woman’s right to education and professionalism . . . as well as a woman’s right to practice prostitution and lesbianism”. Mary E. Kolawole also identifies western feminism with lesbianism and the rejection of motherhood. This and many other reasons have forced many African female writers not to welcome that label. This brings me to an earlier point which said feminism is for women who are sex-starved. This in no doubt goes to say most western feminist are lesbians (Trigiani, 1999). African feminists associated feminism with lesbianism. “Feminism conjures up visions of aggressive women who try to be like men”. (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 1996, p. 1)

Flora Nwapa “wanted nothing to do with feminism because of its anti-men stance”. On a different platform she says that fulfilment of life is not only with a man and children. Though this might be regarded as a contradiction to earlier statements, I believe that reference was made to the satisfaction derived from other areas such as career.

As cited by Susan Arndt (2002), Ama Ata Aidoo, one of the prolific playwrights from Ghana also refutes this label of a feminist (Newell, 2006, p. 150) “I shall not protest if you call me a feminist”, stresses Ama Ata Aidoo. She further affirms:

But I am not a feminist because I write about women. Are men writers male chauvinist pigs just because they write about men? Or is a writer an African nationalist just by writing about Africans? Or a revolutionary for writing about poor oppressed humanity? Obviously not... no writer, female or male, is a feminist just by writing about women (Aidoo, 'Unwelcome pals and decorative slaves', 1982).

However, in an interview on BBC Hard Talk telecast on Tuesday 22 July 2014, Aidoo was asked if she is a feminist and she affirmed it. She also had the following to say on

her position as a feminist. She said feminism is different in different contexts but that a feminist is always somebody who “believes in the potential of women to get to the highest possible level of development”. In her concluding words she said feminism is an ideology, it depends on how it is formulated or negotiated on the details of a particular environment. This brings a contradiction in the earlier quotation and the recent affirmation; one may only say the change of mind is progression over the years. She is one of the leading writers on the theory of feminism through her writings. This has led her to be regarded as a radical feminist by some of her critics.

African women have put forward strong reasons for which they do not want to relate to feminism. Buchi Emecheta says she is not a feminist but if her followers think she is then she is a feminist with a small ‘f’. When she was asked why the refusal to be known as a feminist, she asserts that:

I did not start as a feminist. I do not think I am one now. Most of my readers would take this to be the statement of a coward. But it is not. I thought before that I would like to be one but after my recent visit to the United States, when I talked to real ‘Feminists’ with a capital ‘F’, I think we women of African background still have a very very long way to go before we can really rub shoulders with such women... So my sisters in America, I am not shunning your advanced help, in fact I still think women of Africa need your contribution, and at the same time we need our men. (Emecheta, A Nigerian Writer Living in London, 1982)

Therefore, western feminism can be seen and classified as anti-male; it is the likes of such which evolve the popular cliché “what a man can do, a woman can do and even better”, also instead of manpower, it’s now person power. Emecheta continues to say,

I will not be called feminist here, because it is European. It is as simple as that. I just resent that... I don’t like being defined by them... It is just that it

comes from outside and I don't like people dictating to me. I do believe in the African type of feminism. They call it womanism, because, you see, you Europeans don't worry about water, you don't worry about schooling, you are so well off. Now, I buy land, and I say, 'Okay, I can't build on it, I have no money, so I give it to some women to start planting.' That is my brand of feminism. (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997, p.7)

To the African woman lending a helping hand to the woman or person in need is feminism thus it is not only verbal empowerment of another woman but economic and resource empowerment as well.

Not all African women are against feminism, there are some who are for it whether western or African feminism. Tlali Miriam in an interview was asked 'in this period of "isms" and deconstructed canons, what label would you like for yourself? Commenting, she had this to say: "I identify myself as a black woman writer. In South Africa we live under a pyramid of power, so I regard myself as the voice of the African woman who is oppressed politically, socially and culturally" (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997, p.8). She boldly writes about the plight of women in South Africa, serving as their mouthpiece.

Tsitsi Dangaremba, one of the playwrights under study said in an interview with Flora Veit-Wid, that "the white western feminism does not meet my experiences at a certain point, the issues of me as a black woman. The black American female writers touch more of me than the white ones". (Veit-Wild, 1989) Maybe with this she is referring to the womanist.

Audrey Gadzekpo ¹a Ghanaian feminist believes in feminism. According to her "a feminist is one who sees inequality between men and women and wants to do something

¹ Ghanaian gender activist fighting for the course of women.

about it” (Gadzekpo, 2015). Awo Asiedu² shares similar view with Gadzekpo. She is of the view that, as far as she knows feminism is working towards equal rights for men and women (Personal communication, 2015). These women have identified a problem and the need for a change. Therefore, they can all be connected to Ngozi Adichie who urges that we all should be feminist.

Though some do not see the essence of Western feminism to the African but others are of the view that western feminism has done a lot of good than bad, therefore they must show appreciation. It has led the African woman to be recognized therefore the African needs feminism. “Here we must thank our feminist sisters at home and abroad (American and Europe) who have made it possible for African critics to notice us” (Nwapa, 2007). Ifi Amadiume also believes that “African women have gained voice through feminism; they have also educated the public about this complexity of identity through the explanation of roots and cultural heritage” (Amadiume, 2001). Thence the African woman has gained voice through feminism which has been used to the betterment of other women in the cultural heritage of the African.

These theories by African women have not made much impact. However, studies have proven that more women have associated themselves with womanism than all the other theories. Furthermore, though some women have said feminism is problematic and do not want to be tagged to it, some have also embraced it and are advocating for more women if not all to be feminist.

Ama Ata Aidoo posit

² Ghanaian feminist activist and a lecturer at the School of Performing Arts, Legon.

When people ask me rather bluntly every now and then whether I am a feminist, I not only answer yes, but I go on to insist that every woman and every man should be a feminist – especially if they believe that Africans should take charge of African land, African wealth, African lives and the burden of African development (Aidoo, *The African woman today*, 1998).

This assertion by Aidoo can be related to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s novel titled “*We All Should Be Feminist*” and a speech she delivered on *TEDx*. Findings on Ama Ata Aidoo have shown that she has not been consistent with where she belongs to either as a feminist, a womanist etcetera.

Equal opinions on such issues may not be achieved. Not everyone shares the same view with Nwapa; to some feminism has been with the African long before the colonizers came to the shores of Africa. Aidoo strongly holds this view that feminism is not new to the African; she is not copying an European culture. This she said with reference to female leaders who have led their people in various African countries. In her opinion we must denounce all feminism as imperialist . . . this erases from memory the long histories of women’s resistance to local imperialist patriarchies. . . . Many women’s mutinies around the world predated Western feminism or occurred without any contact with Western feminist (McClintock, 1995). This she said with reference to female rulers who ruled as far back as the sixteenth century, mention can be made of Queen Amina of Zazzau, and Queen Nzinga. These women lived and died before the inception of feminism in Africa. Some think they would have been known as feminist had they lived in current times, others also think otherwise.

I believe these women would not have passed for feminist, first considering the various definitions of feminism. Using Filomina Chioma Steady’s definition of African feminism, these women did opposite of it. Feminism seeks to empower one another but

not to be power hungry and conscious to the detriment of others. These women share in the success story of pre-colonial and colonial history of Africa. Also the question must be asked would they have also had so much diversity among the ideologies that exist now or they will share a common view?

Currently, much diversity has sprung up in the theory of feminism among African women. These various types vary from each other. The various types do not fit into each other. These varieties do not mean division in the women front but rather a widening scope to accommodate different thoughts, views, opinions and ideologies. These theorists are of different religions, classes, political motivation and personal beliefs. According to Trinh Minh-ha “the refusal of the label of feminist by most African women gives room for expansion of feminism which suits their experiences. “Third world” women sometimes have to refuse labels because it is crucial to open space of naming in feminism” (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997). This she said in an interview with Pratibha Parmar. This attests to the fact that, the needs of women are not the same everywhere.

2.6 African culture and feminist values

Africa is one of the continents of the world with the most diverse cultures. It consists of about sixty (60) countries, with thousands of different languages and dialects. The diversity of the people on the soil of Africa comes with different skin colours; some white and others black. In the context of this work, Africa refers to the countries of the geographical continent (Unless otherwise stated). Extrapolation will be used to discuss specific issues in various countries on the continent. As stated earlier, Africa is comprised of different cultures; this is one component of the discourse that cannot be taken out.

Culture is simply said to be a 'way of life'. It is defined as the way of life of a group of people. This includes their entertainment, social lifestyle, commerce and religious beliefs. Mercy Amba Oduyoye as cited by Kwok Pui-Ian defines culture in a very comprehensive way, as "a people's world-view, way of life, values, philosophy of life, the psychology that governs behaviour, their sociology and social arrangement, all that they have carved and cultured out of their to differentiate their style of life from other peoples" (Pui-Ian, 2004). Ogundipe-Leslie opines "Culture; how people think and behave. You are the culture that you carry, despite your colour" (Ogundipe-Leslie, *Stiwanism: Feminism in an African Context*, 2007).

Therefore culture determines the identity of an individual. The subject of culture must not be underestimated but considered and delved into. On the international scene, the African culture is associated with "backwardness, barbarity, and powerlessness, while Western culture is seen as liberation" (Amadiume, 2001, p. 57). These assertions have had their effects in some ways but through education and information most of these disillusionments have been cleared.

The African culture cannot be described as the best because it may or may not favour everyone, either male or female. As culture is dynamic, it has its strengths and weaknesses. It may give one the upper hand and be suppressive to the other but in most cases the latter applies to women. In many African societies, the woman is relegated to the background and considered as second rate. "Within African cultural traditions, beliefs and practices such as stereotypical sex roles, the ritual impurity of menstruating women, and the exclusion of females from certain rituals marginalized women and render them as second-class citizens" (Pui-Ian, 2004). Therefore physical attributes of a woman (discussed in chapter one) which limit her is part of our cultural sphere. Oduyoye

adds that “culture can provide women their communal identity and a sense of belonging; while at the same time it can be manipulated and used as a tool of domination” (Pui-Ian, 2004, p. 7).

Importance and relevance are given to a pressing situation. Western feminists in their struggle, wish to attain liberation for all women worldwide. “African women have always considered survival and economic justice to be primary issues”. (Pui-Ian, 2004, p. 11) There are several issues confronting the African woman but her focus and target are issues of ‘survival and economic justice’.

“Western women have a tendency to define feminism by focusing solely on sexuality, but African women understand feminism to be more comprehensive and multifaceted, including socioeconomic, religious, and cultural aspects” (Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African women and patriarchy*, 1995). Therefore to them, feminism must not have one agenda but must have multiple agenda which will satisfy the needs and demands of women all over Africa.

Culturally or traditionally, women have demarcations that they must adhere to; demarcations such as caregivers and food providers. In decision making, there is a level of inequality between men and women as the man has the upper hand over the woman.

This section of the work will discuss three significant areas of the African tradition and its feminist values. These areas are women and patriarchy, tradition and chastity, and tradition and marriage.

Traditionally, the sex of a child is of great importance to the family. Most people desire a male child who will continue the family lineage and also it is believed that they are those who look after the mother in her old age. Therefore:

In most African societies the birth of a son enhances the woman's authority in the family. Male children are very, very important. Yet, this girl-child that was not desired originally comes into her own at a very early age. From childhood she is conditioned into thinking that being the girl she must do all the housework, she must help her mother cook, clean, fetch water and look after her younger brothers and sisters. If she moans or shows signs of not wanting to do any of this, she will be sharply reminded by her mother. 'But you are a girl! Going to be a woman'. (Emecheta, 2007)

Domestic duties are always seen as a requirement of the female with little or no involvement of the male. If the boy will also be taken through the training that girls are taken through, I believe it would make them bolder and more confident. The preference of a male over female can be heart breaking. In the Akan society of Ghana, when a male child is born it is said "*w'awo nipa*", meaning a human being has been born. This goes further to affirm how the male becomes head over the female, which is the patriarchal system.

I believe this has been in existence since the creation of the world, and therefore there should not be any issue about it with reference to the dominance of the male over the female.

Mythologically, most critics see women and their relationship with their spouses and the entire society as a fair description of their status through the ages. Biblical account has it that it was the woman who first tasted the forbidden fruit and also made the man to taste. The woman is, therefore adjudged to be cursed by the creator Himself. While some feminist writers query this natural dichotomy between the man and the woman, some writers, especially within the African feminist group, are influenced by this mythological justification by the Bible. They seem to suggest too, that even the domestic division of labor practiced in African culture based on sex and gender was

ordained by God and therefore to change this would be to antagonize the creator. (Ode, 2011, p. 81)

This is a truth held by most Africans, that the natural order ordained by God must not be changed. Feminism seeks total liberation from male dominance, while African feminism is seeking the support of men in their development. This clearly shows that the woman acknowledges the place of the man which does not make the man any better than the woman.

As part of feminist values, liberal feminism,

Is that both men and women are created equal by God therefore, they deserve equal rights. They believe women have the same capacity as their male counterparts and should be given the same opportunities in political and economic spheres (Ode, 2011, p. 87).

This type of feminism wants gender equality. They believe there are no differences between male and female; therefore, treatment and accessibility to benefits should be the same. None should be treated superior to the other especially the man over woman.

Chastity is a paramount component of most African traditions. The ability of a woman to remain pure till she is married cuts across most African countries except in some tribes of Africa. The ability of a woman to be chaste before marriage shows her commitment to her husband and children, thus the practice of female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by some cultures to reduce the sexual drive of Females. Though barbaric, it has been successful to some extent in its purpose, but the negatives far outweigh the positives. Its negative repercussions on the life and reproductive system of the female cannot be measured.

In a review by Carolyn Martin Shaw on *She No Longer Weeps*, she showed how sexuality is explored by the playwright. Sexuality in the play shows how the daughter directly battles with her mother and father for a new sexual morality in newly independent Zimbabwe (Shaw, 2007). African attitude towards sex is a sacred one. It is a religious element of creation whereby it is not spoken about. Sexual morality is important in social, cultural and religious context.

Sexual preference in terms of partners in some African cultures is a male and female combination; anything otherwise is not accepted. One of the perceived core values of feminism is to promote lesbianism which does not have a place in the traditional set up of the African society. This issue of chastity has been explored in the works of most African female playwrights weighing the pros and cons of it to the advantage of whatever situations they are projecting. Further on the issue of sexuality, one of the values of feminists is to allow women to be both male and female. This also goes to promote sex change and bisexuality.

The radical feminism is sub-divided into two; radical liberation feminism- which emphasizes that the reproduction role of the woman limits her capacity to contribute to the society. This group prefers that the woman should essentially be androgynous. To achieve this they recommend artificial means of reproduction so that less time is devoted to pregnancy giving way for worthwhile things. They believe that abortion should be allowed and also promote the use of contraceptives (Ode, 2011, p. 87).

These values of radical feminist I believe do not have a place in the African culture. From earlier assertions on African feminism, one can see what is essential to the African through their feminism. This value seeks to change the natural order of the woman for the purpose to convince.

Another feminist value in relation to sex is that of the Radical-Cultural Feminists. “The Radical-Cultural feminists see sex and penetration by the male as male domination. They believe women should encompass their femininity. They see a link between sex, female subordination, rape and other abuses” (Ode, 2011, p.87). This is suggestive to women to have control of their sexuality. They should decide and determine when she wishes for sex. Also the man must respect the need and desire of the woman and not take advantage of her during her time of vulnerability.

Shaw does not regard the feminist ideology exhibited by Dangaremba as liberal but rather says, “she uses the language of socialist feminism and the figure of a radical feminist” in telling her story as well as projecting her message (Shaw, 2007, p. 19).

Some of the beliefs that regulate the human society have customs and traditions as well as beliefs which have succeeded in keeping the woman under subjugation and thus make them feel inferior to men.

Marriage is an important aspect of the African cultural structures. Marriage is the union of two consenting adults as well as families. It is not limited to individuals. Marriage is contracted in various ways depending on the culture of the people involved. In the traditional set up of the Ghanaian society, when the intention of marriage is made by one family to the other; a background search is conducted to ascertain the situations in the family before giving approval. In this case love or emotional attachment to a person is not a prerequisite; therefore, it is not a firm ground for marriage, but it can be developed along the line. There are three types of marriages, predominant in Africa, namely marriage under the Ordinance, Islamic marriage and customary marriage.

Bride wealth is paid by the man and his family before a woman can move to stay in the home of the man. Bride wealth varies from family to family; it's determined by factors such as status of the woman in terms of education among others, the status of the family in the society and whether the society is patrilineal or matrilineal.

A marriage can be monogamous or polygamous. For this research, polygamy is of concern. Polygamous marriage in the traditional setting has its reason for existence. This reason is that a woman cannot meet all the needs of her husband. Therefore, a co-wife or wives are needed to run the home effectively (Dolyphne, 1991). In the olden days when farming was the order of the day, the strength of a man's household determined his harvest since the wives and children were the labour needed to ensure an aspect of a successful farming season. "For the present, most African women, especially the rural majority, believe that polygamy as practised in African societies, is to be preferred to the situation one finds in Western societies where, in the strict monogamous system, a man may be married to one woman but keeps one or more mistresses" (Dolyphne, 1991).

Polygamy seems to be gaining acceptance as it was frowned upon some years back. There are different attributes given as to why it must be accepted. Summarily, Nfah-Abbenyi cites Davis and Greaves who distinguishes between western feminism and the place of Africa in connection to feminism.

The obvious connect between African and western feminism is that both identify gender-specific issues and recognize women's position internationally as one of second class status and "otherness" and seek to correct that. An international feminism to which various regional perspectives are contributed seems acceptable to African women while the European/American model is not. The failure of western feminists has been to deal with issues that directly affect black women and men (South Africa as the most overt example). The term "feminism" often has to be qualified

when used by most African or other third world women (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997, p. 11).

2.7 Summary

African female playwrights have identified that they are the voice of women through their literary works. When drama is used as a vehicle to send these messages, I believe they will be received widely by all since it is more visual. Culture is dynamic to its people regardless of the ills said about. A borrowed culture might not meet the demands of the people. Therefore as Africans and women, focus is needed to foster the agenda of women.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the various methods the researcher employed in gathering data on feminism in the plays, *She No Longer Weeps* and *Nnoera: an African Doll's House*. The end result is used to fulfil the objectives of the research. The information gathered dwell on how feminist ideals are used in the plays under review and also how feminism has been of help to the African. Not forgetting how it could be used as a tool for development.

The chapter also covered the type of design utilised and the mode used in gathering data for the study. It also examines the role of the researcher in making some choices. Again, the chapter discusses the motivation for the research. This includes the reasons for choosing the topic and the selected plays and how consent of the playwright was gained.

Play selection forms an important component of the research. It is necessary to know the reason or reasons why the plays were selected. It is also a way of finding out if the plays are appropriate for the study.

3.2 Research design

Qualitative research method is the most appropriate research method to use for data collection for this research. Qualitative methodology involves the use of interviews, documents and observation to explain some social canons. It focuses on the interpretation of these canons. This method of research employs five steps in attaining the set goals. Creswell notes that:

The five steps are first to identify participants and sites to be studied and to engage in a sampling strategy that will best help you understand your central phenomenon and the research question you are asking. Second, the next

phase is to gain access to these individuals and sites by obtaining permissions. Third, once permissions are in place, you need to consider what types of information will best answer your research questions. Fourth, at the same time, you need to design protocols or instruments for collecting and recording the information. Finally and fifth, you need to administer the data collection with special attention to potential ethical issues that may arise. (Creswell, 2012)

Using qualitative method to reach the ultimate goal, the following mediums was used in arriving at the results. They are observation, interviewing, and content analysis of the text. This methodology is significant to the study because it enables the researcher carry out a content analysis of texts.

Creswell et al define a research design as ‘procedures for collecting, analyzing, interpreting and reporting data in research studies’ (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006).

In finding the presence of feminism in the works of African female playwrights, the researcher used textual analysis of the two plays, library research and interviews. Through these mediums, the researcher was able to gather the different views and opinions on feminism and its relevance to the African. The perception of some prominent playwrights like Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, Zulu Sofola, amongst others were also reviewed.

Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, Alice Walker, Florence Abena Dolyphne, and etcetera are non-playwrights whose works were also consulted. Mention can also be made of the different views derived pertaining to the plays understudy and the subject in general from the interviews conducted. The study also revealed substantial knowledge about feminism that had not been considered for the research from the onset.

3.3 Qualitative procedure

In carrying out in this research, two types of qualitative design were engaged; descriptive and interpretative design.

3.3.1 Descriptive research

Descriptive research design is about facts, it is the ability of the researcher to make known factual details discovered or encountered during the research. “A descriptive research is concerned with conditions, practices, structures, differences or relationships that exist, opinions held processes that are going on or trends that are evident”. It’s a type of design which tries to explain and interpret a trending phenomenon at a time (Rajind, 2013).

In gathering the facts, some essential approach must be used. These are personal observation made by the researcher and observation made by others through literature reviews and interviews.

For the purpose of this study, this design deals with how the text is explained using understanding from the variables in the definition such as opinions held, differences and conditions, in the context of women in Africa and their perceptions on feminism. Feminism has been in existence for some time now but its issues and relevance in still trending not all only in Africa but globally.

3.3.2 Interpretative research

This design enables the researcher to employ his/her viewpoints, thoughts, feelings, intentions and experiences. This type of design deals with getting into the minds of the people (women) understudy (Johnson, 1997, p. 285). A necessary requirement of this design is the provision of “accurate portraying of meaning”. In connection to this work,

personal arguments, assertions and understanding of the researcher are engaged to append to epistemology.

This design is handy to the researcher because most of the findings were based on the researcher's intuitions, personal experience and subjective estimation. Such findings may not be scientifically and empirically established. However, the researcher tried very much to avoid personal biases and malicious and unsubstantiated views.

The interpretative research applies to the work in outlining the plot summary of the two plays. The researcher's view is the essential mode used in describing the plays. For the purpose of feminist writing accurate meaning is employed to bring out the facts. Delving into the minds of the women in the plays provided essentials needed for feminist ideologies. The researcher used this type of design to also define understanding of the theory.

3.4 Protocols observed

In carrying out interviews, a guide is designed to provide a formula. This made the interviews easier and successful. Selection of the interviewees was also decided upon. Phone calls were made to the selected persons who agreed to grant the interview. Date, time and venue were their own discretion.

Ethics is very needed for every type of research; it needs to be strictly adhered to since some of the issues may be confidential. Adherence to ethics is observed for interview though questions outlined for the interview had no bearing on the personal lives of the interviewees. Also most of the issues discussed were not sensitive and they all consented to sharing their knowledge on the subject area.

All interviews were held in the offices of the participants as it was more convenient for them. Though minor disruptions occurred, such as a knock on the door, a visit by

someone amongst others, however, these did not affect the information gathered in any way. Before the interview, a general idea of the whole process was discussed. This prepared them for what is ahead, what has been found out and what is expected.

Results from the interviews conducted were transcribed; this helped in the further analysis of the work. Grouping of the answers per the questions asked aided in easier identification of information needed.

3.5 Approach to data collection

The major approach used in gathering data for this research is through reading of the plays, *She No Longer Weeps* and *Nneora: an African Doll's House*. The reading helped in extracting opinions about feminism. The two types of design enabled their interpretation with respect to feminist philosophy. It also involved library research to find works by others who have written reviews on the plays with feminist concerns. The research from the library provided data on feminism, women writers and their bid to empower other women. It also aided in getting into some of the cultures that exist in Africa and their treatment of women. The use of the library gave information on the playwrights, their backgrounds and their works. Some of the libraries used are Balme library, Institute of African Studies library, School of Performing Arts Library and Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy (CEGENSA) all on University of Ghana campus, Legon. Another important library used was the online libraries provided by the University of Ghana.

3.6 Characteristics of the design in relation to the plays

The plays were read; the characters identified and grouped under stereotypical, marginalised and liberated as these are notions of African women using western

paradigms of feminism. Character analysis was done through various theories of western and African feminism. There are nine females in the play *She No Longer Weeps*. For the purpose of the study, six of these female characters were analysed. They are Martha's Mother, Martha, Gertrude, Chipo, Mrs. Mutsika and Mrs. Chiwara. *Nneora: An African Doll's House* has four female characters; Nneora, Mama Uduak, Linda and Lady but Nneora, Mama Uduak and Linda were used for the work. They were analysed according to the parameters of the various types of feminism. This further elaborated on women who were stereotyped, marginalised and the concerns that the playwrights sought to highlighted on, which also assert them as feminist. The result was reported with subjective arguments, personal opinions amongst others. Arguments were largely based on subjective interpretation, logical argument.

3.7 Choice of research topic

In growing up, I heard a lot of arguments about feminism which were mostly negative and controversial. It was around the same time that the Beijing Conference was held in 1995. Popular sayings such as "I know my rights" were held up high by some women. Also "what a man can do a woman can do and even better", was the talk of the time. These ignited some interest in me but I never tried to delve into it. During lectures with one of my lecturers studying theories and criticism, I realised my familiarity with the course. It stimulated interest in the works of feminist and the desire to know more about ideology. Several factors contributed to why a research is undertaken but the principal among them is ones personal interest in the subject. Personally, my first interest in the subject is because I am a woman and concerned with issues of women. As a theatre practitioner and knowing the basic functions of the theatre – to inform, educate and

entertain - I sought to use this medium to examine the issue of women in Africa, her beliefs and practices.

3.8 Permission from playwrights

After reading and selecting of the plays, steps were taken to obtain permission from the playwrights. A message was sent to one of the playwright; Tsitsi Dangaremba. Who gave her consent but said she could not respond because of the subject of feminism but wished success for the thesis. Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh was not contacted as there was difficulty in accessing her address.

3.9 Choice of plays

The writings of African women show the true identity of the African woman and her condition. The relevance of the woman worldwide cannot be overlooked. The two plays used for this research were *She No Longer Weeps* and *Nneora: an African Doll's House*. The plays were discovered through wide studies of African plays. The choice was due to the fact that the playwrights are female and also the plays have feminist ideas. The playwrights have done extensive work through their writing to highlight how women are stereotyped and marginalised in their homes and the society as a whole. African women writers have through their works, consistently and subtly projected these propositions, sometimes vehemently, hence the tag 'Feminist'. Dangaremba and Utoh-Ezeajugh's plays are in my view, apt materials to assess these conditions of the African woman in the global context, through a socio-cultural and economic lens.

3.10 Data collection and recording procedures

In qualitative method of sampling two methods are engaged; random and purposive sampling. Four people were considered for the interviews conducted. Interviewees were

selected purposively. In purpose sampling, the researcher intentionally selects individuals and the site to be used. Also the researcher must know if the participants and the site is “information rich” according to Patton. (Creswell, Educational research planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research, 2012)

Three out of the four selected interviewees were lecturers from the Department of Theatre Arts, School of Performing Arts, and University of Ghana who have in-depth knowledge into the area of study. This knowledge includes their reading of the play, understanding of it and also their ability to discuss it. The remaining one was a second year graduate student from the same department.

During reading of the texts and other materials, reflexive notes were taken of the salient points found in them that resonated with the subject of feminism and African female playwrights. Notes were made in the reading materials and in a notepad and exercise book. The instruments used in recording informations during the interview were a pen, notepad and a recorder. These were used in conducting the interviews, which informed some of the findings made in the research. The questions were general and open-minded.

The interview guide was designed on open-ended questions, which gave room for follow up questions when necessary. Language used for the interview was English because of the interviewees sampled. The recorder was used in recording the session whilst the pen and notepad used in making notes when deemed fit. The interview was liberal, giving room to the interviewee to express him or herself. Therefore, the interview guide was not strictly adhered to; this does not mean that unnecessary issues were discussed. Most of the things discussed were captured in the guide. In addition, the liberal mode used enabled other areas to be covered as it came up.

Overall, the researcher ensured questions were in the range of the guide. In designing the interview guide, the research questions were considered. Findings in the literature review were also used. Another consideration was the view of people about the playwrights and the plays.

Another method engaged was the textual analysis of the plays conducted. Comprehensive work done can be found in the next chapter (four); discussions were centred on description of the plays in the context of feminist writing. The playwrights discussed with their background and their influence on their works. The section also concerned itself with the plot summary of the plays, character portrayal, and diction of the plays in the stereotyping of the women. Interpretation also formed an essential part of the chapter. The work also provided a solution to cultural problem. Last but the least how the researcher empathize about the subject.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE PLAYS

4.1 Overview

This chapter provides an extensive insight into the research and the feminist ideologies extrapolated from the plays. It is a total of all that has been discovered and discussed in the research. It provides the analysis and interpretation of the work which dissects the various portions of the text bearing on feminism. Plot summary of the text is made available to give forehand knowledge of the events that unfolded in the text. The cultural and political background of the plays which tells the time and place the plays were written is also provided.

The chapter also describes the plays in the context of feminist writing to affirm the positive portrayal of the female characters as not docile or flat. Furthermore, an intricate knowledge of stereotypical philosophies of men and women towards each other are laid bare. Also this research could serve as a solution to a cultural problem. Playwrights have various reasons for writing. It could span from observation to the personal experiences of the person. Brief backgrounds of the two playwrights are outlined, to help ascertain whether their personal feminist beliefs have influence on their works. A summary to give insight to the personal thoughts of the researcher relating to feminism is also provided.

4.2 Plot summary of the plays

Detailed plot summaries of the plays under review are outlined. The plot summaries outline the sequential arrangement of events in the respective plays, as presented by the playwrights.

4.2.1 Plot summary of *She No Longer weeps*

She No Longer Weeps is a play centred on a young female university student who falls head over heels in love with a male colleague. Their affair results in pregnancy, which in turn triggers different responses. Her father, a reverend minister, and also a typical symbol of patriarchy, drives her away from home for bringing shame and disgrace to the family. Her mother initially pleads with the father to be considerate of their daughter's delicate condition, but eventually shifts camp to join her husband to enforce his decision. She moves to her boyfriend (Freddy)'s house where she is also not welcomed since she is regarded as an impediment to the numerous relationships he has with other ladies.

She does all the house chores though heavily pregnant. She receives insults from Gertrude and Chipo, both sex partners of Freddy. She runs back to her parents' home, and this time, they showed her love and concern, but not for long. When Freddy wanted her to move back in with him, she refused. The father is concerned about his reputation, therefore, he asks her to move in with some relatives so as to give him room to preach freely.

After childbirth, Martha took her destiny into her own hands. She furthered her education, got employed and moved to stay on her own. She pampers her daughter so much; showing her so much love and care. Martha develops hatred for men due to her past experience with Freddy. She now develops the attitude of using men to her 'seeming' advantage such as satisfying her sexual needs. Her long lost boyfriend, Freddy, returns to claim his daughter after seven years though he is married and has a family of his own. In his bid to claim his daughter, Freddy points out to Martha the support of the law towards him being the man. He takes the child away without her knowledge. During a visit of Martha's parents to her place, he shows up. Anger and motherly passion wells up in her; she picks a knife to stab Freddy. She invites thugs to

beat him up and then invites her father to call the police since he always stands for what is right.

4.2.2 Plot summary of Nneora: an African Doll's House

Nneora: an African Doll's House is an adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh changed the name Nora to Nneora meaning "mother of all". The story is developed around a young business woman who sacrifices her business to create a good home for her husband. A man she helped when he was in dire need. She marries him and bears him four beautiful girls which situation posed no problem for starters, but family and societal pressure for a male child sets in sooner than later. Nneora has an ex-lover by name Osita who helps her secure a job for her husband at the bank. One day from the hospital en route via the market, she meets an old school mate who is in town to reconcile with her husband whom she has abandoned for so many years and left for America. Osita decides to blackmail Nneora after she refuses his amorous propositions in return for some favours he granted her. Ikenna, her husband, does not treat her with the deserved respect. It is later discovered that Osita is the husband that Nneora's friend, Linda, is looking for. Nneora refuses to inform Ikenna that she is expecting a set of male twins since he has bluntly expressed his dislike for his daughters. Ikenna gets angry at Nneora when he suspects she is flirting with other men. He asks her to leave their matrimonial home with the children whom he calls "pests". Osita comes to apologize to Nneora and Ikenna for the blackmail and the mistrust he has brought into their marriage. Linda also makes it known that Nneora is carrying male twins. Ikenna's joy knows no bounds but Nneora stands by his words and packs out of their home with the children despite her husband's pleas.

4.3 Description of the plays in the context of feminist writing

Social drama is employed to address relevant societal issues. The two plays under review serve exactly the same purpose. Tsisti Dangaremba hails from Zimbabwe which happens to be the setting of the play; *She No Longer weeps*, written in 1987 during the postcolonial period of Zimbabwe. The background of the play deals with gender relationship during the post colonial era. Patriarchy which reigns in most African countries has a deep root in “this Zimbabwe” as well. This becomes a great tool in the hands of Freddy; the antagonist in the play, as he explores it to his advantage.

Women’s emancipation was promised by independent Zimbabwe, especially in the passage of the Legal Age of Majority Act, giving women the right to contract their own marriages, represent themselves in court, and be guardians of their children. Despite such laws, many legal rights of women were not honored. Though increasing numbers of women broke away from the good daughter-loyal wife-sacrificing mother ideal to establish a different kind of sexual politics, they were certainly not heralded as cultural pioneers (Shaw, 2007, p. 8).

The law had a place for women but one may say culture overrode the law, still enabling men to dominate women. Though culture and feminism do not have a lot in common, the playwright displays certain lapses of culture and feminism and their place in the life of the African. This is seen in the discussions of marriage in the play. Sexual immorality which was rife in the era under review and Zimbabwe was not left out in the play.

The play *Nneora (an African Doll’s House)*, is an adaptation of Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*. Both plays (*Nneora* and *a Doll’s House*) are centred on the protagonist, *Nneora* and *Nora*, respectively. These characters (*Nneora* and *Nora*) serve two different cultures, the Western mode of the woman and the African embodiment

of the woman. The title Nneora, meaning, “mother of all” also determines the heroine’s characterization. Asiedu (2011) informs that:

Utoh-Ezeajugh’s eponymous heroine Nneora is also greatly transformed, as compared to Ibsen’s Nora. This transformation, beginning with her name, Nneora, which translates as ‘mother of all’, presents her characterization as a strong industrious woman not at all as helpless and naive as Nora may be read, I argue is as a result of African conceptions of feminism and womanhood. African feminism, like all other contemporary theoretical conception on the continent, is conditioned by the social and cultural matrix. What African women see as priorities in their fight for equal rights are not always the same as what Euro-American feminists would consider as priorities (p.172).

Nigeria is one of the largest countries in West Africa with different ethnic groupings and cultures. The playwright Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh is from Nigeria and belongs to the Igbo tribe, against which cultural background the play is set. Just like most Nigerian ethnic groups, the Igbo culture is steeped in proverbs and proverbial expression which are an integral part of their language. The Igbo tribe also practices patriarchy, which trend entails in most African cultures.

The plays discuss marriage and the issues of children and gender in the marital environment. As discussed in chapter two, the quest for a male child becomes a problem between Nneora and Ikenna, whereby the husband and by extension, the man’s family wants male children.

. . . *“E don dey wey I dey pray for you make you born man. Woman wey no born man for dis world dey suffer”*. (p.54)

As playwrights, Dangaremba and Utoh-Ezeajugh write about the cons of their culture and also highlight the pros. These two give a fair idea of how they uphold their culture and the realities involved.

The plays make good use of the female characters to project how women are marginalised and stereotyped in Africa. These projections utilise the parameters of feminist writing. Nwankwo (2009) educates on how female playwrights emerged and their significance to dramatic writing. “In Africa, the likes of Zulu Sofola, Ama Ata Aidoo and a host of others, emerged in the dramatic writings to re-write the woman back into positivity after the unwholesome portraiture they received at the hands of the early male writers” (Nwankwo, 2009).

This positive rewriting of women is in line with feminist writing. “A feminist literature is literature that affirms women; this affirmation must present women as articulate, three dimensional beings, not flats, not caricatures, a literature that does not portray us as being dumb or inactive” (Aidoo, interview with Ama Ata Aidoo: Facing the Millennium, 1996). Therefore, feminist writing projects women not as caretakers of the home and as house-wives, but as women who are empowered and assertive both domestically and socially. The above is what Ama Ata Aidoo describes as good feminist writing.

Feminist writing is a work that has feminist tendencies present in them. This feminist presence covers general feminist ideology and African feminist projections in a text. In view of this, Dangaremba’s *She No Longer Weeps* and Utoh-Ezeajugh *Nneora* will be described in the context of feminist writing.

4.3.1 She No Longer Weeps

The play is centred on a female character Martha, a university student who gets pregnant. She is rejected by her parents and the man responsible for the pregnancy. Martha pleads with Freddy to accommodate her as very soon they would both be earning money which would enable them take care of their child.

You've got a good job and if things work out, I'll have finished my degree by this time next year. Just think, we'll be family already. Oh, Freddy, it's not so bad. It'll be all, everything will be just fine. (p.108)

In this dialogue Martha is in a dire attempt to secure her future, that of her child, and that of her potential family, by ensuring that she finishes her education. Her pleas to Fred, give the picture of a woman seeking for partnership considering the circumstances surrounding the unborn child, implications of dropping out of school and her rejection by her family. She evokes the hope, even in the audience that the imminent change in Freddy's social and financial standing holds better prospects for her, her unborn child as well as her potential family. This is an apt example of the social transformation and partnership that Ogunidipe-Leslie advocates for, with her Stiwanist theory.

Martha appreciates the sacrifices of her mother and women of her generation to keep the home intact, but she decides not to follow the same path, as she believes that the years of servitude of women to men is long overdue.

. . . To be a woman is no longer a crime punishable by a life-time of servitude to a man. I know that in your day there were many pressures that prevented a woman from becoming independent. I know there were not even women who could be independent because they couldn't work for a wage or salary, but people saw to it that women would remain dependent because that was the only way of thinking that people knew then. . . . I don't have to be tied by those beliefs because I can support myself and I will not sacrifice myself to a man's eye just because society says I ought to. I'm as much a part of society as any one of you where I see that change needed; nothing

will deter me from making that change in my own life or from working towards achieving that change. (pp. 123-124)

Flora Nwapa's opinion that satisfaction is not only derived from marriage is another view crystallized by Martha's character and circumstances. Nwapa says: 'A husband or child is not needed to attain fulfilment in life.' In resonance with her view about marriage and childbirth, Martha has this to say:

. . . You grew up in a world where women were made out of lace vests, or at least they pretended to be. But today we are not afraid to let it be known that we are flesh and blood too, so the problems of the flesh are our problems as well. We are not above them, so we must fight. (p. 120)

She went on further to say,

You see, mother, I discovered that the object of life is not to get married like they taught you, but to celebrate our existence. (p. 121)

Martha draws attention to the changing phases associated with generational transitions of womanhood. She emphasises that hers is the phase where it not only men who are regarded as humans. Therefore, problems and issues that confront men, confront women too, and in addition, that women also have dreams to pursue, irrespective of whether they are single or married, mothers or not.

. . . I don't believe that just because I'm a woman I must sacrifice my potential to looking after some idiotic man and his off-spring. . . . (p. 122)

Motherism, an African feminist theory centred on mother and child bonds, also plays out in *She no longer weeps*. Martha pampers her daughter and gives her the best of care. She clearly exhibits her 'motheristic' nature, as opposed to what her mother showed her. Without telling, Martha was sending a loud message to her mother and the other women of her generation, that a mother's true pride was her children. . . . *Remember one thing, my love, my daughter is mine, mine, mine. She's all I have, the one thing I love. (p. 129)*

After childbirth, Martha took her destiny into her own hands. She furthered her education, got employed and moved to stay on her own. The general view and perception of feminists as women who are independent and assertive is evident at this stage in Martha's life. She puts on a new assertive and defensive attitude, and runs her own life, irrespective of other people's opinions about her.

... I don't want you thinking that just because I let you sleep in my bed you can come here and tell me how to live my life. (p129)

She goes to the extent of instilling a similar value in her daughter, to be strong no matter the circumstance.

I think she deserves lots of presents. All the years I've been telling her that if she's a good girl and does what Mummy tells her, that is, if she gets good marks, sticks up for herself at all costs and doesn't cry even when she gets hurt, then I'll give her lots of presents . (p.128)

From the above analyses and Martha's specific resolve not to be Freddy's wife, and to take care of her daughter single-handedly, it is true what Anku says, that, African women can detach themselves from marriage but not from the aspect of motherhood. Motherhood and womanhood form an integral part of a woman that even the African feminist cannot detach from (Anku, 2015).

It is a widely-held notion in some circles that feminists are men-haters. It is, however, true that our decisions and attitudes are built either over time, in reaction to, or in line with certain pertaining circumstances. Martha develops hatred and a degree of disregard for men due to her past experiences with Freddy, and in subtle ways, her father. After she becomes independent, she is seen using men 'seemingly' to her advantage, mainly to satisfy her sexual needs.

You are something I need from time to time for purposes that you should understand well. After all, you are a man. (p. 129)

Martha, during an encounter with Mrs. Mutsika and Mrs. Chiwara indulged Martha to talk to their girls, but she refused. The two characters are a symbolic representation of western feminists and their expectations of the African woman. The western feminist believes that as the African has embraced feminism, she is ready to let go of everything and follow their beliefs, but Martha proves otherwise. She drew their attention to the fact that their situations are similar, but are not the same. Moreover she would not be used as a tool in their hands to manipulate the people in a situation she once found herself.

In using Martha, who is a round character as a pivot in the play, the playwright effectively coordinates both sexes and two generations. “Martha strives for equality between the sexes in relation to both her lover and her father” (Shaw, 2007). She serves as a voice for the African feminist who is striving for a place in all spheres of global development; economic, social and political. Freddy says “*You don’t know your place in this world, which is underneath. You thought you should be on top*”. Martha’s response to him is in line with feminist advocacy, because all they want is equality. Therefore she says, “*No, what I wanted was side by side*” (p. 135).

4.3.2 Nneora: An African Doll’s House

Nneora a hard working business woman gave up her all for the sake of marriage to be the wife that her husband wants her to be. Ikenna her husband does not want a working woman but rather a house wife so she can take care of the home.

. . . And I love the way you take care of the house. That is the difference between a working–wife and a house–wife. A house–wife always has an edge over the working–wife. (p. 30)

The relationship that existed between Nneora and her husband was the oppressive type. Ikenna felt by default of marriage he owned her entire being and could make dictates that had to be expressly obeyed as and when he wished.

And now, I own you. You are solely mine; shop, body and soul. So honey, why are we arguing about something that belongs to me? . . . Darling even your feelings belong to me. (p.32)

Ikenna did not miss out on any opportunity in making Nneora know that she is solely his. This exemplifies male chauvinism and how women are marginalized by some men. In exploring men and women in the context of marriage, regardless of the contribution of the woman to the marriage; she is regarded as subservient to the man. (Asiedu, 2011) Nneora confirms the subservient nature of the woman to her husband in her conversation with Linda

. . . “We are women and once we marry, we must stay under our men”.
(p.70)

Linda draws Nneora’s attention to the fact that times have changed; gone are the days a man determines what they (women) do, and encourages Nneora to take charge of her life.

LINDA: Nneora wake up! We actually have rights! It is just that we have been brought up in a hypocritical society, where men gang up to steal everything that belongs to us, including our God-given rights of existence. And you know what bothers me most? For centuries, we, women have silently endorsed this social gang-up (p.70-1)

She is instigating an uprising against patriarchy and male chauvinism, the two main problems identified by women, calling for women demanding their rights from men. Such demands brought forth feminism; but Nneora who represents the African woman analyses the situation from a different perspective. She tells Linda:

NNEORA: *I don't think so. Because if you have struggled and succeeded, I believe that there must be other women who have done the same.*

Nneora draws on the fact that feminism has not succeeded so well in Africa. This drives home the assertion that feminism is not applicable to the African because it's an offshoot of western ideology. Linda continues to make her point to Nneora:

LINDA: *But Nneora my dear, it has not been easy. I had to leave my husband. It was immediately after my graduation that I made up my mind to leave. I took my children and walked out on him. My brother who resides in the United States invited us over. That was ten years ago (p. 71).*

Linda also outlined two essentials of feminism; they are education and the origin of feminism. Education brings enlightenment, knowledge and awareness. These are things that made Linda realise that she deserved and demanded more for herself, from men and society as a whole.

Secondly, she talks of her travel to the United States, which I find significant. It marks her exposure to western culture and more significantly, to the hub of feminism.

African women have been noted for their reactional nature to situations they find themselves in, which also resonates with female writers, who as discussed in the problem statement of chapter one, write to react and in some cases are apologetic for what they write. Linda exhibits this tendency in further dialogue with Nneora. What these women go through propels them to become who they are.

LINDA: *There is nothing to be said. The experience left me a wiser person. I've had time to reflect on my life (p. 71-2)*

Linda upon all her enlightenment proves that she still needs the male counterpart. . . .

After ten years, I've decided to go back to my husband, (p. 72)

The advice given by Linda takes effect after Ikenna realizes his mistake in asking Nneora and her children to leave his house. She makes two important but heartbreaking statements to Ikenna, “. . . *Now my eyes are open. . . . Every feeling I’ve ever had for you has died* (p. 121). She affirms feminism and also embraces an aspect of feminist value which is doing away with men. She sees marriage as an institution which takes so much from her and replaces with nothing. . . . “*I will no longer force myself to stay in an institution which takes everything a woman has to offer and gives nothing in return*” (p. 120).

Nneora makes it known to him that she is going to re-open her shop and go back to being the working woman she was. Also, after the delivery of her child she was going to go back to school to further her education. . . . *After my babies are born, I will re-open my shop. . . I must go back to school and struggle on, till I get a degree* (p. 124).

These realisations are geared towards the duty she owes herself. This is a duty every woman owes herself, to make herself happy and not to rely on a man to be her source of happiness.

4.4 Portrayal of female characters in the plays

This section discusses how women have been portrayed in the plays by the two playwrights. The essence of this is to find out how these female playwrights have rendered support to their female characters and also how they have been used as a tool to promote a worthy course. In the play, characters are portrayed in different ways. Portrayal is a word picture of a person’s appearance and character. Word picture can be defined as in-depth account given of a person in writing.

Characterization is how a character has been portrayed in a play. It is also the role and nature of human qualities of each character in a play. It is the method an author uses to acquaint the reader with his/her characters. It is an actor's interpretation of a role through the expressions of emotion, thoughts and ideas. A character is identified by what he says about himself, what others say about him and what he says about others.

Jeremiah Methuselah acknowledges that 'women's images have ranged from the flat, docile, ordinary housewives, to the trope of temptresses, nags and other such representations that overlay them with such fractiousness and or complacency' (Methuselah, 2010). This is his general submission of how women are portrayed. In recognition to how female playwrights have effectively used this medium in portraying their female characters. He says, "counter to these, female playwrights have also used imaged women in strong, progressive and assertive heroic roles and also projected other issues that impact on the ordinary lives of women like domestic violence, insecurity, food security, poverty and disease and the effects of war on women and children" (Methuselah, 2010).

He has heightened on portrayal from different angles. His first submission may be connected to male playwrights and the second, female, as stated.

As per the authorial power the playwright has, the characters are like clay in his/her hands to be moulded to a particular specification. Therefore in the vogue of changing perceptions, female characters are used by playwrights to send a message.

4.4.1 She No Longer Weeps

Martha

Martha is a young lady in her third year in the university. She is twenty years old and is pregnant at the beginning of the text. Martha can be described as a rebellious child as she is not ready to follow the status quo. She defies all odds to become the independent woman she wants to be.

Martha makes her generation known to everyone around her. “Martha tells her boyfriend, exposes the hypocrisy of society matrons, lets her mother know just how different they are from each other, and to her father”. . . (Shaw, 2007, p. 15)

She says the following to her father;

How shall I speak to you? With smiles in my voice although my heart is breaking? No today I will tell you, you had a daughter, but am becoming a woman, and things are changing. To be a woman is no longer a crime punishable by a life-time of servitude to a man. (p.123)

Martha is very vocal, she lets out her thoughts and opinions Freddy tells her she behaves as though she is a man.

FREDDY: . . . You wear trousers like a man, you drink like a man, you argue and challenge men as though you were not a woman yourself. (p.107)

In some cultural settings, a woman does not talk back to a man even if she is older than him. Freddy, during a verbal duel with Martha, tells her “*Hey Martha, you think too fast and talk too much*”. This confirms the virtue Martha’s mother has that she does not.

Freddy attributed all these to education but also did not miss words to make Martha know that that kind of education is not applicable to the home but only good for earning money.

What you don't know is that that education of yours is good for only one thing . . . it lets you earn money. That's the only reason why men like women like you, otherwise you are useless.

Martha breaks free from the traditional bondages of subservience of a woman to man and to the home. She initially makes it known that she is not ready for babies and creates the impression that the baby belongs to only Freddy but later she fully embraces her responsibility as a mother and tells Lovemore that

. . . my daughter is mine, mine, mine. She's all I have, the one thing I love. (p. 129)

Martha at the beginning of the text was so desperate to be married to Freddy due to her situation and also to attain respect in society. Marriage is contracted when the man presents a head drink and pays dowry or bride wealth for the woman's hand in marriage therefore co-habitation is not marriage as in the case of Freddy and Martha.

MARTHA: [Stands to look out of the window] They say you are my husband. [Silence] They say a woman's place is with her husband. They won't let me stay at home.

FREDDY: So where have you been staying all this time?

MARTHA: With my sister. But my father found out and told her to send me away and her husband said she should obey my father so she sent me away . . . and here I am. [She pleads with him.] I've got nowhere to go, Freddy. They say I must be with my husband.

FREDDY: I'm not your husband. I haven't married you. (p. 107)

Being the wife of a man guarantee's you a respectable place in the African context as Martha said.

. . . They just want me to be Mrs Somebody Mrs Anybody will do, just so I'm respectable and people can't talk. (p.107)

She wished she had done the right thing by waiting to be married before getting pregnant. This pregnancy makes her lose her immediate family as her parents throw her out of their home because of the shame she has brought on the family. Her sister and husband also do not want to offend their parents so they send her away. She expresses her desperation to Freddy who is not ready to make a family with her.

MARTHA: *But you must, Freddy, please, you must. It will not be difficult or expensive – my parents are only worried about the rumours – you know how people are, they are talking already. All my parents want is for me to be married so that it's all right for me to have my baby. They won't charge much; they'll make everything easy for you. [Getting hysterical.] No one will refuse anything you say. They just want me to be Mrs. Somebody . . . Mrs. Anybody will do, just so, I'm respectable and people can't talk. Jesus, Freddy, the way they go on you'd think they'd never done it themselves. "What I know," says my mother, "is that when a woman is old enough she gets married so that she can have her babies." And what about companionship and conversation, intellectual stimulation and basic human rights, I asked her? [Freddy is getting uncomfortable but Martha is oblivious.] She looked at me as though I was talking Greek. How on earth could I speak it to her. Heh! It's bad. They don't want to hear, none of them. Not even my sister who is younger and ought to know better – she shouldn't be so set in her thinking. "There are some things" she told me . . . and I swear she looked just like my father. "There are some things," she said, "that simply aren't done. Decent girls don't sleep around or at the very least they don't get pregnant. You have done both. You will have to suffer the consequences. I wish I could help you," she said, "but I can't keep you here. Our father and my husband both say you must go." I cried and cried. I begged her, I begged her to let me stay, but even she believes that since I'm expecting I must have a husband somewhere. Somewhere there must be a man to go to.*

[She goes to Freddy, caresses his neck. Freddy stiffens.] You know I love you, Freddy, and whatever else I am or whatever else I do it's what I believe is right. That's why I'm carrying your baby. I thought it was right to love you. It was not only my body that was yours, I gave you my heart and soul as well because I loved you and you said you loved me so I knew you wouldn't hurt me. How many times did we pledge our love to each other? So often. Every time we were together we . . . (p.107-108)

Martha captures the perception of her family and society as a whole on their ideology about her situation. She brings to light the discussion with her family. This can draw an influx from the discussion on marriage and its importance in most African societies reviewed in chapter two. A reference to the chapter can also be made to connect the discussion on chastity that is not indulging in illicit sexual activities which can result in pregnancy as in Martha's case. The family also make it clear to her some of the canons of womanhood.

She is described by Mrs Mutsika as someone who has achieved too much for her status as a woman. Mrs Chiwara calls her rude, and unfriendly. She makes mention of the absence of a man in the life of Martha.

Martha after her ordeal develops some level of resistance to men but again she proves that she is not against marriage and will not want to be seen as someone who hates men.

I'd tell them that it's much easier to be a domestic slave to a man than it is to take responsibility for your own life, because when you are a domestics slave your problems aren't your own-they all come from your master, your man, and because the problems aren't your own, you don't have to solve them. All you have to do is go to your women's clubs and talk about how much you hate men on the whole and especially your husbands. Then when you've finished talking you can go back to the safe slavery of the home, feeling better and stronger more defiant because you've talked. Meanwhile at home nothing has changed. Mrs Mutsika, do you really think your organization, or I, or anybody can do anything for these women? (p.132)

Martha describes herself as naive and headstrong. She recounts to Freddy what she suffered during her pregnancy. The courage and hope she had for herself.

. . . In my third year when I was pregnant I got no help from anyone – as for you, I didn't see you that whole year, not even once. That was bad time for me, you know. Even my parents wanted nothing to do with me. I was young and headstrong and naive. I desperately needed something to hold on to, but I had nothing except myself. Still, I survived. Now nothing can touch me or

hurt me anymore – I have money and I have my child. You say you love me – even if it is true, I know you love my money and the comfortable life I would give you even more. I still remember the good things but I don't need you anymore. I have my child – what else could I need from any man? (pp. 134-135)

She further tells Freddy who he is and what he wants from her. She continues to reveal to him that she does not need any man to attain her set heights. She does not hope to use her association with men for material advantage or gain prominence in society. Even though Freddy tells her she needs company from men; she tells him there are a lot she can get if only it has to do with satisfying her sexual needs.

Freddy uses blackmail to take her daughter from her. He tells her, her place in the world is underneath not on top and she responds by saying she wants side by side.

FREDDY: . . . You don't know your place in this world, which is underneath. You thought you should be on top.

MARTHA: No, what I wanted was side by side (p. 135)

He also tells her how she is referred to by others. . . . *“They call you the cold, bitch, the proud pussy” . . . (p. 136)*

During a visit from her parents, the father acknowledges the hardworking nature of his daughter as it has enabled her attain a lot in society and life. He also notices her mood change in her sarcastic response when asked about the where about of her daughter. Knowing very well that the daughter was in Freddy's house, she asks him to accompany her to find the child. In one breath she tells her parents and Freddy what they had done to her and how they had contributed in turning her to the bitter person that she is.

MARTHA: I am not being thoughtless. I have thought about this for a long time. For eight years I have thought about how Freddy has ruined my life. Because of him I am an outcast. Because of him people say I am “that” kind

of woman. Because of him I must live my life in loneliness and unhappiness. Before he came back into my life at least I had a child. I had something to fight for, something to live for. Now I have nothing. I have nothing. It doesn't matter what I do (p. 139).

At the end Martha stabs Freddy and asks the father who believes in the right thing to call the police. . . . *It is done. Father, you were always strong enough to do the right thing. Phone the police. Tell them to come and take me (p. 139)*

4.4.2 Martha's Mother

Martha's mother is an elderly woman who upholds religious and cultural morals up. She is against the daughter getting pregnant before marriage as she sees it as a problem for her husband who is a reverend minister. Therefore, she calls her daughter a wicked girl.

Martha's mother can be described as a typical African woman; who strictly adheres to tradition regarding the submissive nature of a woman to her husband. She gives her husband all the support he needs from her. She does not want to go against the words of her husband.

MOTHER: So you will go back. [It is a statement. Without waiting for an answer she goes to lay her head on Martha's shoulder. Martha remains motionless.] I knew you would be sensible. You have always been sensible, and good too, except for your running around with this man. Come, [she begins to pack, turning the clothes already in the suitcase out in order to fold everything neatly] we must pack quickly. You must be gone before your father returns. Otherwise he will get angry. You know what he is like when he is angry. That is part of a woman's job, you know, protecting her man. You have to make sure he never loses control of himself. (p.119)

From the above lines, the woman clearly tells the reader who she is and how she runs her home. The playwright gives a vivid picture of her as one who does not tolerate immorality. The mother makes it evident that she knows her child, and also notices the change she has undergone after seeing Freddy. Even though her motherly instincts were working, she did not want to offend her husband by incurring his wrath. She gives her

daughter support but did what most women would do to support her husband. Aside appealing him over their daughter, I believe she did not want to lose her husband. In many parts of Africa, marriage is held supreme in the life of a woman. Divorced women are comprehended to be 'bad, evil' and some adjectives that best describe her. Therefore, the mother did not want to fall into that category. She also made it known to her daughter that its part of a woman's job not to make her husband angry. She again says a woman must make sure her man does not lose control of himself.

MARTHA: *Ha! So you must control him because he can't control himself. And who controls you? (p.120)*

Probably the mother could be making known some 'supernatural' ability of the woman in her home. The ability to keep the man controlled. Probably she wants to point out to her daughter a natural power the woman has from her God given innate qualities which when used in the right way will give her the control over her home, including her husband.

MOTHER: *You must just accept, my daughter, that by their nature they cannot take responsibility for themselves. Even when they are great men and achieve wonderful things they need to be controlled just like children. But it is only a wise woman who can do it.*

MARTHA: *Ts! And how does she do it?*

MOTHER: *By keeping quiet day and night and watching, watching what her man does, letting him enjoy himself like a child who does not know that soon it will be time to go home. Then, when the time is right, a wise woman knows that her hour has come.*

The character of Martha's mother represents the traditional society whiles Martha represents the contemporary society.

MOTHER: *Ts! You are right, my child, this is the difficulty, that that hour does not come early. But there is no other way. A woman must be patient*

and strong and bear her life bravely. If God is willing her time will come. And if he chooses not to bless you in this life you can be sure of your reward in the life to come. (p.120)

To an extent the mother educates the daughter on the expectations of every woman towards her home and in the same vein talks about the virtues of a woman. Virtue comes with a reward, which I believe most women are aware of; hence, their willingness to go through all to attain. Further on in the text, the reader realizes that the support of the mother for her husband is unflinching.

4.4.3 Gertrude

Gertrude is a young woman and a sex partner of Freddy. She is described by Freddy as a nice woman who does not make demands on him. She does not expect Freddy to marry her as in the case of Martha. Joe, a friend of Freddy calls her a nice bitch. Gertrude pays a visit to Martha to make her know she is also having an affair with Freddy and she asks Martha to allow Freddy to be shared.

GERTRUDE: . . . Hey, woman, our men don't care for this-just let them drink and let them fuck. Let them fuck anybody and everybody and they'll stay with you forever. (p.114)

From the lines, Gertrude makes it known that in order to keep a man sleeping with him is not enough but give him room to do same with others. Underneath this, there is a polygamous ideology in the mind of Gertrude. It is believed that there are more women than men in the world. Therefore, some women have the belief that a man must be shared. Others also believe in the myth of the emergence of polygamy. Gertrude might not have an issue with Martha but will rather wish Martha could share Freddy with other women. This is acceptable in some African traditions and also in some religious spheres.

Gertrude tells Martha the things Freddy does not expect her to do. She tells Martha that Freddy and Joe do not want her to have an encounter with Martha because she will talk

too much thus revealing to her some of the things they do away from home. She discloses the numerous ladies he has.

GERTRUDE: About the other women. There's hundreds of them. But you're no fool – I'm sure you know already so it doesn't matter if I tell you. Anyway, what's wrong with being the hundredth woman, it's like that for everyone – share and share alike. If you want a man you just have to settle for half or a quarter or tenth. That's not much when they are so little to begin with, but you don't joke with a woman. A desperate woman will take even a hundredth. Anyway I don't blame you. I would also be desperate if I was in your position.

She describes Freddy as a whore. . . . *Freddy is loose. If they call men whores, Freddy would be a whore with capital letters (p.115)*

Freddy calls Gertrude a bitch and a whore. She makes known to him how he had made her a sex tool *You just love the way I open up for you (p. 115)*

4.4.4 Chipo

Chipo is also a young lady who is in love with Freddy. She is promised marriage by Freddy. Joe describes her as a lovely lady. She calls Martha a whore when she finds her in the bedroom.

CHIPO: Then you must control your whores. There's one in your bed waiting for you. (p.118)

Despite the presence of Martha in the room, she still wants to be with Freddy. Freddy raised his hands to hit Martha and she restrains him. This was not to support Martha, as she was being sarcastic.

CHIPO: [Who has been watching with great interest] Leave her alone, Freddy. She's not worth it. You've said it yourself many times. (p.119)

4.4.5 Mrs. Mutsika and Mrs. Chiwara

Mrs. Mutsika and Mrs. Chiwara are women activists from Women's Association for the Protection of the Illegitimate Mother (WAPIM). They want to empower the young girls who are also single mothers. They approach Martha to talk to the girls and empower them to live their lives not to rely on a man. Martha disagrees with them but rather says she would advise the girls to stay home till someone comes to marry them. These women wish Martha will encourage the girls to revolt against marriage even though they are married themselves.

MARTHA: I'm sorry, I can't help you. I don't want to become a public figure and I certainly don't want to speak for women who don't want to be spoken for. They'll hate me for my success as they hate you for your families and husbands. I want to be left alone to live my life, that's all.

Though they are married, their marriage was not one to write home about therefore they needed someone to advise the young not to get married and also be in their situation. They regard Martha as better than them in every standard. She is perceived to be the one who will be able to change the conditions of the women in their domain though they are the leaders

MRS MUTSIKA: Are you sure you cannot? A woman like you could do a lot to improve the condition of such unlucky women in this country.

Though they are the leaders of the foundation, they tell Martha the girls cannot find husbands because they think there are more women than men.

. . . You know very well these girls could not get married . . . You yourself know there are no men. That is why these women are so unlucky. So how can you advise them to get married (p. 132)

4.4.6 Nneora: an African Doll's House

Nneora

Nneora is the protagonist in *Nneora: an African Dolls House*; she is a mother of four girls and pregnant. She sells at the market with Mama Uduak. She meets her husband Ikenna at the market and offers to help him find a job. He is so grateful for the kind of gesture.

IKENNA: I am so overwhelmed by your kindness. I don't really know how to express my profound gratitude. May God reward you a million fold for this generosity. (p.13)

She does not only show him kindness by providing him money and settling his debt but also gets him a job through Osita at the Bank.

NNEORA: He studied law. Please help him. He is my cousin on my mother's side. He has no one else to help him. Please do this for me. (p.25)

She proves she could go every length to offer her support. It can further be seen in how she secures money to fly Ikenna, who has become her husband, out of the country to seek medical attention. She made a deal with Osita in order to secure funding from the Bank to fly her husband abroad for surgery and she informs Osita to help her.

I can do anything to save his life. (p. 80)

According to her she did all she did because she wants to build her home, have a family she can call her own and also because of the love she has for her husband.

. . . "I did out of love for my husband and the desire to build my home". (p.92)

Ikenna calls her a typical woman whilst Mama Uduak sympathizes with her because she does not have a male child and prays she gives birth to a boy.

MAMA UDUAK . . . *“E don tey wey I dey pray for you make you born man. Woman wey no born man for this world dey suffer”*. (p. 54)

She regards Dr. Frank, their family doctor, as part of her family and shares her fears with him. A family might not necessarily be with blood relations. . . . *You are very much a part of our family.*

She is afraid to lose her husband and home. She tells him of the impending tragedy that is about to hit her marriage.

NNEORA: *“Problem”, is not exactly the word to describe what is about to happen. Disaster might be a better word. Our marriage is about to be uprooted by a mighty storm that is gathering. Only God can save us.*

She also presents herself as one who easily gives up in the face of adversity. Though the doctor offers to talk to her husband, she has already resigned to fate. . . . *I’ve resigned myself to fate (p. 46)*. To be resigned to fate is madness as Odewale says in the *God’s Are Not To Blame*.

Nneora believes in the African mentality that once a woman is married her life belongs to her husband. . . . *We are women and once we marry, we must stay under our men (p. 70)*. Talking about the submissiveness of the woman and also shedding light on the servile nature of the woman to the man. Nneora learns to stand for herself after her encounter with Linda. She manifests this when she resolves to Ikenna to rebuild her life. . . . *Now my eyes are more open (p. 121)*. This serves as a moment of liberation to her.

. . . *I will fly out like a bird. After my babies are born, I will re-organise my life. I will re-open my shop. From the proceeds, I will train my children and above all, I will teach them true love. Then of course, there is another task that I must accomplish . . . I must go back to school and struggle on, till I get a degree.*

In her submission, she tells of how she will be free from male domination. Another avenue she will resort to is education. Most women seeking liberation have used education as the tool to get empowered and be able to assert themselves.

Nneora proves her name as mother of all, through her characterization as a strong industrious woman. She exhibits traits of a virtuous woman who is subservient to her husband and asserts herself only in non pugnacious ways (Asiedu, 2011).

Mama Uduak calls her a “big woman” because she no longer sells at the market and is also married to a man who works in the bank.

Nneora does not think women have attained any form of liberation in their struggle as Linda tells her the change that has taken place in the hypocritical society that they live in.

NNEORA: I don't think so. Because if you have struggled and succeeded, I believe that there must be other women who have done same (p. 71).

Osita, her one time sweetheart, calls her a conniving bitch because she uses what she has to get what she wants.

Ikenna, her husband, calls her a wretched woman and a bitch after he finds out the kind of life the wife led before they got married. He uses different abusive words to describe her. Ikenna calls her children pests.

*IKENNA: . . . You saddle me with pests who might not be my children. . . .
(p. 107)*

4.4.7 Mama Uduak

Mama Uduak is an elderly market woman. She is an illiterate and speaks Nigerian Pidgin English. She is focused and head strong. Ever determined to make ends meet to cater for her home and will not settle for anything that will seek to deprive her of making an earning.

So mek I lef my market dey look masquerade becos na Christmas? Na masquerade me and my children go chop? (p.3)

At the beginning of the text, she sounds like one who is not married and presents herself as a single parent. She might be married to an irresponsible man that is why he is not mentioned. Later she makes the reader know she is married to a drunkard.

. . . "I get matter to settle with that ogogoro man wey dey call 'im self my husband". (p.57)

She exhibits how women go all out to make their home and to provide for their children no matter what. She is also a woman who upholds tradition. In the Igbo tradition, masquerades are not to be beheld by women. In this case masquerades have invaded the market to raise funds for themselves.

MAMA UDUAK: All I know be say, me I no like dis dere new style. How masquerade go enter market de collect tax? Masquerade no be spirit again? So becos masquerade de find money, woman fit see am now. (p.3)

‘Masquerades are associated with spiritual elements, and according to Igbo belief, they represent images of deities or sometimes even dead relatives. The identity of the masquerade is a well-kept secret and performed exclusively by men’ (Widjaja, 2000). Presently, masquerade is used for entertainment, begging for alms as well as scaring children.

Women are known to have total control of the market. No matter how sympathetic they

can be towards a fellow human being, money can destroy this. It's seen in how Mama Uduak treats Ikenna her customer who owes her and does not have the means to pay.

MAMA UDUAK: (furious) Ebi like say craze de worry this boy o o. I de talk of my moni, 'im de talk of another credit. Na your papa start dis business for me? Look (stands up.) give me my moni now, or you go see dat thing wey you de find today. (p.8)

Ifi Amadiume in her article African Women: 'Voicing Feminisms and Democratic Futures' gives a good description of a market woman as one who is matured, exhibits patience and fairness in dispute settlement; success and wealth. She further makes it known that such attributes have given women economic and political power in Igbo societies in Nigeria (Amadiume, 2001).

Mama Uduak has supported Ikenna for a long time. As the popular adage goes, patience has a limit. On that fateful day Mama Uduak had reached her wits end. She withdraws her support for him, thereby killing every mother or wife instinct she might have had towards him.

4.4.8 Linda

Linda is a childhood friend of Nneora, wife to Osita and a mother of three children. She drops out of school to marry Osita because of pregnancy. She does all she can to make the marriage succeed.

LINDA: Surprisingly, the marriage was smooth sailing at first. I put everything I had into it. I tried my best to be a good wife and mother. Infact, I worshipped my husband. I took care of the home so that my husband could concentrate on his job.

Osita refers to his wife as insignificant and his lover also calls her dirty.

OSITA: Don't pay attention to her. She is very insignificant. Remember that dirty illiterate I told you they forced on me?

LADY: *Oh yeee. She sure looks dirty. (pp. 65-66)*

Linda exhibits her belief in the institution of marriage and does all she can to prevent it from collapsing. She tries to be a partner to her husband and not his slave.

. . . "In a desperate bid to save my marriage, I enrolled in an evening school and studied very hard". (p.69)

When her marriage looks irreparable she travels to the United States with her children. . .

. I could no longer save my marriage (p. 69) . . . I took my children and walked out on him. My brother resides in the United States (p. 71)

She educates Nneora to stand up for herself and not to live her life in low self esteem.

LINDA: *Nneora wake up! We actually have rights! It is just that we have been brought up in a hypocritical society, where men gang up to steal everything that belongs to us, including our God - given right to existence. And you know what bothers me most? For centuries, we, women silently endorsed this social gang-up (p. 71).*

She draws attention to male chauvinism and incites an uprising against patriarchy.

4.5 Diction and stereotyping of women

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines diction as the choice and use of words in literature (Hornby, 2006). The ways in which these words are employed and even placed play a vital role in analysing and interpreting a text. Diction defines things like setting, imagery and more importantly, characterisation. This raises the common recurrent trend of stereotypes and stereotyping.

A fixed idea or image that many people have of a particular type of person or thing, but which is often not true in reality (Hornby, 2006) is stereotype.

Female characters in *Nneora* and *She No Longer Weeps* are subjected to certain stereotypes that exist generally in African literature and society. These stereotypes do not

only show how some men perceive women, but also how some women view their fellow women.

Dictionary.com defines image as ‘physical likeness or representation of a person, animal, or thing, photographed, painted, sculptured, or otherwise made visible’. It further says ‘a mental representation; idea; conception’. These two definitions are apt for this discussion. The general perception of a person about the other is very important. The playwrights did their best in bringing out some of these stock images that some men have about women as well as women towards their fellow women. Diction is the tool employed in projecting these images.

A stereotype that is evident in both plays is the woman’s image as ‘a bitch’, ‘a female dog’. Knowing the characteristics of a female dog would help understand and appreciate this better. The use of this word with reference to a person, or the animal itself is derogatory in almost all cultures in Africa. Bitch, used for a woman, is synonymous to a ‘prostitute’ or a loose woman. Unfortunately, the word is used to describe women in both texts. In *She No Longer Weeps*, Freddy calls Martha a bitch. This is a woman he had professed love to and had also made pregnant.

FREDDY: . . . *I’ll tell you . . . a bitch. Only a bitch will do that. You are a bitch, Martha. Never forget that. (p.107)*

Freddy is not the only one who uses the word. His friend, Joe also does same when he refers to Gertrude as a bitch in a conversation with Freddy.

JOE: . . . *Gertrude is a nice bitch.*

Freddy concludes that ‘nice women are bitches’ and he likes ‘bitches because they don’t make demands on me’. (p.112)

Freddy and Joe are not the only guilty people in this category. Osita also refers to Linda, his wife as a bitch. Osita also refers to Nneora as a bitch.

OSITA: . . . *After everything I did for the bitch. (p. 22)*

OSITA: . . . *Now, I know you for the conniving bitch that you are. (p.90)*

It is worthy of note that every time the word is used on any of the women in the two scripts, they were at a low level of education and thus needed empowerment. For instance, though Martha is in the university at the time with Freddy, they were not at the same level. He is with her just for sexual pleasures and also to take care of his home. All these roles placed Martha in a vulnerable light in the eyes of Freddy and in reality. We also get to know that Gertrude does not make demands on Freddy, and that is the reason why he likes her. Chipo is also in a similar situation, Freddy promises her marriage which is nowhere in sight. Both Gertrude and Chipo feel threatened by the presence of Martha in Freddy's life.

When Osita was enjoying pleasures with Linda, she was one of the best things that ever happened to him. He never called her a bitch but rather the wife who was a school dropout. Later, he tells Nneora that she is a conniving bitch. He could not call Linda a bitch after she attains some level of education.

Ikenna, Nneora's husband is not out of this category, he calls his wife a bitch.

IKENNA: *You wretched woman! You bitch! Do you realise what you have done?*
(p.106)

He does so in the light of her low empowerment in the form of education. This leads Nneora to resolve that she would further her education after the birth of the twins. He also uses harsh words to describe his wife. . . . *You are an embodiment of deceit. A*

gloried whore! (p.110). These words are not deemed fit to describe one's wife. His language tells of the image he has of her.

The body of a woman has been portrayed and perceived as a sex tool. Ogun-dipe-Leslie indicates that male writers present the woman as a phallic receptacle. Osita refers to Nneora's body as a palatable dish ready to be eaten. The unfortunate incident about this "dish" is that, it cannot be eaten just anywhere.

OSITA: . . . *On a serious note darling, you look good enough to eat. How I wish we were not in the office.* (p.20)

Osita knowing very well that Nneora is married still makes advances towards her.

. . . *Because I want to feel your body next to mine again. Because I want to explore those pleasure spots once more. Because I want to make love to you for one whole precious hour!* (p. 81).

Women are also seen by men as money wasters. There is the perception that every form of expenditure by a woman is a waste of money. Nneora shops for the house as the next day is Christmas but the husband says:

IKENNA: *You bought all that? So you have been out wasting money again.*

NNEORA: *But I. K, surely we can spend a little money on ourselves this Christmas. . .*

IKENNA: *Still, we mustn't waste money you know.*

Marriage as discussed in the earlier chapter is a union between a man and a woman as well as families. This institution has served as a medium of oppression to some women. To some men marriage is ownership and not partnership. In certain cases the woman is seen as part of the property of the man.

IKENNA: *And now, I own you. You are solely mine; shop, body and soul. So honey, why are we arguing about something that belongs to me? . . . Darling even your feelings belong to me. (p.32)*

The chauvinistic trend of perceiving and treating the wife as a chattel is steeped in African societies, and is prevalent among men, whether educated or otherwise.

Again, in marriage, as evidenced in the two scripts under review, women are treated as insignificant. Osita brings his lover home and asks the wife to cook for her. He refers to the wife as “insignificant” and the lady also calls her dirty.

OSITA: *Don't pay attention to her. She is very insignificant. Remember that dirty illiterate I told you they forced on me?*

LADY: *Oh yeee. She sure looks dirty. (pp. 65-66)*

Osita calling his wife insignificant affirms Beauvoir, when she said women are regarded as the ‘non significant other’.

Some men perceive that the woman owes them a duty by default of marriage. They feel a woman loses her right to a life of her own, because she is married and has children. Left to such chauvinists, women would lose their voice, friends, opinion and even the right to make decisions. This leads most of such women in these awkward positions, being oppressed in their marital homes.

IKENNA: *But this is disgraceful! Is this the way you neglect your most sacred duties?*

NNEORA: *What do you consider my most sacred duties?*

IKENNA: *Do I have to tell you that? Your duty to your husband and children of course!*

This oppression, after she has had enough of it, leads Nneora to tell Ikenna she is longer interested in an institution which takes so much from her.

. . . I will no longer force myself to stay in an institution which takes everything a woman has to offer and gives nothing in return. I have really suffered in your house, Ikenna (pp. 120-1)

In certain parts of Africa, the kitchen is seen as the place of the woman.

OSITA: (talks to Linda over his shoulders.) You better get up from there and go and get some food for us. And the food had better be decent. (p. 65)

FREDDY: . . . Martha, my love, aren't you going to cook? Joe and I are going to have a heavy night tonight. It's best to start on a full stomach. [Martha crosses over to the kitchen without a word] (p. 109)

This phenomenon has gotten into the heads of some women, who will gladly go to the kitchen though not requested to. There is the tendency to think they are in agreement with the popular saying that the way to 'the man's heart is through the stomach'.

NNEORA: Stretch your legs for a while let me make fresh juice for you. I baked your favourite cake today. I know you will love the combination. (She moves towards the kitchen) (p. 34-5)

This is not to say that it is wrong for a woman to undertake culinary and domestic duties. However, these are most preferable in situations where there is mutual respect.

Another stereotypical notion is that a woman cannot live without a man. This has been touched on in the first chapter. Some women build their life around a man. Their world revolves around him. He becomes the centre and pivot of her world; she feels she cannot do anything without him. Martha's mother preaches this to her daughter.

MOTHER: . . . Usually a woman feels she must have a man to be something. Her man becomes her life and if she loses him she feels as though she is losing her life. (p. 125)

Similarly, some feel the man is the source of their joy, therefore, they will not wish to jeopardise this and not to lose the man. Because Nneora's source of happiness depends on Ikenna, she does not want to hurt his ego even if it's for her own good.

NNEORA: *Linda, you don't understand. You see . . . Ikenna has his pride . . . Most men do . . . He'd feel terribly humiliated if he thought I used myself as a bait to get that approval. It will spoil everything between us, and our marriage will never be the same again (p. 85-6)*

Linda is not farfetched from the earlier discussion; she does things that will make her look good and appealing in the eyes of her husband. He is the Lord in her life whom she worships like a god.

LINDA: *Surprisingly, the marriage was smooth sailing at first. I put everything I had into it. I tried my best to be a good wife and mother. In fact, I worshipped my husband. I took care of the home so that my husband could concentrate on his job (p. 63).*

The woman as a baby-making machine is another stereotype worth mentioning. Nature makes the woman the being to carry a child and bring it forth after nine months. Beauvoir (1949) says a woman is a womb. Apart from all the physical attributes that show the difference between male and female, one significant thing a woman has is the womb. This is home of a foetus until it is born.

Some have abused this, considering the woman as a child-bearing tool or a baby-making machine. In some homes children are the measure of true womanhood. In *Nneora*, the playwright shows that some women, who had given room for their bodies to be totally owned by their husbands, do not have control over their own bodies and their sexuality. In the course of the text, Nneora is heavily pregnant though she already has four beautiful girls. Ikenna categorically tells her . . . *pregnancy always suits you (p. 30)*. The body of the woman must be respected. She must have the control to decide when to have a child and even the number of children she can bring forth as all of these have health implications.

When Nneora decides to leave their matrimonial home after Ikenna realises his mistake and apologises; he asks her about his babies she is carrying and does not even show concern for the one carrying them. . . . *Do you realise that you are carrying my sons in your womb? What will become of my children?* (p. 119).

This can also be connected to the fact that some African men are more concerned about male children, than they are about girls. Though there are four girls, Ikenna's focus is on the unborn boys. He refers to the girls as children of the wife. Ikenna uses different adjectives to qualify the children he has with Nneora. He refers to them as noisy. In some situations, a girl child is referred to as the property of the mother. He also refers to them as pests.

IKENNA: . . . *But you must try to keep your children on check, whenever they are in the house. They irritate me with their noise.* (p.42)

IKENNA: . . . *At the end of the day, you saddle me with pests who might not even be my children.* (p. 107)

Though married for eight years, one can say trust is very low on the part of Ikenna of his wife. He tries to use an old cliché on Nneora that, 'only mothers can tell the true fathers of their children'.

IKENNA: *(getting worked up.) I mind! The thought of those your noisy girls! They practically make the house unliveable. I think we should send them to the village for the holidays.* (p. 36)

All three different instances show how Ikenna hates the presence of the girls in their home; he always wishes they were not present. This was not the case from the beginning. He initially loved the girls and showed them affection. But after a visit of his uncle to their home, the situation changed. Probably the children were part of their deliberation.

The family is more concerned with male children because they will continue the family lineage and also the survival of the family name.

NNEORA: . . . *I had always thought you loved your children.*

IKENNA: *Don't be ridiculous. I love them as much as a father can love his children.*

NNEORA: *That was what I thought, until six months ago, when your uncle paid us a visit. I don't know what you two discussed, but I know that ever since then, your behaviour towards our children has never been the same again. (p. 37)*

Personally, I believe marriage serves three purposes, sex partnership, companionship and re-procreation. There need not be a dominant in this instance but a fair co-operation between the two sexes.

The woman is not expected to practice infidelity. It's easier for men to cheat in a marriage or relationship but the woman is not expected to. Ikenna in the first instance, flares up when he sees a man's shoe in his living room, thinking the wife has brought a man home. Apparently the shoe was his Christmas gift from the wife.

IKENNA: . . . *Just tell me how a man's shoe got into my sitting room.*

NNEORA: *(in a hurt tone.) I bought it for you. It is your Christmas present. I was planning to give it to you tomorrow (p. 29).*

Ikenna clearly displays his male chauvinistic nature when he tells the wife a man cannot be held accountable for fidelity.

IKENNA: *Oh! you're talking and thinking like a stupid child. A man cannot be held accountable in matters of fidelity (p. 122)*

In the same domain, Osita brings his concubines home, even in the presence of his wife.

OSITA: (*ignores her and guides the lady to a settee.*) *Baby, make yourself comfortable. . . . (p. 65)*

In both instances the woman is not expected to reciprocate what the man does. Also the men are protective of their own. They believe nothing they do should be questioned. As Ikenna puts it . . . *I'm in the power of a man without scruples (p. 108)*

In *She No Longer Weeps*, Freddy is not more righteous than his colleagues discussed. He also brings his lady (Chipo) home to spend the night with him even though Martha is present.

[About ten o'clock in the evening. The lunch has been cleared away; the room tidied. Martha is lying on the bed, awake but far away. Enter Chipo and Freddy, drunk, laughing and talking. Martha listens from the bedroom] p. 117

Infidelity moves hand in hand with violence. All the unfaithful men in the plays tried to beat the women in their lives when they complained about the attitude of the man. Freddy raised his hand to beat Martha when he got home with Chipo and found Martha in the bedroom. He treated her like a child, telling her she does not listen to him as a parent angry at the child.

FREDDY: You never listen to me, do you? I think today I must teach you a lesson. [Freddy lifts his hand to strike Martha.] (p. 119)

Osita is not far from this assumption. He also flogs the wife in the presence of his mistress.

OSITA: (removes his belt and goes after her.) . . . (Drags her back, and begins to flog her.) This will teach you a lesson. Idiot! Illiterate! Animal! (p. 68).

These women have suffered various degrees of abuse at the hands of men who are supposed to be their help meet, in relation to infidelity.

It is generally conceived that women cannot be in dire need as they can use what they have (body) to get what they want. Hence their body serves as a means to an end. This is also another notion which is held by some men. Utoh-Ezeajugh, highlights on this notion using the characters Nneora and Osita. She first uses the relationship between her and Osita to secure a job for Ikenna. Osita is overwhelmed with the reward he gets and wishes for more.

OSITA: *(smiling.) If this has earned me a peck, what will I do to earn a full kiss? (p. 26)*

Osita feels cheated when he realises Nneora did not live up to her word of meeting him in the hotel after he endorses the application.

OSITA: *The truth hurts doesn't it? You never really loved me. I was just a means to an end. You merely used what you had, to get what you wanted. The fool that I was, I gave you my heart, my money and my world. In return, what did I get (p. 91)*

4.6 Biography of writers and how they have influenced the work

Tsitsi Dangarembga is a Zimbabwean novelist, playwright and a filmmaker. Some of the works to her credit are *Nervous Conditions* (1988), *The Lost of the soil* (1983), *She No Longer Weeps* (1987) (under study), *The Letter* (1985), amongst others. The Commonwealth Writers Prize (1989) is one of the credible achievements that have come as recognition given to her works. She was taken to England at age six to school but later she returned to Zimbabwe to further her education. She kept going back and forth between England and Zimbabwe then known as Rhodesia.

To every great achievement there is a motivation, therefore the central idea of every work must not be underestimated. Her inspiration for the play *She No Longer Weeps*, she said; “on campus, there were relationships happening all around us and many weren’t

working very well, and women were becoming pregnant. A friend of mine did fall into that circumstance. And I thought it was something that I could address in a drama” (Dangaremba, 2009). The play was written to address a situation that was pressing. Though this play was written some years back the realities it presents, still persist. This makes it valid and authentic to be considered even in current times.

Shaw (2007) describes how the playwright uses her work to advocate for women. “In her writings, Dangaremba argues for women as independent, adult, sexual beings, but at the same time, she recognizes the awful responsibility, vulnerability, and loneliness that being in charge of one’s own life can bring” (p. 8).

The principles of every individual are very important and so are writers to their work, Tsitsi believes in feminism and she has made use of this medium in some of her works to promote the agenda of women. “For Dangaremba, feminism stands for a voice, personal integrity, assertion of self, socially reproductive uses of the erotic, and recognition of the value of women productive and reproductive labor” (Shaw, 2007, p. 14) The primary focus is gender and its use or relevance and the issue of male domination over the female in Africa and other spheres of the life of her. The essential list given in what she asserts as feminism is made evident in her play, *She No Longer Weeps*, through her lead character.

In the play, Martha is the protagonist; the playwright used her to project all her stands for feminism. Martha finds her voice during the bitter experience with Freddy. She makes it known to her parents. She purges her heart out concerning what she thinks should be the right order.

“How shall I speak to you? With smiles in my voice although my heart is breaking? No today I will tell you, you had a daughter, but am becoming a woman. (p.123).

This is to make the parent know that she is no longer the timid child they thought she was. It was also to break free from parental bondage. Sometimes parents find it difficult to accept that their children are growing up and need to be regarded in that light. Though in most countries the age for adulthood is eighteen years and above but for as long as you still live with your parents you are seen as the little child that you are. Martha’s father could not bear the thought that the daughter will not be dependent on him any more as she is now independent.

Martha upholds her personal integrity highly when she is consulted by Mrs. Mutsika and Mrs. Chiwara to speak to their girls. She tells them she will not speak to women who do not wish to be spoken for. Also to keep her integrity intact, she does not struggle with Freddy when he comes for his daughter and threatens to expose the kind of life she is living which she knows will be an indictment on her career as a lawyer.

Assertion of self is very important to every individual as it defines who you are and what you stand for. This is one realization Martha conceives at the onset when she realizes she is also going to be knitting all her life like her mother and the other women before her. . . . *So, I wonder, am I going to spend the rest of my life knitting, knitting like my mother and her mother and all the rest of them (p. 105).* . . . There are duties that are known to be duties of a woman such as taking care of the home and other domestic duties.

In her bid to change the norm she stands up to Freddy who could not stand her. He says she talks too much, drinks and even wears trousers like a man. *She tells Freddy “whatever I am, whatever I do I believe is right”*. She does most of these in defiance to patriarchy.

Martha does not hide her erotic life. She believes it must be exhibited for all to know. She tells her mother; I love him that is why I gave him my body. She also tells the maid how good she felt whenever she was in bed with Freddy. The playwright breaks the notion that sex is an ultimate desire of men. Martha tells Lovemore she wants him in her bed and could get him out anytime.

Reproduction wise, women should be in control. They should determine when they want to start reproducing. Martha says she is not ready to take care of Freddy's child; she is not ready to have babies though she is pregnant. Freddy tells her she is finished because she is pregnant.

Dangaremba's background with reference to feminism can be linked to western feminism but she equips that the African American feminism work's for her. This may be linked to the theory of womanism.

The playwright's feminist beliefs might have developed during her stay in England and her association with feminist poets such as Audre Lorde whose ideologies she believes in. "In her writings, Dangaremba argues for women as independent, adult, sexual beings, but at the same time, she recognises the awful responsibility, vulnerability, and loneliness that being in charge of one's own life can bring" (Shaw, 2007). This quote is not different from what she portrays in her play.

Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh a Nigerian is the second playwright under study. *Who Owns This Coffin* 1999, *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again* 2001, *Cauldron of Death*, *Out of the Mask* 2005, etcetera, are some of the plays to her credit. She is a lecturer and has co-edited an anthology of plays-*Contemporary African plays*. Her play *Nneora* (an African Doll's House), is an adaptation of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Both plays *Nneora*

and a *Doll's House* are centred on the protagonist, Nneora and Nora, respectively. These characters (Nneora and Nora) serve two different cultures, the Western mode of the woman and the African embodiment of the woman.

Just like her compatriot, Utoh-Ezeajugh also works around feminism and women attaining a voice both at home and in the society despite the dominance of patriarchy. 'Though her dramatic works, have shown that amidst the proliferation of variegated strands of feminist postulations, female writers can resist the temptation of viewing society solely through the periscope designed, manufactured, assembled, and patented by feminism' (Nwankwo, 2009). Every individual may have what they stand for in life. As a principle she stands by, Nwankwo quotes in his article that 'Chima is a playwright who will not shy away from reality, however controversial that may be' (Nwankwo, 2009). These are attributes that have found their way into her works. These are also traits that are inherent in some of her female characters such as Nneora who exhibits a lot of strength despite the treatment given by her husband. She uses Nneora and Linda to project the reality of the African woman and the place of feminism in Africa.

Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh, through her dramatic works, has shown that amidst the proliferation of variegated strands of feminist postulations, female writers can still resist the temptation of viewing society through the periscope designed, manufactured, assembled, and patented by feminism" (Nwankwo, 2009).

Utoh-Ezeajugh has her beliefs in feminism but in the same breath thinks the woman should not be tempted to live according to the laid down principles of feminist but rather she encourages all writers should cast a path for themselves through their works. Again, she did not want to be just another feminist voice but

to throw more light on the problems of women in Africa. She does so to find a way forward for the empowerment of the woman in Africa.

She not only promoted feminism but did in the Africa context. Femi Osofisan describes “Chima is a playwright who will not shy away from reality, however painful, and who is not afraid to challenge conventional wisdom, however controversial that may be” (Utoh-Ezeajugh, 1999). She shows how it can be used not in a forceful manner but in subtle but effective ways. In her play,

Nneora, an African Doll’s House she re-works Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* and makes her Nora (Nneora—mother of all) to remain in her husband’s house after their quarrel so that both of them can jointly tackle other far more oppressive forces in both their family and society. I wish to posit in this essay that Utoh-Ezeajugh’s social consciousness as a writer holds gargantuan relevance for the unification of both men and women in the fight against global malaise such as hunger/poverty/famine, HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, wars, promiscuity, and other sundry problems(Nwankwo, 2009).

As playwrights, they both write about the cons of their culture and also heightened on the pros. These two give a fair idea of their knowledge of the realities involved. As they write for the positive treatment of the woman, they do not lose sight of the fact that culture is a controlling wheel in all these feminist ideologies.

4.7 The work as a solution to a cultural problem

Culture has its pros and cons. The negatives of culture have more effects on women. Paramount among what is negative to feminist is the culture of patriarchy. This system as discussed in earlier chapters has been of subjugation to most women. Asiedu (2015) outlines how women are perceived.

Somehow it is true women and men have had their places allocated but women have been allocated the subordinate position, so should we accept

that? I don't know really. I agree that we have our roles that we play and I mean women have been wired in a certain way and therefore even in positions of leadership or wherever women find themselves, they bring a certain perspective to bear because they are women. Because of the issues they deal with but it doesn't mean people have to be boxed (Personal communication, 2015).

The ideology of patriarchy has three main focuses which are importance, dominance and superiority of the male over female. So much focus has been placed on the male. The male is perceived to be stronger, physically than the female. Most family lineage is carried on through the male. Through this work it will be realised that patriarchy has not been of help to women. It makes them feel less human, which the men are quick in pointing out. The women want to be part of the developmental processes of the man but not to be dominated by the man. Catherine Acholonu advocates for patrifocal and matrifocal instead of patriarchy.

Another cultural problem is the ability of a woman to express her sexuality. This is one issue that Dangaremba has addressed. Women should be given the room to express themselves sexually.

This does not mean they should practice lesbianism as its one of the values of radical feminist. They should be able to express when they want to have sex. Their sexual drive should not be limited as some cultures have tried through female genital mutilation (FGM). This is by cutting off the clitoris which gives sexual satisfaction. The desire to express bodily pleasure should not be undermined. Women must also not feel shy about their sexuality as Martha exhibits. It must also be acknowledged that women also have lust. Culture, in most African countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Ghana do not make room for the freedom to express such things, as it is regarded as sacred.

Another value of culture is the lack of recognition of the labour of women. Labour in this context covers child bearing, domestic duties, their career lives and even their academic aspirations. Though domestic duties are a requirement of women it should not become a tool of oppression as Freddy makes Martha go through. Ikenna does same to Nneora and even says he likes the fact that she is a house–wife. Career women must be respected not just for the money they earn but for the ability to support the man and the home.

In a personal interview with Kanazoe, he said “a woman’s education is not worth it because when you educate her she will come and rebel against you” (personal communication, 2015). This, in my opinion is not true in the sense that education is for enlightenment rather than rebellion. Rebellion sets in when there is marginalisation. Also, assertion of oneself must not be termed as rebellion. More so, most governments, such as the government of Ghana encourage more women to take active interest in politics so the political sphere does not become male dominated as it is now.

So we women must be strong and give the men nothing. They should not even be allowed to see the children otherwise they will in their simple - mindedness be happy because they can have the pleasure without the responsibility. It is up to us women. We must take sole responsibility for everything we produce (She no longer weeps p. 133).

These are the words from Martha to the women activists who call upon her. It can be described as the words of an embittered woman. She advocates that men should not be given a chance in the life of women to own anything not even their children. They want to take total control of the fruit of their labour. When society acknowledges the woman for who she is and not what she has, her contribution to society will be enormous.

4.7 Summary

The two playwrights under study did not forget to make known aspects of their culture that deal with the subject matter (feminism) and how it is treated. Zimbabwean culture sees feminism as a fantasy, a delusion from reality on the ground which is male dominance. In the end “feminism no longer wins” (Shaw, 2007, p. 21). Though Zimbabwe had gained independence, this might not be complete as their culture oppresses the women. The subject matter of feminism has diverse interpretations as discussed earlier. Its application differs from place to place. As the Zimbabwean culture abhors it, the Nigerian culture embraces it, using the play *Nneoma* as a reference point.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 Overview

The chapter comments on the findings of the research, the challenges encountered as well as the necessary recommendation made. It restates and summarises the essential observations in the various chapters.

5.2 Findings

Three objectives are listed at the beginning of this research, to ascertain the presence of feminism in the works of female African playwrights. This is achieved through the reading and analysis carried out on the plays. Outcomes of interviews and library research also contributed to the findings. The following is observed in relation to the first objective.

This seeks to distinguish between the European concept of feminism and that of the African. A detailed comparative study of feminism and African feminism is conducted to ascertain the differences between the two. Both have different types and branches. Similarly they have what they stand for.

(i) The general idea of feminism is equality for both sexes in political, economic and social issues, while African feminists are pleading for personal independence to be able to exercise their authority and co-operation with their male counterparts in everything. Western feminism seeks for women to break free of all bondages to men. They want every form of male domination eliminated, so their women can be free from rigid gender roles if possible, to have a women-only community where they do not need any man. On the contrary, African feminism acknowledges the need of the man in the life of the woman, throughout her developmental stages.

(ii) In as much as culture cannot be entirely taken out of the picture of feminist discourse, it must not suppress nature. Cultural practices of a people need not affect the natural status quo of the woman, such as child bearing and her sexuality which are exploited and used to make her feel less human. Children must belong to both parties, not to one. Therefore the centrality of the children in the life of the parents is important. No child should belong to only the mother or to the father. This truth was discovered in the two plays under study. Ikenna refers to his children as the children of the wife. Martha and Freddy also have their own tussle over their daughter.

A clear distinction has been made in the two types of feminism in the study. Western feminism does not fully apply to the African. Africans have defined what they want through their various types of feminism they have outlined for themselves. This they capture under the broad tag of African feminism.

The second objective set out to trace the presence of feminism in the works of African female playwrights. It can be said with certainty that western feminism has influence on the works of African female writers.

(i) Most of these writers, for example those studied have had some form of exposure to western culture which is the home of feminism. Utoh-Ezeajugh uses one of her characters to confirm this. Linda travels to the United States, and upon her return, she is so enlightened and able to assert herself after her encounter with western ideologies on the rights of the woman. Not all of these women writers though, had their education in the 'West', but it is interesting to note that they still contacted the 'West' by proxy, via education and books. Thus, their works still have feminist underpinnings. Reference can be made to Ama Ata Aidoo who wrote *Dilemma of a Ghost* when she was a university student and had not travelled out of the shores of Ghana. Dangaremba's feminist

consciousness was highly influenced by the discourses present in Zimbabwe at the time of writing some of her works as well as feminist ideas popular in the west in the 1980s (Shaw, 2007). Both writers studied also used advanced education as the highest form of attainment for their protagonist. Their education served as a catalyst to their eventual realisation of the status quo of the African woman, and their moves to proffer solutions.

(ii) Two note-worthy values of western feminism are established in the plays. They are liberal and radical feminism. In *She no longer weeps*, Martha wants to be a mother but does not want to carry pregnancy as she sees the time devoted to pregnancy as a waste of time. This is in line with radical feminist beliefs. Radical liberal feminists recommend “artificial means of reproduction whereby less time is devoted to pregnancy, giving way for “worthwhile things”. In *Nneora* as well, Nneora is used to project how time can be wasted carrying pregnancy. In eight years of marriage she has four children and expecting another two. She finds herself in a cycle of pregnancy and nursing as well as nurturing her children. The husband is happy of his monopoly over her life. He tells her he likes her for being a house wife rather than a working woman. This invariably makes Nneora less capable to contribute to society. Martha affirms radical liberal feminist ideology, as she exhibits androgynous abilities; she sees herself as both male and female but her feminine nature is dominant. She relay’s this to Lovemore when she told him that she is both the father and the mother of Sarah her daughter.

Interrogating how African women are portrayed in the works of African female playwrights is the third objective. The portrayal of women in the texts has been very important for this research. The data gathered during the interview proved some of the findings.

(i) It's been proven that women are not portrayed as docile or flat characters. The writers used their protagonists to show how women are marginalised and stereotyped. They also provided solutions, which are seen in how these women reacted to the laid down canons and their situations. After their empowerment, they also showed how these women had embraced their situations and made the best out of it. They used their female characters to send a message to their western counterparts. The message is that though they are feminists and acknowledge all that the theory stands for, they belong to a culture that cannot just be thrown away. Rather, they wish to handle their situations in a much different way.

Both playwrights address the need for higher education for women. They exhibited how less educated women are marginalised and the educated ones upheld. Though some will say “too much education is not good for the woman”, it is also very much needed for her to be able to take part in the essentials needed for the development of the continent and the world as a whole.

5.3 Challenges

During this research an essential challenge encountered was the lack of books needed for the study. Citations from books and other materials found and used referenced important books that are necessary for the study area. The University's libraries did not have most of those books, thus making accessibility to some of the requisite materials difficult.

Another challenge was the lack of personal cultural exchange experience of the researcher. Time is a limiting factor for the research, therefore there was no room made available for the researcher to travel to the countries in which the plays are set, to experience the culture and possibly have some literary interaction, know the realities on the ground. I believe that experiential knowledge holds a valuable place in research,

which cannot be overemphasised. This provides contact with people, situations as well as materials and even data, to help concretise findings and conclusions.

5.4 Recommendations

I recommend that the university and more especially the Department of Theatre Arts stock its library with current books on feminism. The arguments on feminism and its relevance to the African are unending, therefore, stringent measures should be taken to upgrade knowledge and also keep students abreast of current trends and literatures in that regard.

I also recommend that researchers in Africa, especially Ghana, take deep interest in the subject and research on it further, especially to the relevance of their culture. Most scholarly materials used for this research is written by Nigerians, therefore, I will encourage my fellow Ghanaians to take up interest in research and more especially in related fields such as this (Performing Arts).

I recommend that a further study into the works of African female playwrights be done using African feminism as the theoretical framework.

5.5 Conclusion

The urge to undertake this research has brought further understanding and insight to the discourse. The various theories and definitions surrounding feminism have been very interesting. Women are not battling for equality but the simple acknowledgment that needs to be accorded them as humans just like their male counterparts.

Throughout this studies, the word feminism in general poses a negative connotation to some African women. I would rather entreat all women activist to embrace stiwanism

instead of feminism. As it is defined, social transformation including women in African. (Refer to chapter two)

This debunks all cultural baggage and excesses as it deals with transformation that is taking place globally. Global developmental processes must include women and not dissociate them from it. The choice for this theory is because it best describes feminism in the African context. Moreover, the brain behind the theory, according to Ogunjipe–Leslie is that “African women do not need liberation or feminism because they have never been in bondage”. This brings to bear the difference that has existed between the western women and African women. The African woman has her recognition in the home whilst the western women do not.

Feminism with its negative connotations as held by some African women has its positives as well. The central ideal of the various branches of western feminism is “that the woman needs support for equality for men and women in politics, economics, religions and socio-cultural sphere is absolutely necessary”. Also, Ode says “the woman needs empowerment and emancipation” (2011). Western feminist have a focal point they are working towards whilst African feminist seem to have difficulty in locating their own.

The African feminist group have not identified a uniform focus on the issue of women. Africans have not yet identified the fact that the African woman needs liberation. They seem to resign to fate and the biological element that create an illusion on the mind of the people; why the division of sex by God in the first place? The cohesiveness of the western approaches is the reason they are advanced in the promotion of a better life for their women. (Ode, 2011, p. 100)

Feminism, according to the researcher is not entirely negative as has been found during this study. The idea of feminism is the same both European and African. The barriers

creating the difference between the two are the cultural and traditional practices found in Africa and the west. This gives African feminism a different perspective.

Feminism on the whole, has brought a lot of change to the lives of women. “feminism is, no doubt good because it has to a large extent modified the earlier negative portraiture of feminity in literature” (Nwankwo, 2006). It has enlightened most African women to write about themselves and also use it as a medium of communication to policy makers and the world at large.

The government and policy makers in Ghana for example have set up institutions as Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) that deal with issues of human rights and abuses. Another institution is Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), also into domestic violence. Though these institutions are available the issues of abuse still persist. Some women are battered day in day out. Most of them lack the courage to report or take the perpetrators to these institutions for justice. Some of the reasons for these are popular lines such as; “because of the children”, “I love my husband” etcetera. These and other social factors prevent the institutions to live up to expectation.

Governments are encouraging more women to take active part in politics but most of them are withdrawing because some are subjected to insults and ridicule. Education is essential to make these issues and institutions known. Drama can be used as a tool of advocacy to educate women and the general public on their rights and other issues.

Culture and tradition are very important to everyone, especially the African, male or female. It is something they hold on to, no matter the exposure and advancement they attain in their lives. Some are of the view that educational exposure is doing more harm

to women than good but through this research most of the women have proven otherwise. Though they may want to assert their voice in whichever way possible, tradition still reigns supreme. Belonging to a society or a family is very important, as it adds a lot of self worth to an individual. African women want to feel a sense of kinship. Western feminists want the woman to be independent, not to rely on anyone.

Both playwrights studied have exhibited western feminist and African feminist ideologies in their works, but African feminism outweighs the former. Utoh-Ezeajugh exhibits motherism whereas Dangaremba, womanism. Even though feminism is the theoretical framework used, its application to the African situation must be done with caution, as Africa does not practice some of their values.

The African culture has room for feminism because culture is not static, culture is dynamic and culture is also a tool for change. Therefore, culture can embrace feminism to bring out the strength in women for the betterment of society. As Efo Kodjo Mawugbe in an interview with Awo Asiedu said “I don’t take women for granted at all. They have their contributions to make to the society” (Asiedu, 2011). I believe he said this because women are the backbone in marriage, in a society and even in a nation. When the backbone is broken the entire frame collapses. This testifies to the fact that women have their unique place in society and they do not need to battle to be seen.

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PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Asiedu, Awo Mana. Personal Interview. Legon, 17-06-2015

Bengar, Samuel. Personal Interview. Legon, 16-06-2015

Kanazoe, Iddrisu Seidu. Personal Interview. Legon, 16-06-2015

Opare-Darko, Fabiola. Personal Interview. Legon, 16-06-2015

APPENNDIX

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Topic: Feminism in the works of African female playwrights

1. General knowledge and perception about feminism.
2. What is African feminism?
3. What is the African's view of womanhood
4. Are female playwrights feminist?
5. Do all their works bear feminist ideology
6. Do the African culture have room for feminism
7. *Nneoma* and *She No Longer Weeps* do they promote feminist ideology
8. Portrayal of female characters
9. Is feminist living positive impact on Africa?
10. Do you think the African need feminism?
11. Are women marginalized in Africa?
12. Does the Africa culture have a place for feminism?