



## Re-Appropriation of Gendered Representations & Roles in African Literature: A Feminist and Psychoanalytical Study of Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o & Wa Mirii's I Will Marry When I Want

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### **Abstract**

In most African scholarly literature, the concern has predominantly been about the contribution to the feminist literary contribution in postcolonial African literature has been characterised by the ostentatious literary interrogation of poverty of the authentic feminine depiction in characters intertwined with the absence of female authorial representation. Many scholars have researched ideologies surrounding representations of women characters and their roles in various novels and dramas; however, these investigations most of them are at a micro level and in this study we argue that at a macro level, representations of women's role in these dramas and novels have been limited. This study contributes to filling this gap through the analysis of two African literary works-Chinua Achebe's Novel, Things Fall Apart (1985) and Ngugi wa Thiongo and Mirii, I will Marry when I want (1977). The scrutiny and analysis of the dual texts herein is embarked on through the feminist perspective as well as African and womanist perspectives. Thus, the article reveals that authors assign strongly masculine expressions to their Male characters much more frequently than to their women characters and argues that these differentiated representations is a reflection and representative of the deepening crisis of male heroism and gender stratification, deteriorating patriarchal order and structure of society of which cannot be divorced from the cultural and religious mode of production. Linguistic data are presented that both unsettle the constructed image of women as sexual beings and question the historically assumed relationship between gendered language and authenticity. The second part is devoted to the definition of gender roles in these African literary works and the depicted views of marriage in African societies. The study adopted a qualitative exploratory research design to find and identify these poignant representations of women. This study uses feminism as a theoretical lens while drawing on African feminism and womanism as principal linchpins. The findings highlight a number of challenges ascribed to women as a result of these kinds of portrayal of women.

**Keywords:** *Feminism; African Feminism; Womanism; Masculinity; Religion and Culture*

## 1. Introduction

The chief concern of the topical contribution to the feminist literary contribution in postcolonial African literature has been characterised by the ostentatious literary interrogation of poverty of the authentic feminine depiction in characters intertwined with the absence of female authorial representation, and subsequently, that African literary world publication is male dominated which seem to be congenial African literary orthodoxy hitherto which has been widely recognized from the canon of this postcolonial literature. This deepening literary concern in African literature has manifested itself as conundrum within the gendered representation and roles of characters within the African literary works and world. Thus, this concern at this time and its intensity is a reflection and representative of the deepening crisis of male heroism and gender stratification, deteriorating patriarchal order and structure of society of which cannot be divorced from the cultural and religious mode of production.

Within the two selected texts of the African literary highbrows — *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *I'll Merry When I Want* (1977) depict women as intrinsic part of lower marginalized class strata in the context of agrarian African patriarchy, further, these literati in their revolutionary anti-colonial works have unheeded and neglected the central womanhood/femininity in the rationale and insurgent struggle to vanquish colonialism alongside its cultural negation of the colonized African native. The character representations and assigned gendered roles therein advance male heroism, masculine dogmatization and susceptibility of natural leadership, female objectification and commercialization, and innate female submission. These texts embody and reveals a complex framework of subjective gender stratification in their manifestations; at their core there's a chief male preference and/or masculinist patriarchal tradition in character depiction. Kumah (2000:6) attribute this phenomenon to the dominating patriarchal tradition of the literary world, the attributes as follow:

As a consequence of the male-dominated literary tradition, many of the depictions of African women are reductive — perpetuating popular myths of female subordination. Female characters in male-authored works are rarely granted primary status — their roles often trivialized to varying degrees — and they are depicted as silent and submissive in nature.

Male characters are manifested as rulers, superiors, and warriors in their nature — protagonists; while on the contrary, female characters are ordinarily manifested as suburbanites and subaltern citizens who are objects or rather possessions which determines the social worth of a man — mere supporting characters. The clear instigation of this assertion is located and found in the obvious centralization of the character Okonkwo as the protagonist in the novel of Achebe (1958) and how the downfall of the character is not attributed to hubris (that is excessive/overweening masculine pride; miscalculation and arrogance) and hamartia (that misguided error of judgment inflicted by sheer and utter masculine arrogance of natural correctness) but on the contrary, the downfall is attributed to and manifested as, in gendered analogy, something which is aptly bound and expected to a woman; that a woman is the one expected to commit such errors, flaws and all other weak moves.

Moreover, Stratton (1994: 25) condenses that the status of women in Umuofia is very low and argues that this gives the picture that “they are mere objects, willed, for example, by a father to a son as part of an estate or traded for a bag full of cowries.”. Thence and therefore, Buchi Emecheta, a female literary author from West Africa, is accurately quoted by Kumah (2000:7) asserting that “the good woman in Achebe's portrayal is one who drinks the dregs after her husband.”

Ngugi's *I'll Merry When I Want* is a classic play penned in the post-independence in circa primordial phase of Kenyan postcolonial independence as anti-colonial literary play of insurgency needed to repudiate social and political quagmire, tellingly obtainable in societies under siege such as Kenya

herein of the literary text as contextual African society. Ngugi steeped the play into interface of religion and politics in order to expose the pitfalls of neo-colonialism and the maintained exploitation and prejudices of colonialism and its cultural myths and dogmas suffered by the lower-class strata and the poor working class.

More-so, the play exposes the menace and pitfalls as well as the real class character of the black elites masquerading as concerned Christian people of humanity and development (the deepening exploitation, in actuality) and the colonial and neo-colonial superstructures maintaining the exploitation thereof. Therefore, Thiong'o and Mirii exegetically used the intersection of literary consciousness, songs, and culture to dramatize Kenya's postcolonial narratives, and to challenge the shameless colonization of exploited masses by the Kenyan ruling class and its elites, in particular Christian elites. In reciprocity to Achebe's novel, Ngugi's play is profoundly set against the background of colonial annexation and establishment of Africa and antagonistic towards the cultural imperialism. More-so, Ngugi also explains the central role of women in patriarchal African society through character cultural representation in this apt anti-colonial and cultural nature in its manifestation in pre-colonial and neo-colonial Africa or the deemed postcolonial independence.

Furthermore, herein this apt anti-colonial play of Ngugi which exposes the nature and structural pitfalls of colonialist and imperialist establishment, we see, just like in Achebe's novel herein, the protagonist being a male, Kiguunda wa Gathoni. Kiguunda is an improvised farm laborer in the colonial occupied land of his birth by British imperialist in the postcolonial Kenya. He has a wife, daughter, and a son. In this play, we see a gendered privilege being brought to light. Improvised as the family of Kiguunda is, their son is sent to acquire commercialized colonial education whilst we see the theme of female objectification being dominant as their daughter, Gathoni being propertied object which to a greater extent can be useful if sold, that is if married to a wealthy family like that of Kanoru.

A fair and few exceptions of female protagonists in prose by African male authors can be cited to instigate the subjective gender stratification within power relations through representation. Fundamental example is depicted in the novel *Jagua Nana* by Cyprian Ekwensi, whence main character, Jagua, is portrayed as an ageing, yet very beautiful prostitute (Ekwensi:1961). Kumah (2000: 7) advances an argument that this is a "prostitution trope that is exemplary of the debasement African women suffer at the hands of male authors." Although Jagua is the main character, she does not exhibit the traits of a conventional heroine. Ekwensi paints a picture of a woman whose beauty is admired by all; however, he depicts her as no better than a common prostitute who depends on male customers to provide for her.

The scrutiny and analysis of the dual texts herein is embarked on through the feminist perspective as well as African and womanist perspectives. These interplays necessitate themselves as profoundly interesting to observe and critique. With pragmatic cultural factuality that historical cultures demonstrated in any given patriarchal just as in these texts, women are depicted as thrilled and productive beings even though they are subalterns in any spheres of influence within the patriarchal culture. Further, even when are made a stress relieving and masculine egoism; point-proving and forbidden from key decision-making strata and continually loathed and maligned in cultural language of supposed promulgation of respect — such in idioms, proverbs, so on and so forth. With the cultural accentuation of gender stratification, male heroism and privilege which characterizes the traditional nature and operation of patriarchy in family and society. A man is thus innately born privileged in being first class options for necessitated broader growth for family and society. And the masculine culturized privilege over the choosing of Kiguunda's son over the daughter to acquire civilized education.

Massively, Africa in circa nineteenth century whence the geographical origins of the two texts herein are written in, women were socially stratified to fill specific assigned roles in their respective society. Notwithstanding, Gathoni does raise the theme of feminine exploitation and male privilege in

relation to her being overlooked in necessitated acquisition of structural education, thus, being overworked and whether her households-based exploitation is then reasoning her brother was sent to school over her. In the pre-colonial African society, the feminine roles were socially secondary and complimentary to the masculine tradition which then places those of men at the apex of social and cultural stratum. These two societies of the texts demonstrate prominent male dominance. Anything strong and mattering is equated to men and any futile and feeble features and social characteristics are equated to femininity. A husband is the head of the household. Therefore, the culture which did not forbid put categorically and wholly permitted the culturalization and normalization of bigamy and polygamy since the social status of a man is gauged, first and foremost, on the basis of the numerical statistics of women acquired; how many wives he has taken as a real man, secondly, the sizing capacity of his yam and/or barns and thirdly, the attained titles of bloodsheds, wars and the related likes in the agrarian patriarchal Africa.

Scrutinizing gendered representations and roles in the context of power and psychoanalytical relations is as imperatively worthy as it unveils the affairs and connections of male and female in society.

## 2. Research Problem

The chief fundamental concern of the topical contribution to the feminist literary contribution in postcolonial literature of Africa has been characterised by ostentatious interrogation of the necessitated literary obsession and interrogation of poverty of the authentic feminine depiction intertwined with the absence of female authorial representation and that African literary world publication is male dominated which seem to be congenital literary orthodox hitherto which has been widely recognized from the canon of this postcolonial literature. The postulation is that the classic writers of postcolonial African literature are not just male literary literati but male gendered privileged first generation of African intelligentsia which had prioritised access to colonial education in the coloniser countries. Likewise, the underlying themes such as gender polarization, renunciation of gender roles, sexual antagonisms and the susceptibility of patriarchy are problematically and paradoxically embedded into the core of postcolonial African literature. Moreover, herein the study, I scrutinize and analyse the significant African literary texts of two important and well-renowned African literary highbrows — Achebe (1958) and Ngugi (1977) — both which thematise and therefore, are diametrically set against the background of colonial annexation and subjugation of Africa, and are entangled into legitimately insoluble quest of stamping out fallacies and mythologies of colonial claims that colonization rescued the natives from backwardness, barbarism, natural inferiority complex, innate intellectual and spiritual penury of pre-colonial Africa. These two central texts in African literature set against the cultural imperialism and colonial legacy, to a greater extent, speaks about women and embody gender disruptions and agrarian patriarchy in a socially stratified society: pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial Africa.

The chief questions which this study investigate are the following:

- How and what does it signify to peruse as a black woman in this patriarchal tradition? How does Achebe manifest or rather more aptly, represent the womanhood and femininity in his *Things Fall Apart* (1958) I?
- In which pattern does Ngugi (1977) represent women?
- How does Ngugi in *I Will Marry When I Want* represent womanhood and femininity? And if so, is there any recognised and acknowledged feminine response to colonial violence and war in depiction?
- How does these selected literary texts represent the woman in her wholeness?

In totality, it is worthy historical fact that in as much as colonial conquest is concerned that the African literature is, therefore, apart from its primordial male authorial domination marked by the states of hysterical colonial destitution of cultural dogmatization, alienation, dislocation, intellectual penury, displacement and/or dislocation, so and so forth. Regardless, African literature is the hub and epitome of subjective gender stratification and disequilibrium; that it forges and endorses within the framework of power relations, the masculinist tradition and male heroism as innate and therefore, men as naturally eligible and legitimate to rule. In the reciprocating analogy of these selected texts, we hypothesize that apart from the wide fact that women are assigned to some of the traditionally ‘deemed’ mattering roles or functions such as priestess on spiritual level, symbolically - the earth goddess and literally as nurturers of the Igbo and Gikuyu people, caregivers, mothers and teachers of children, representation and roles of characters is attributed by pro-masculine cultural and religious mode of production; in the framework of power and social relations.

### 3. Literature Review

Generally, to ensure a colossal and robust contribution is made to the existing body of literary world, and to stamp out the dogmatically impugned gendered representation, and to illuminate the authentic position of the repressed and/or suppressed gender specifically; this study make an employment and application of reviewing literature that has apt reciprocation to the research topic of the study. Moreover, this entailed study and juxtaposition of the gendered central themes of masculinity and femininity in a postcolonial African literary works of a necessitated number of literary critics and literati whose critiques and works are gravitated and have direct impact and content to the works of the chosen texts of Achebe (1958) and Ngugi’s (1977). The included works in this literature review are not mere frills and ornaments of literary nature but primarily provide elucidation of this study given the factuality that these literati have chiefly based their literature against and vowed the agony death of the patriarchal ideologies, patriarchal proclivities and the practical implications thereof.

#### 3.1 Masculinity and Femininity

Domination has traditionally been somaticized in sexual terms and power has traditionally been associated with masculinity! To aptly grasp the marriage between the gender concepts which manifest themselves to be an antagonistic to each other within the sphere of power relations. Kimmel (2000) vividly demonstrate the profound marriage and definition of the two intertwined gender conceptual contradictions — masculinities and femininities in their nature and manifestation denote to the social roles, behaviours, and meanings prescribed for men and women. As such, they accentuate gender, not biological sex, as well as the multiplicity of identities amid diverse groups of women and men. Masculinities and femininities are produced within the socio-cultural and religious establishments of society.

Buchi Emecheta scrutinises how women are tormented and marginalized in the patriarchal society of Africa in primordial epoch of postcolonial Nigerian society in her renowned novel — *The Joys of Motherhood* (1975). Thence, she pursues to stamps out the gendered illusions of feminine inferiority and masculine superiority within the framework of social and cultural roles, responsibilities, attitudes, and traditions which are camouflaging the authenticity of motherhood-femininity. The novel makes available a thoroughly juxtaposed scrutiny and analysis of nebulous and greatly exploitative African patriarchy on womanhood entangled into insoluble contradiction of the vigorous colonial curtailment faced by mothers and women in general, as it is the case with Nnu Ego. Typically, Emecheta is deranged at the set fatal tradition which then stratify and gauge the woman’s social value on the basis of, first and foremost, her socially bound ability to be fertile hub and epitome of natural reproduction of children, and subsequently, her willingness to meet and adhere to set masculine gratifications and services in male-orientated Igbo



culture as kernel of African culture. Furthermore, taking into literary cognitive resonance that the application and employment of the angle of the depiction of the employed language patterns, the two antagonistic gendered identity of masculinity and femininity embody a reflection of ostentatiously pernicious social attitude towards femininity and association of women to weakness. To Emecheta's novel reading as a woman, the feminine representation, and roles of the two core texts of Achebe & Ngugi are thus the demonstrative evidence to the social attitudes towards gender. There's extensive imbalances of positivism and negativism in the depiction of characters, contextually and often if not always, the positive traits and salient directly attributed to a father's influence downplays and dwindles the imperative role in necessitated arena of life played by female characters, as mothers, for instance.

### 3.2 Religion and Culture

In accordance to Emile Durkheim (1988), religion is "a united system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things that set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church; all those who adhere to them". More-so, the intense juxtaposition shows that the two are intertwined and thus, are entangled into insoluble marriage of pragmatic operation and function. Religion is corollary to culture! Religion just like a psyche opium intent to alter and fortify a human being into what it perceives to be an apt norm which on the mutual basis of yielding into the set norm of supernatural as culturally fixed and agreed. Both culture and religion embody exploitative and oppressive proclivity. The individual as a bound adherent of the set religion and culture is embody a particular framework of behavioural conduct, adherence to social roles and responsibilities, so and so forth. Purwarno Purwarno in his thesis, *The Role Of Women In Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart* (2017) locate representation and roles of women in the novel within the typical masculine arrangement through the auxiliary power kernel of religion and parenthood as religious leaders, phenomenal parents, teachers, etc, and he asserts in his preface:

"The women's powerful positions in the clan deal with their functions, i.e. spiritually as the priestess, symbolically as the earth goddess, and literally as the nurturers of the Ibo people, the caretakers of the yam crops and the mothers and educators of the Ibo children."

### 3.3 Wifhood and Motherhood

Buchi Emecheta (1975) offers an apt understanding and synopsis of what a woman, wife and a mother is in the opening of her novel and she assert, "Woman in Africa is mainly the mother. She finds fulfilment in becoming the mother of sons and is creative, productive force in life, and is so reflected in African literature. The mother image shines like unbroken ray in the whole African culture." However, women in African literature are designated to conform and confirm wifely prosperities, the implication is drawn that they varied extensively from their male counterparts to an extent that their aspirations that their prescient life aspirations are thwarted with by the exigencies of systematic masculine cultural domination. Motherhood and wifhood in the Igbo African society as manifested is a game of power for desire and hegemonic control, the moulding of the woman into a chattel of her husband. Emecheta, therefore, illuminate this extraneous represented traits of patriarchal order in other postcolonial literary texts, she shows the protagonist, Nnu Ego who devote her wholeness into becoming an ideal and culturally imbuing mother but she has no life outside the preview of motherhood as per set cultural and religious orthodoxies. Whilst her novel is centralised around the fundamental depiction of culturally debased, disfigured and psychologically abandoned mother, a protagonist named Nnu Ego who is vilified and lambasted for not adhering in cultural time and space the set obligations of being a woman, by the society. Buchi Emecheta is diametrically contrary to the renunciation of gender roles, and thus, illuminate the overlooked gender polarization with the sheer feminine susceptibility and the endorsement of masculine domination and correctness, as well as portrayal of women alongside property. Thus, "the good woman in Achebe's portrayal is the one who drinks the drags after her husband", asserted Emecheta.

Thence, judged by the constant dialectical ideological orthodoxy of femininity of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which accentuated the social role of women as nurturing mothers, and gentle companions to their husbands, women, therefore, remain nothing within significant power arrangement but anomalies in as much as the gender stratification and traditionally internalised patriarchy are concerned. Whilst it is undisputed factuality that the colonialism in its apparatuses further institutionalised patriarchy and gender disruption gravitated to the structure of African womanhood definition and motherhood with its colonial an imperialist destitute social conditions which continuous to pressgang and put blinkers on how Africans must culturally define and view themselves in relation to the world hitherto, it is worthy to critically note that the state of wifehood and motherhood in African patriarchy was not conducive to a wife and mother due to the patriarchal base which the African is established on.

In Achebe's novel which Purwarno (2017) instigate or rather stand tall in his defence of Achebe's feminine representation that feminine role is not that which is defined or located outside the framework of power relations in African patriarchal culture and that the people of Igbo have no problem with patriarchal order of Igbo society. Purwarno argues: "By emphasizing the weakness of femininity and benefits of masculine behaviours, the Igbo people emphasize the gender stratification of their culture, ensure the continuation of patriarchy."

Womanhood and wifehood are not spontaneously an innate aspiration and ideal or rather life necessitated obligations which women are intrinsically and exclusively good at as portrait depicted in both Ngugis and Achebe in their texts. The cultural prioritisation of the man within household as a figure and pillar on life progress is easily exposed as we witnessed in the two novels.

#### **4. Theoretical Framework**

##### **4.1 Feminism**

Feminism emanate from revolutionary events of the epochs of 18<sup>th</sup> century as an umbrella (and school of thought) for all progressive pro-women beliefs and theoretical traditions. It is conceptually employed in referral to the women's rights movement which centrally advocate and struggle for the complete social, economic, and political equality of men and women. Its concern is further extended cultural position of women also. This theoretical tradition is primarily established to represent the female figure. Thus, women who are the forefronts of this theoretical tradition and its pragmatic struggle call are conceptually classified as feminists. Thus, the accurate meaning of feminism by Nicole Hämmeler (1968): "Feminism is the name given to the theory of the feminist movement and the anti-social dominance of the men's movement for equal rights for women. Feminism turned to a broad social movement in the late sixties. Feminism means in broader sense freedom and equality, aspirations of women to represent their interests and rights." Feminist literary theory, like feminism itself, enable us to understand the relationships between males and females and their relative positions in society. The central content of feminist literary theory reminds us of the often-unequal social relations between men and women which represent a particular patriarchal ideology. In the development of literary texts, these diverse relationships can, in their manifestations, be unlike. In those ties we are invited by feminist theorists to pay special attention to patterns of thinking, behaviour, values, hegemony, and power. In its implementation, feminist literary theory explores the representations of both the female and the male characters, the language of the text, the author's attitude, and the interaction between these characters directly. Thus, the remarks about culture as a whole that the author seems to be making.

##### **4.2 African Feminism**

One of the chief problematic and bigoted of the application ideas in postcolonial feminism has been and still is the angle of the utilizing the gendered terminology 'woman' as a worldwide group;

postulating that women are thus defined and classified by their gender not by cultural backgrounds and identities and their social class strata. Numerous scholars and literati in feminist arena have accentuated and gravitated to responsibilities, limitations and failure that mainstream Western feminism have unheeded the fundamental struggles and voices of native African women in foreign land due to the 1400s Atlantic slave trade of black slavery transportation, colonised women in the Third World, etc, for many tragic decades and centuries, thus, perpetuating the gendered class and race antagonisms inter alia; pro-feminine international movements and the freed-autonomous lands. Thus, the quest for authentic activism outside the Western middle-class centred feminist attributes and values by feminist movements across the globe. Mikell (1997) outlines the apt synopsis of the origins and what African feminism and/or African feminist perspective is and emanate from: “the perspective of feminism in Africa grew from a very different dynamic than in the West. In the first place it has been shaped by the resistance of African women against western rule. As the African states arranged themselves with that organization came a gender prejudiced social pact gradually growing at the power of female leaders.” Numerous African literary playwrights and novelists such as Ama Ata Aidoo and Buchi Emecheta, did not want to historically in the primordial phase of the feminist movement widespread across the world as it manifest itself as the chief representative of their advocacy. Their central concern which is the founding categories of African feminism are; the menace of the political economy of colonialism and imperialism — political and socio-economic issues, culture and tradition, religion, gender disruption, so and so forth. The general feminist conception of feminism being as the hub and epitome of serving as a sharp vehicle to demonstrate the “innate” hatred of women against men is one of the contributory fundamental base for Buchi Emecheta and Ama Ata Aidoo renunciation of association with the term feminist then.

### 4.3 Womanism

The gendered inflicted concept of ‘Womanist’ was developed through literary intellectualism of the well-renowned Afro-American playwright Alice Walker, more-so, Walker hypothesizes the concept — womanist “is a woman who is committed to the survival and wholeness of the entire people, male and female”. The application of this gendered conceptual definition of Walker is apt for the study herein, primarily because, it’s prime purpose is to scrutinise and juxtapose gender ideologies of femininity and masculinity, social and cultural forces past and present, in order to enable the balanced assessment of all present and possible contributory elements of gender misrepresentation. Thus, the employment of womanism is a suitable feminist theory and technique on selected two literary texts. Both are literary highbrows of African literary world and thus, are rooted into depiction of African traditionalism which clearly enable them to be classified as traditionalists and are wholly rooted and committed representatives of African tradition and culture.

## 5. Purpose of the Study

### 5.1 Aim

This work is intended at the investigating, scrutinizing and showing the pitfalls of the gendered representations and roles, and gender ideologies as attributes of culture, religion, political and socio-economic conditions in order to reimagine harmonious Africa with gender equity as depicted in the two works and also, in Buchi Emecheta as instrumental literary kernel on gender revolution during the gender disruption of colonial annexation. The cultural hybridity of gender antagonisms in postcolonial Africa.

### 5.2 Objectives

- To scrutinize and juxtapose traditional constructions of cultural gender ideologies and/or polarisation as portrayed in Achebe’s novel and Ngugis’ play.



- To stamp out the dogmas and illusions in the native's psyche about the gender stratification conundrum as an isolated natural phenomenon.
- To establish and pervade a sharp revolutionary gender ideological orientation and understanding in African neo-colonial African literature and Africa as a whole.
- To formulate alternative radical gender mode of mental production — thought and perception through counteractive and curative literary works.

### 5.3 Research Questions

The chief fundamental concern of the topical contribution to the feminist literary contribution in postcolonial literature of Africa has been characterised by ostentatious interrogation of the necessitated literary obsession and interrogation of poverty of the authentic feminine depiction intertwined with the absence of female authorial representation and that African literary world publication is male dominated which seem to be congenital literary orthodox hitherto which has been widely recognized from the canon of this postcolonial literature. The postulation is that the classic writers of postcolonial African literature are not just male literary literati but male gendered privileged first generation of African intelligentsia which had prioritised access to colonial education in the coloniser countries. Likewise, the underlying themes such as gender polarization, renunciation of gender roles, sexual antagonisms and the susceptibility of patriarchy are problematically and paradoxically embedded into the core of postcolonial African literature.

Moreover, herein the study, I scrutinize and analyse the significant African literary texts of two important and well-renowned African literary highbrows — Achebe (1958) and Ngugi (1977) — both which thematise and therefore, are diametrically set against the background of colonial annexation and subjugation of Africa, and are entangled into legitimately insoluble quest of stamping out fallacies and mythologies of colonial claims that colonization rescued the natives from backwardness, barbarism, natural inferiority complex, innate intellectual and spiritual penury of pre-colonial Africa. These two central texts in African literature set against the cultural imperialism and colonial legacy, to a greater extent, speaks about women and embody gender disruptions and agrarian patriarchy in a socially stratified society: pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial Africa.

The chief questions which this study investigate are:

- How and what does it signify to peruse as a black woman in this patriarchal tradition? How does Achebe manifest or rather more aptly, represent the womanhood and femininity in his *Things Fall Apart* (1958)?
- In which pattern does Ngugi (1977) represent women?
- How does Ngugi in *I Will Marry When I Want* represent womanhood and femininity?
- Is there any recognised and acknowledged feminine response to colonial violence and war in depiction?
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In totality, it is worthy historical fact that in as much as colonial conquest is concerned that the African literature is, therefore, apart from its primordial male authorial domination marked by the states of hysterical colonial destitution of cultural dogmatization, alienation, dislocation, intellectual penury, displacement and/or dislocation, so and so forth. Regardless, African literature is the hub and epitome of subjective gender stratification and disequilibrium; that it forges and endorses within the framework of power relations, the masculinist tradition and male heroism as innate and therefore, men as naturally eligible and legitimate to rule. In the reciprocating analogy of these selected texts, I hypothesize, apart from the wide fact that women are assigned to some of the traditionally 'deemed' mattering roles or functions such as priestess on spiritual level, symbolically - the earth goddess and literally as nurturers of

the Igbo and Gikuyu people, caregivers, mothers and teachers of children, representation and roles of characters is attributed by pro-masculine cultural and religious mode of production; in the framework of power and social relations.

#### 5.4 Sample and Procedure

A population is "the set of elements that the research focuses on and to which the results obtained should be generalised," according to Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:85). In this example, all novels dealing with gender representations and roles in cultural power relations are the total population. Sampling is called the turn of setting apart a subset of a population as a sample, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:199). Creswell (2003:185) categorize "purpose sampling refers to the selection of sites or participants that will best help the researcher to understand the problem and the research question; they must be willing to reflect on and share that knowledge." For the current analysis, an objective sampling technique will be used with Literary texts that are contextually selected as the chosen sample. These texts were chosen because their themes are important to the research question and can contribute to achieving the research goals.

#### 5.5 Data Collection and Instruments

"The collection of data is the process by which the participants are selected, and information collected from them," according to Burns & Grove (2001: 460). Data is collected primarily through close reading, in-depth review, and description of the two texts entailed as this is a desktop analysis report. In addition, in the context of critical texts, a study of secondary reading material will be adopted to assist in the examination of power imbalances and inconsistencies in the selected texts of gendered stratified representations and positions of endurance of the male tradition.

#### 5.6 Data Analysis

Schwardt (2007:6) base it in meaning as a meaningful, interpretive, and theorizing activity, which means the search for over-all accounts of data between categories. This kernel of the study carries significant weight as it offers directive, structure and relevance to the mass of data collected.' In the selected texts, the research queries will lead in guidance the analysis of the data. Research is divided into both primary and secondary data. In an effort to achieve the objectives of the study, primary data is objectively investigated and synthesized using thematic textual analysis. In addition, a theoretical lens is used to describe the effects of the selected literary works.

### 6. Results

#### **“They Are Subalterns of Patriarchy and Masculinity”: Feminine Traditional Alienation, Violence, Silence and Psychological Torture.**

In the preceding sections, we deliberated on how women in African literature are designated to be objects of men, subalterns in cultural and religious relations and complimentary neophytes of power. We also highlighted, documented an discussed how religion and culture are manipulated to institute the social duties and responsibilities from the childhood if not birth level. We further went on to undress the religious and cultural pitfalls on the pattern which it reduces a woman to a commodity and object of a man through the lobola process to enhance wealth and bloodline of patriarchal tradition. More-so, how a woman is bound to conform to wifely prosperities with the drawn implication that they varied extensively from their male counterparts to an extent that their ideals and aspirations, that their prescient life aspirations are thwarted with by the exigencies of systematic masculine domination. In this section of the article, the focus on psychological violence espoused and endorsed by the culture of patriarchy and male

heroism and privilege with the close scrutiny of the family of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* and that of Kiguunda in *I Will Marry When I Want* correspondingly.

Moreover, we scrutinise the prevalence of gender violence and subsequent of silence as well as the implications of the psychological torture thereof. Gender violence hysterically affects the family of Okonkwo and womanly psychological torture or rather violence in Kiguunda's family demonstrated through their daughter. More-so, we advance an argument that the depiction of characters in African literature has gender imbalances with masculine domination and masculine sexual promiscuity being replenished with gendered extraneous edge to arrest and problematise gender metamorphosis. Male characters in African literature have hegemonic control over their women through the delineate means of religion and culture. The representation of violence; the manner in which cultural and religious hegemony silences characters; the unearthing of feminine power of voices and potentiality outside the masculine cultural framework; measures women take to free themselves from inflicted patriarchal and masculine injustices; thus, the necessity to liberate femininity from patriarchal totalitarianism. From the womanist and feminist, and even to a greater extent from the African feminist, it is shown clearly that male heroism and favouritism is culturized due to the dogmatic traditional customs and norms that men are naturally born to be leadership and thus, heads of survival production to humanity including inter alia; his ability forged and endorsed by society to be head of the family, him being able to control his family and provide for it, and him being a priority when it comes to access to services which matters in the development and growth of the household and society in general. In the further movement of decolonizing, it is significant for a reader to note and observe the roles of women. Most if not all of African society is patriarchal, thus, they give more importance and mattering roles within the framework of power and social relations to male characters much more than to female characters.

In *I Will Marry When I Want*, we see in the Act One (p.17) of the play the psychological torture unleashed to the daughter of Kiguunda and Wangeci, Gathoni whom is attempting to insurgent to her mother's patriarchal language of commodification and gendered role and responsibility reduction as she angrily asks if what she regards to be household feminine exploitation of her labour as she feels overworked with auxiliary household duties in their destitute and poor household. More-so, she asks if they had sent their son to access the colonial education in order to be better with the purpose of overworking her and she further asks if she's not worthy of being educated. Her mother mock her with the controversial questions and response in their confabulation as she tells her to get married and even ask as to when are you getting married, thus if she wants what the mother regards as misguided freedom of laziness, she must get married and have her own home. As Gathoni mocks what her mother regards as beds, she's responded with commodifying language as she's being told to get a husband who'd buy her beds and to stop being old maid in her mother's house:

Wangeci: Why don't you get yourself a husband

who will buy you spring beds?

Gathoni: Mother why are you insulting me?

Is that why you refused to send me to school,

so that I may remain your slave and forever toil for you?

Picking tea and coffee only for you to package wages?

And all that so that you can get money

And pay fees for your son!

Do you want me to remain buried under these ashes?

And on top of that injury

You have to abuse me night and day?

You think I cannot get a husband?

I'll be happy the day I leave this home!

Wangeci: Take the road!

There's no girl worth the name

Who's contented with being old maid

In her mother's homestead!

Gathoni: Sorry!

I shall marry when I want

Nobody will force me into it! (p.16)

Furthermore, in this phenomenon the reader learns and take into psyche that the application and employment of the angle of the portrait of language patterns, the two antagonistic gendered identity of masculinity and femininity embody a reflection of ostentatiously pernicious social attitude (attitude of objectified, commodified and alienated being of women as this societal dogma which is psychologically internalized), in particular towards femininity and association of women to weakness. The reader further learns that reading as a woman, the feminine representation, and roles of the two core texts of Achebe & Ngugi are thus the demonstrative evidence to the social attitudes towards gender. There's extensive imbalances of positivism and negativism in the representation and roles of characters, contextually and often if not always, the positive traits and salient directly attributed to a father's influence downplays and dwindles the imperative role in necessitated arena of life played by female characters, as mothers, for instance. In the event of Okonkwo rationalising and legitimising some of his robust cultural and patriarchal orthodoxies that it is upright in his psyche; for a man to do anything in his power including enacting violence to ensure and demonstrate his power. Okonkwo beat up his and shot to death his wife, Ekwefi only for secondary and minor things:

“Okonkwo's wife had merely cut few leaves of it to wrap some food and she said so. Without further argument Okonkwo gave her second beating and left her and her only daughter weeping” (p.37)

More-so, when he called his son Ikefemuna to fetch his gun, the poor helpless woman who had been hysterically beaten murmured something about the guns that never shot. What an unfortunate in a midst of unfortunate event, Okonkwo heard her! Thence, Okonkwo madly with urgency ran into his room for a loaded gun, came out and aimed at her as she clambered over the dwarf wall of the barn. (p.37). To Okonkwo, this is either not irrational, uncultured nor barbaric, but his deepening silence enveloping violence; and silence is a repercussion of his father's cowardice and mediocrity and his life vow not to become anything closer to the man. Okonkwo have confidence in and have faith in violence to makes his sons pious, superior, and manly enough to command and control. His culture and religion which therefore governs his manly consciousness posits Okonkwo to construes violence as greater respect to and worship of culture and religion. The perpetrated gender violence and silence within the family of Okonkwo has

been a feature activity which has not been condemned through harsh punishments except when Okonkwo beat his wife up during the Week of Peace.

In totality, the penury of feminine freedom and equitable gendered interaction within the spheres of household as a focal manifestation of traditional power arrangement is what forges violence and subsequent silence greatly intertwined with psychological torture. In both Okonkwo's and Kiguunda's historical reminiscences of colonial and tribal wars, manly brave made compromises, power conquests and bloodshed in their storytelling; there's no location or place for feminine contribution except femininity and womanhood to be reduced to ornaments of masculinity. During the epochs of the Kenyan guerrilla war of Mau Mau and British soldiers, feminine contribution is disregarded during this wars of liberation for Kenya. More-so, Okonkwo's son during his father's storytelling of bloodsheds and wars, his interests is narrowed in analogy to the stories of animals; tortoise and birds captivated his interests more than his father's. Okonkwo's violence does not serve the effective purpose of security and safety over his family but on the contrary, his overpraised posited masculine traditional violence and internal silence in turn affects his family and he's the perpetrator of the victimisation.

Thus, we strongly argue that violence and silence is pedagogical, and maintained by culture, which is pro-masculine tradition, and thus, reduces women to subalterns of men, objects, and commodities to satisfy and endure patriarchy for generations and generations to come. In the characters' representation of culture and religion, the reader is presented with an opportunity to learn the gendered subjectivity of natural superior masculinity over inferior femininity. And to internalise that in any patriarchal society, women are alienated and subaltern class while men are but first class and the determining figures of the society and its future. The ultimate failure of a man is the downfall of his family regardless and society in general. The cultural and psychological alienation, violence and silence is ostentatiously suffered by women who defies the set conformism to patriarchal norms and tradition. The suppression of feminine voice to ensure the rationality of masculinity, as demonstrated and witnessed in *The Joys of Motherhood*, the protagonist Nnu Ego is tormented and traumatised by her family, in particular her father for her failure to bear a child for her husband within a given and preferred time period of twelve months and her marriage's failure is blamed on her; a marriage which she was psychologically abused and vilified in. The silenced disappointment in her father eats her to the core in silence as well as she ends up being arranged into a marriage with her modern husband working as a houseboy in white metropolis, what a shaming and undignified marriage she's in. More-so, the failure of her marriage and the ability to bear child is as the results of the traditional sacrifice made during the burial of senior royal wife whence an innocent woman is murdered as a symbol of ritual. The ritual which haunts the life of Nnu Ego. The society did not have much care on the impacts of these miseries on woman.

This section dwelled on the scrutiny and discussion of imbalances of gendered representations and roles in African literature and the broader African patriarchal society, and how patriarchy and masculinity as the superstructures of culture and religion detrimentally affects the characters. It further scrutinised the extends and effects how in Okonkwo's family and psychological torture, silence and alienation in Kiguunda, patriarchy which greatly inflicts gendered traditional alienation, violence, silence, and psychological torture as the reflections of conundrums affects characters in African literature representation, and which cannot be either be overlooked and sacked with an ease contempt. It is pragmatic and truer that through the culture and religion of patriarchy of the supernatural male heroism and domination, the masculine violence and violent patriarchal language of male characters and to some extent, female characters enforces silence and psychological torture. Herein, readers are able to learn a lot about the operational nature of patriarchy within the household penury of freedom which greatly and explicitly turns into a metaphor of totalitarianism and/or dictatorship.



### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In the analysis and examination of gendered representations in the two contextual texts herein through female characters. It was juxtaposed and discussed that the masculine tradition and patriarchy treat woman issue as an isolated phenomenon outside the cultural and religious mode of production. Through silence, the study discussed that the male silence; hubris and hamartia, men are victimised objects of their perpetrated and perpetuated violence in their families which they're expected to serve as forefronts safety and security of. These violence breaks the man with an understanding that a man in the agrarian patriarchal Africa, a man is his family. Female characters are victims of this masculine violent tradition with their voice under supervised suppression by culture and religion. Violence on female characters is attributed by sanctions of voicelessness as the study greatly demonstrated. Thus, silence is a potent weapon of violence and a shield from violence! In the application of violence, the instigator and inflictor of the violence is thus in return as victim of the violence thereof. Therefore, the study's suggestion that the menace of patriarchy through violence are felt and affects the entire mankind. Generally, as the study postulate, patriarchy is a representative force and approver of violence and marginality on women in their households/families and the entire society.

The social roles and responsibilities of characters within the cultural and religious mode of production, which is pro-masculinity, thus reduces women to alienated beings, subalterns, objects, and commodities whose humanity is naturally entangled into insoluble marriage of a man's being. Within the framework of power relations, a woman is a secondary and second-class citizen, a neophyte of bravery to make contribution to wars. Woman are depicted as chattel of their husbands and husbands, and generally the patriarchal culture with no premarital sexual freedom but their matriarchal proclivities. The reader is thus learning that a woman in the African patriarchy is but ornament and frill of masculinity and her mattering role, although camouflaged in the representation of the literary works herein, is the natural reproduction for manly social exaltation, being and pride. Any woman's failure to execute that must be responded to with cultural human and psychological alienation.

### **Recommendations for Further Studies**

This study has critiqued the gendered representation and roles under the patriarchal Africa within its cultural and religious mode of production in African literature with the necessitated and selected two texts which the study was centralised upon. It has demonstrated the gender imbalances, polarisation, alienation, violence and psychological torture and objectification within the power relations and their dire sweeping implications on women and the broader society under the pro-masculine mode of production. A further study can be conducted on the representation of culture, gender, and colonialism. And again, another study can be conducted the effective and apt representation of class, race, culture, and gender in African literature.

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