

**NARRATING GENDER HETERODOXIES: A NEW HISTORICIST ANALYSIS  
OF SELECTED NOVELS BY AFRICAN WOMEN**

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**DECLARATION**

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university or any other award.

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**DEDICATION**

For Velesi

My beloved Mum

Who literally sold her planting seeds

To plant education seeds in me.

Here is

The tree

Mummy,

That you

Planted.

It has borne fruits.

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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis analyses generational transmutations among women characters in four novels by African women writers whose temporal setting is a trajectory of a century. The transmutations have taken place within the three major African epochs mainly; pre-colonial, colonial, postcolonial and contemporary Africa with regards to African women. The study is based on the reasoning that the African women writers' presentation of women characters through several generations in the same novel resonates with what is happening outside the fictional Africa. The study uses New Historicist Literary Theory and Feminism specifically African Feminism strand. Using cross-sectional textual analysis, the study examines *The River and the Source* by Margaret Ogola from Kenya, *Kintu* by Jennifer Makumbi from Uganda, *Threads of Gold Beads* by Nike Campell-Fatoki's from Nigeria and *Ancestor Stones* by Aminata Forna's from Sierra Leone. The premise of the cross-sectional analysis is that the four generations of women characters represented in each of the four novels by authors from different African countries is a representative of what is happening in Africa regarding women's successive gain of emancipation from patriarchy which is in line with the changing world. Consequently, the basis of choices of the four novels is threefold; novels with four generations of women characters, novels written by contemporary African women, and novels that are historical in nature. The main objective is to demonstrate how women's position in the society has changed from that of a subjugated victim of patriarchy during the pre-colonial time to that of empowered members of the society enjoying a considerable amount of inclusivity, equality and equity in contemporary time. The study concludes that interplay of different factors including Westernization in form of formal education and religion has, to a greater extent, diluted the structures used by patriarchy to subjugate women. The contemporary African woman is free to make career choices, make decisions on her marriage life, and has defeated the proclivity for male gender. In view of this observation, the study argues that, the journey towards gradual inclusivity of women into important spheres of life is better told by African women writers since they present a true picture of the situation of women across time as opposed to their male counterparts who tend to incline towards patriarchal ideologies hence misrepresenting women in their writing. Thus gender heterodoxies that characterize some pre-colonial African women gain traction gradually climaxing into a largely liberated contemporary African woman.

## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS**

### **Pre-colonial women**

The study employed this phrase to refer to women characters in the first generation who did not go through formal education

### **Patriarch**

The term in this study depicts those men who are either married to or are fathers of the first generation women. They are the co-founders of the families being analyzed here

### **Metaphorical Death**

This concept refers to incapacitation of men who are pitted against their female counterparts through either sickness or celibacy. Such men appear to lose their traditional position as the ones responsible for continuation of their fathers' lineage

### **Gender Heterodoxies**

Gender-based opinions or doctrines at variance with established and accepted ones as expressed by the characters.

### **Phallocentrism/Androcentricism**

Unjustified elevation of men at the expense of women in the main spheres of life informed by preference for males over their female counterparts and dictates of gender

### **Gender**

This study employs the term gender in a dynamic sense, borrowing from Wallach Scot that; Relations between the sexes are a primary aspect of social organization..., that the term of male and female identities are in large part culturally determined; and that differences between the sexes constitute, and are constituted by hierarchical social structure

### **Matriarch**

The term in this study depicts those women who are either married to or are mothers of the first men's generation. They are the co-founders of the families being analyzed here

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**CONCEPTUALIZATION OF AFRICAN LITERARY CANON AND GENDER**  
**HETERODOXIES**

O, ye daughters of Africa, awake! awake! arise! no longer sleep nor slumber, but distinguish yourselves. Show forth to the world that ye are endowed with noble and exalted faculties.

(Maria W. Steward. First Black Woman Political writer, 1831)

African Literary Canon has tended to lean towards male authors who have not been very keen with articulating issues that exclusively concern women. Whenever women characters are brought into focus, more often than not, they are not offered a platform to grow and nurture another stronger generation rather in most cases they end up presenting female characters who reflect the temporal setting at the time. Since the time when African literature existed in oral form up to Chinua Achebe's authorship, considered to have fathered Anglophone African literature, to Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Elechi Amadi and latter day male writers such as Ben Okri, patriarchy has mainly guided the concerns of male writers with little effort to address the need for women empowerment. In line with this observation, Justine Bakuuro in her article "The Monster in Patriarchy: A Thematic Review of Novels of Three Female African Writers" argues that "Women have been discriminated against in terms of place in society and fundamental human rights in the history of man" (28). Bakuuro goes ahead to elucidate how the same discrimination has found its place in writing by men which is "full of patriarchal inclination" (29). Thus women's writing, among other things, tries to remedy this discrimination.

It is against the back drop of this exclusionism that women started to write about issues that exclusively concern them. African women authorship started with early writers such as Grace Ogot, Flora Nwapa, Ama Ata Aidoo among others. Their effort was to demystify their position in the cosmos of male domination. Since these female writers started writing, many more authors have emerged with complex thematic concerns, diction and style of narration. Among the complex styles is packaging several generations of women within the same text in order to demonstrate the dynamism of women roles and chores especially as seen from their (women's) social-cultural position. Consequently, the influence of women authorship has brought in strong sentiments that maybe considered to be heterodoxical in relation to what men authors had made to be considered orthodoxical. Analysis of these heterodoxical women characters, therefore, becomes necessary in order to establish the changes that have taken place among African women over a long period of time within which the novels are set.

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Gender studies have always been a rich repository for scholarship owing to the increasing awareness of gender imbalance. Gender antipathy, compelled by women's realization that their relegation to the periphery by men is ideological rather than biological, has prompted women to come out to challenge the instruments that men have been using to keep them away from active public life, chief among them being writing. For a long time, men have reserved for themselves the responsibility of writing, thus affording them an opportunity to present skewed views regarding women in line with their patriarchal predispositions. Consequently, African women authorship owes its origin, mainly, to the feeling that male authors have not presented the world of women candidly. (Justine Bakuuro, 28)

Male African authorship arguably fronts Chinua Achebe as the father of modern Anglophone African Literature. Female authorship, on the other hand, has bequeathed Flora Nwapa same status. Florence Stratton designates Nwapa as "the Mother of African female tradition in fiction" (80). The same sentiments are expressed by Susan Andrade who considers Nwapa's novel, *Efuru*, to be "[the] first published novel by an African woman that inaugurates an African women's literary history" (97). From East Africa, Grace Ogot has been given prominence as an equally important woman writer with Bernth Lindfors, at one point, describing her as "the best known female writer" (interview, 57). Thus these two women can be considered to be among the pioneer African women writers from West and East Africa regions respectively.

Pioneer women writers and their successors came out to challenge styles and themes that men used to represent them. A major style among the male literary authors is embodying Africa in the figure of a woman, a style adopted by the likes of Léopold Sédar Senghor, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, among others and which Stratton finds to be demeaning to female fraternity (39). Similarly, McLuskie and Innes consider the representation of African women by male writers to be in tandem with the colonizers' mythologization of Africa as the Other, as Female, as treacherous and seductive (4). Such sentiments regarding women have resulted into some sort of discomfort between the two genders. Women, therefore, chose to tell their own story.

African women writers have tended to be preoccupied with what can be summed up as the world of women, the major theme being their own experiences with patriarchal tendencies and how to assert their position to counter its insolence. Most texts by women, therefore, offer self-images, patterns of self-analysis and general insights into women situations ignored by the male authors. Ama Ata Aidoo submits that "Women writers write about women because when (they) wake up in the morning and look in the mirror (they) see women" (163). The same sentiments are echoed by Toril Moi who posits that "female writers bring into focus their femaleness/femininity in their narratives and in doing so highlight power differences between men and women" (112). Consequently, women writers strive to highlight predominantly male aspects of life such as politics, economy, history, the social fabric and the psychological set up that has excluded women for a long time. Women critics started being attracted to creative works authored by fellow women

because they felt, hitherto, that their male counterparts had always romanticized patriarchy both in their fiction and criticism. This viewpoint is supported by Jerome Doga that:

[T]he male dominated literary tradition; many depictions of African women are reductive – perpetuating popular myths of female subordination. Female characters in male-authored works are rarely granted primary stature- their roles often trivialized to varying degrees- and they are depicted as silent and submissive in nature, remaining absent from the public sphere (137).

From the assertion above, it becomes clear that the depiction of African women by male writers is through or with the lenses of an unpleasant images and or portraits that stifle their voices and aspirations. In order to balance the negative feature associated with African women, some contemporary female writers came out to write their own fiction that “breaks the silence” associated with them as others use feminism to attack from another front.

One of the major functions played by women’s fiction is the need to highlight the notion of women subjugation and to advance diverse methods they use to surmount it. The pace set by pioneer African women writers already mentioned has been furthered by Mariama Ba, Veronique Tadjo, and Ama Atta Aidoo from West Africa; Rebeka Njau, Elvania Zirimu, Rose Mbowa, Jane Bakaluba, Ayeta Wangusa and Oludhe Macgoye, from East Africa; Besie Head and Nadine Gordimer, from Southern Africa; and Nawal El Saadawi from Northern Africa, to mention but a few.

Further, African women writers, more so those who have published their works between the late 90s and the present have augmented African women writers with their

works. Among the prominent ones are: Leila Aboulela, Yvonne Owuor, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Cristina Ali Farah, among many others. Most of these modern-day women writers have tended to demonstrate that patriarchy has been subdued and there has emerged a contemporary sophisticated woman who has freedom to roam the world without being dogged by a male figure. To effectively represent the subduing of patriarchy, African women writers have continued to write from different platforms their diverse settings include: African women writers in the Diaspora who opt to set their works in their country of origin. For instance Jeniffer Makumbi teaches creative writing in Lancaster University but the setting of her novel, *Kintu*, is based on the history of Uganda, her country of origin. There are those who had travelled abroad for engagements such as studies or to seek greener pastures and once they come home, they set their works based on their experiences abroad. An example of such an author is Aminatta Forna who comes back home to interview her aunts before writing her novel, *Ancestor Stones*. There are also those writers who have been at home all through and choose to set and draw literary materials from within their countries. Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source* is an apt example of such a work of art. The exploration of diverse settings has offered women writers a podium within which they have managed to front issues relevant to and exclusively concerning women.

To handle the ever contentious subject of feminism, women writers bent on representing female gender realistically have adopted varying approaches. One such an approach is to fictionally trace several generations of women characters over several a long period of time within the same book which offers an avenue for fictitious women

characters to depict the reality in the ever changing Africa. Such delineation by African women authors intertwines the history of Africa with that of the transition from victimhood to gradual heterodoxical move towards emancipation up to what the study proposes to refer to as the contemporary sophisticated African woman.

A critical analysis of creative works by women writers which trace several generations of women in the same text, though fictional, can be read as a representation of Africa from earlier times when her women were considered voicelessness up to the contemporary African woman who has gained considerable space to have her voice heard. Indeed the representation of women across generations is a rich repository for gender scholarship capable of demonstrating how women have revolutionized themselves across time and thus the position of female gender in the current dispensation. Scholars have tended to lump women together in gender studies as they decry their misrepresentation without taking into consideration the historical underpinnings that informed their truthful representation. Reading and analyzing African women writings against history with several generations in the same work of art can be an avenue through which women concerns are better understood, an erudition that scholars have tended not to give prominence.

It is against the backdrop of the little attention accorded to the study of women generations analysis that we sampled four novels written by African women writers in which authors have adopted a similar approach, intertwining their countries' history with that of female characters and the transition from victimhood to emancipation across a time frame of close to a century. Using this criterion, this thesis narrowed down to two novels by East African writers; Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source* and Jennifer

Makumbi's *Kintu*. It also examines two novels by West African women writers; Nike Campbell-Fatoki's *Thread of Gold Beads* and Aminata Forna's *Ancestor Stones*. The texts were subjected to critical study.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The existing scholarship on writing by African women has dealt with creation of powerful women characters. Such characters tend to usurp the major spheres and thus confront intricate questions such as politics, patriarchy, psycho-social, educational, and cultural dominance. The emphasis of these studies has invariably tended to be on the limiting nature while challenging the conditions and circumstances that surround African women produced at a certain time of African changing history. Such a rigid approach to study of women writings inflict a pattern of women's representation as inherently superficial, where women writers create characters to suit the historical time in which their creative works are set. The resultant scholarship pegged on this kind of approach is one lacking in terms of systematic development of women characters across generations over several decades which is a depository for historical representation of change that has happened to women across time. The literary evidence by women, especially in novel genre, proves that some African women writers have adopted a unique style of setting their literary works across decades. This kind of setting enables the writer to present several generations of women characters within the same novel. Consequently, they undergo metamorphosis in line with the historical facts of their time. This thesis, anchored in Historicist literary theory and African feminism seeks to venture into the little utilized approach of investigating how setting works of art that cut across several decades within the same text maps women

positive change across the major epochs of African history: pre-colonial, colonial, post - colonial and contemporary. Heterodoxical women characters in the four major epochs mentioned above are examined in order to demonstrate how representation of women in literary texts has changed over time.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The study sought:

1. to analyze the attempt to victimize pre-colonial female characters by their male counterparts in the novels under study.
2. to examine the cross-generational transmutation of female characters within the long period of time covered by the four novels under study.
3. to explore the heterodoxical level of emancipation of the contemporary educated and liberated female characters in the four novels under study.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. How has patriarchy attempted to victimize the pre-colonial African woman in the novels under study?
2. How have trans-generational transmutions taken place in the female characters across the time frame within which the four novels are set?
3. How has the heterodoxical contemporary educated and liberated woman been represented in these novels?

### **1.5 Research Assumptions**

This thesis makes the following assumptions, that

1. patriarchal ideology has not always managed to victimize pre-colonial African woman.
2. there has been an immense cross-generational transmutation in the female characters within the time frames of the four novels' setting.
3. the heterodoxical contemporary educated and liberated African woman has managed to emancipate herself from the shackles of patriarchy.

### **1.6 Justification and Significance of the Study**

There exist two full-length books on the nexus between female gender and literary production in African literature, namely: Katwiwa Mule's *Women's Spaces, Women's Visions: Politics, Poetics and Resistance in African Women's Drama*, and Florence Stratton's seminal, *Contemporary African Literature and Politics of Gender*. They hold a vital place in the evolution of studies on Women Writers of modern Africa since they map a terrain that continues to attract critical interest in the field of modern African literature. These texts can be said to have been staged as corrective studies on account of patriarchy and hegemonic masculine contours unpacking the production of postcolonial literature. The two studies operate from the point that contemporary African society is laden with history skewed towards male epistemologies of arts. As a result, women representation variously appear to have denied them space to feature in the historical gender dynamism which is intertwined with African political, psycho-social, economic and humanity advancement. It is, therefore, necessary for this historical segregation to be re-examined with the aim of making it gender inclusive.

Apart from the two aforementioned seminal texts, other encyclopedic efforts that have been doing sketches of such concerns are: Daymond et.al, Sutherland-Addy and Diaw, Lihamba et.al, and Sadiqi et.al, published in 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2009 respectively. These tomes amp the terrains of literary modernities covered in terms of genre and regions of Africa. They particularly highlight how women have increasingly changed with time to emerge as probable challengers of contemporary patriarchal tendencies and how gender inclusivity has been re-imagined, re-constructed and maintained. A detailed study is hereby intended to further this agenda by specific focus on the new generation of fiction produced by writers who have followed the footsteps of pioneer African women writers. Literature review revealed that the eclectic approach and comparative design proposed is unique and it led to a genuine contribution to this important aspect of African literature in the twenty-first century. The fresh ground offered by the study in terms of selected novelists and their texts is therefore a quest after new critical horizons since it adopted new lenses hitherto not deployed to a full-length literary study of women writing since *fin de siècle*. The study offers an opportunity for re-immersion into literature of women of the past two decades who are emerging as the new voices and vistas of African women writing in the end of twentieth and beginning of twenty-first century. Their works are new and present a fertile ground for literary exegesis and new epistemological concerns informed by their fascination with the gravity of history in production of gender-based subjectivities and narrativisations.

The New historicism approach sought to accentuate criticism of how female subjecthood is not only contemporary agenda but also the sum of sustained, multifaceted

and epochal productions and counter productions of perspectives and imaginary conditions informed by chronotopical parameters embedded in both historical and cultural consciousness of the sampled fiction. The novels selected can, out of genre, be classified as historical novels, a subset of prose fiction influenced by historical subjects, allegories or consciousness. In light of the above, therefore, this study was motivated by the critical impulse to explore the emergent challenges and resilient factors that continue to generate new African women writing at the intersection between history, culture, gender and their literary sociologies.

## **1.7 Literature review**

### **Introduction**

Literature review is divided into three sections. Firstly, there is an examination of the place of African women writing in general. Secondly, there is the analysis of the four women writers whose works are being scrutinized regarding feminist aesthetics and female gender representation. Lastly, I examine collections of women writings spanning several centuries that have been done with regional history(ies) as the guiding principle.

#### **1.7.1 Gender-based Marginalization of Pioneer African Women Writers**

Lyn Innes and Caroline Rooney in their article “African Writing and Gender” juxtapose the “elite” male writers (Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Wole Soyinka and Léopold Sédar Senghor) against their female counterparts (Flora Nwapa, Ama Ata Aidoo, Grace Ogot and Buchi Emecheta). They isolate Achebe’s work and argue that, while writing back to colonialists, he seems to have created voiceless women and relegated them to the periphery consequently creating “a link between Achebe’s anti-colonial dialectic and

his representation or non-representation of the feminine, the female and the African woman” (195). They point out the motif of father/son struggle in the first two of Achebe’s novels as fathers try to impose their will to their sons with little success. The third novel features no male/female struggle while the fourth one has women characters being featured occasionally hence the critics don’t feel they are given eminence. It’s only in Achebe’s fifth novel that female gender emerges as having been given space through the female Idemili god and Beatrice.

Innes and Rooney contrast the male writers’ representation of women in general and Achebe in particular by examining Flora Nwapa’s works. Flora Nwapa is of Achebe’s generation and comes from Eastern Nigeria just like him (Achebe). The two critics argue that, Nwapa’s concern

[...is] to write in women, to give them voice, to create the world of women and to insist that women did not hear about culture for the first time from men. Here, women, who have been given` marginal spaces in Achebe’s novels are placed at the center, and the world of men is relegated to the periphery... [..](201)

Thus the comparison of these two representatives of both genders, the “Father” and the “Mother” of African literature sets the gender debate for future writers. It is clear that by African women writers setting out at the earliest opportune time to re-write men’s narratives regarding women depiction is a trend that they (women writers) are bound to continue. The “Mother” of African literature provides a base from which future women writers spring as Min-ha Trin observers in her book *Woman, Native, Other*. She avers

The moment the insider steps out from the inside, she is no longer a mere insider (and vice versa). She necessarily looks in from outside while also looking out from the inside. Like the outsider, she steps back and records what never occurs to her the insider as being worth or in need of recording. But unlike the outsider, she also resorts to non-explicative, non-totalizing strategies that suspend meaning and resist closure... She refuses to reduce herself to the other. (217 -218)

Consequently, women writers' writing is a sort of resistance from the peripheral position that the patriarchal hegemony has been, and is still, pushing them towards. This research focused on how Nwapa's successors have come out to respond to Minh-ha's call for resistance to otherization of women in exploring women marginalization through their fictional works by presenting several generations of women across several decades.

Florence Stratton in an essay "The Mother African Trope" published in *Contemporary African Literature and Politics of Gender* offers a vital ground for appreciation of feminist aesthetics from a woman's point of view. The essay highlights two styles of writing by male writers that tend to demean women: the depiction of Africa, the continent, as a woman and the conversion of Mother Africa trope into a prostitute metaphor. The three male elite writers come to focus again: Léopold Sédar Senghor, Wole Soyinka and Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Further, Stratton traces the trend of depiction of Mother Africa to later creative writers such as David Diop, Nurrudin Farah, Mongo Beti, and Ousmane Sembéne. To Stratton, what qualifies the African texts to be of special class is that the private individual destiny of a female figure serves as an allegory of the embattled situation of the public culture and society.

The (mis)representation of African women is furthered by a metaphor employed by some male writers such as Wole Soyinka, Nuruddin Farah and Beti Mongo to depict African women as prostitutes. Stratton finds this depiction degrading to not only Africa but also women. In Farah's *From a Crooked Rib*, Mother Africa as represented by the main woman character, Ebla, ends up as a whore. She bears a child whose father she can't identify. In Soyinka's novel *Season of Anomy*, "[he] uses extra-literal context about the function of his female figures" (45). The main character, Iriyise, embodies the vision of national redemption and revision arising from the literature that has been shaped by history of colonialism and the making of the new independent nations. In Beti's *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*, Perpetua, the main character, is objectified by not only her mother but also her husband. She is married off at a tender age in order to provide wealth for her (mother's) male children. Indeed her mother favours her male children over her. Perpetua's husband degrades her by using her as a servant, then attempting to starve her into submission and finally prostituting her to a civil servant of a higher rank in order to be promoted. She dies heavily pregnant – a depiction of “abortion” of post-independence dreams of African Nations.

In Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*, Wanja, the main character conjures the postcolonial history of Kenya – the author's country of origin. Wanja's dropping out of school after she is impregnated by her father's friend, her act of disposing off the new born baby into the latrine, her subsequent life, starting as a prostitute-cum-barmaid who is exploited by middle class men, and her later adoption of the “eat or you are eaten” ideology that leads her into becoming a fully-fledged whore depicts the historical

degradation of the nation. That she becomes barren thereafter highlights the irredeemability of Kenya as a country from the grips of capitalism.

The four male writers act as samples of how their ilk have metaphorically used women to read the history(ies) of their countries. While the metaphor is an apt platform for presenting the history(ies) of their countries, it proves to be mortifying to African women. To counter the demeaning depiction, women have composed their own historical texts that use styles that are reverential to them to present the history of their countries. This study aims at interrogating texts by contemporary women writers that have historical undertones of the writer's country. The authors have created heterodoxical women characters that depict the resistance of patriarchal ideology that has been going on for a long time, sometimes unconsciously.

In another essay entitled "Flora Nwapa and the Female Novel of Development" published in *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*, Stratton decries the treatment that has been accorded female writers in general and Flora Nwapa in particular. Stratton points out two factors that have contributed to fewer literary works by women: male bias in education where the male child is preferred in provision of education - an approach that is informed by social prejudice rather than any sound foundation - and critical devaluation of women writing. Regarding the same, Stratton points out that despite Nwapa having been hailed as the mother of African female tradition in fiction after publishing *Efuru*, most critics, prominent among them Eustace Palmer and Eldred Jones, seemed to suggest that she is not in the same league with "junior" male writers. Palmer and Jones for instance place Nwapa's novel - *Efuru* - against Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine*

and dismiss *Efuru* as “[...] nothing more than idle chatter, chit-chat prittle-prattle, gossip of a woman (83)” while *The Concubine* is elevated as an accomplished text. Amadi’s hero, Ekweume is celebrated as “[...] a man with mother fixation, forced by circumstances to marry an emotionally immature girl (82)”. Further, Stratton aptly observes that a gendered naming has been applied where Nwapa is either “Flora Nwapa” or “Miss Nwapa” while Amadi is always “Elechi Amadi” or simply “Amadi” thus inscribing authorial sexual differences in their critical texts. Stratton’s essay demonstrates that women’s writing has historically been dismissed as lacking the clout to warrant a serious study since all what it offers is women gossips.

This discrimination of women as depicted by these texts offers an in-depth analysis of contemporary African women writings to not only demonstrate their worth against their male counterparts’ literary works but also how they are intertwined with the history of their (authors’) countries. This study demonstrated how African women writers create heterodoxical women characters who cut across several decades hence indicating how women have changed over the period in the primary text’s temporal setting.

In “Their New Sister: Buchi Emecheta and the Contemporary Literary Tradition,” an article published in the same book, propagates Stratton’s point of view of there being an established female tradition. Unlike the preceding African female writers, Emecheta, especially in *The Joys of Motherhood* introduces education as a liberating force in the lives of her heroines with the degree of servitude being inversely proportional to the amount of education they receive. Emecheta, more than any other woman writer preceding her, offers a challenge to the conventional male view of motherhood. She combines the progressive

representation of motherhood with realism to denounce the stereotypical representation of women hitherto perpetuated by male writers. Borrowing from this point of view, study narrowed down to formal education and qualified it as a liberating factor that emancipates women. The effect of formal education in the transition of generations of women characters represented in the texts under study cannot be naysaid as it represents historical reality. As pointed out earlier, the study used Stratton's arguments to draw comparisons between male and female authors. The same is done with restraint because while the study employs African feminist strand of literary theory, Stratton, as Katwiwa Mule observes falls into the "pitfalls of radical feminist criticism in its full regalia of arrogance, prejudice and separatism" (26). Thus even as we borrow heavily from Stratton's arguments, we try to "sieve" what relates to gender interrelationship in general even as we situate the research within the conceptual framework of New Historicist literary theory and African feminist literary theory.

Molara Ogundipe-Leslie in her essay "The Female Writer (and) her Commitment" acknowledges that gender in its biological and its social definitions in African society influences writers' discourse. However, she further notes that the criteria of critiquing women writing should also include viewing their work as artists, as women and as Africans. Consequently, Leslie calls upon critics, while analyzing women's works of art, to do justice to their art at the highest level of enterprise, to be willing to stand for their commitment to their womanhood, an endeavour that entails telling what it is to be a woman and destroying male stereotypes of women. Additionally, Leslie calls upon the critic to be aware of the writers' commitment to third world reality and status which is

governed by political consciousness, perspectives on perceptions of colonialism, and neocolonialism and how these issues shape African's lives and historical destinies.

The study borrowed heavily from Leslie's point of view with regards to recognizing that women's writing will endeavour to tell the experiences of African women while at the same time shaping historical destinies. As a point of departure, however, the study tapped from African women writers whose style rakes in several generations of women characters thus offering a rich depository for historical transition of women alongside that of their countries.

Mary Modupe-Kolawole in her article "Transcending Gender Incongruities: Rethinking Feminism and the Dynamics of Identity in Africa" is of the opinion that African feminism has been unable to make an impact in the feminism arena because of the diversities that exist between African and Western feminists. Kolawole thus roots for Womanism as an antidote for bridging the existing gap between the existing forces of feminism. To Kolawole, it is impossible for women to handle their own affairs without bringing men on board. As a point of departure, this research employed African feminism to demonstrate that historically, African women have fared well in instances where they formed a cocoon of their own to confront patriarchy as a united front conscious of challenges which are unique to the African continent.

Meyre Ivone da Silva in advancing Kolawole's ideas regarding African feminism in her article "African Feminist towards the Politics of Empowerment" opines that the exclusion of African women writers' texts in the literary criticism arena for a long time has provided a tilted understanding of the African history. Da Silva considers lack of balanced

opportunities for both genders - especially education, and more so tertiary education, which is the prerequisite for writing - to be the major reason behind the few African women writings. According to her, the opportunity accorded by the small number of African women writers who are expected to present the African woman truism has accorded men writers an opportunity to misrepresent African women through their writing. She posits: “Chinua Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart* presents voiceless women while his counterpart Léopold Sédor Senghor employs a Manichean-allegory in his Negritude poems, the man-woman allegory, which represents dominance-subjection, mind-body, subject-object” (133). According to Da Silva, other postcolonial male writers have relegated African women to the periphery, excluding even those women who fought for independence. Da Silva considers this treatment of women to be a disservice to not only women but humanity. She opines

African feminism should search for justice not only for African women but for African people. It is an inclusive movement which integrates the whole African people into the construction of the African continent. It takes into account needs and goals that arise from the particular realities of women's lives in African societies and the necessity of a reconstruction of Africa (135).

Indeed women’s texts’ inclusion into the African literary canon is not meant to serve the whims of women but to bring to light their tribulations and achievements as they co-exist with their mostly patriarchal menfolk. To achieve the goal of unearthing African history through the novel genre, the study endeavoured to engage contemporary women writing whose setting commences earlier than when women’s writing was an unknown

phenomenon. This approach provided a fertile ground for analytical approach to women transmutation from the time they were not featured in literary canon to the present.

Alexis Brooks de Vita in an article “The Circle and the Cross: Womanhood, Manhood, and Cultural Destruction in Prophetic African Literature” approaches the study of African Literature from a different angle. She isolates the cultural disintegration and interpersonal erosion inculcated into Africans in general by the colonialists. De Vita’s argument can be summed as the imposition of Western culture by colonialists which does not recognize the roles played by pre-colonial women. The mainly Western educated male writers used Western texts as their base from which they conceptualized Africa hence failing to adopt factual representation of African women in pre-historic period. This study, through women generations in the texts under study, attempted to bring out a true historical picture of African women as narrated by African women writers through analyzing the fictional women characters through whom the writers try to present a true picture of the pre-colonial period as presented in their novels.

### **1.7.2 Other Researches Focusing on Texts under Study**

Among the four texts, Margaret Ogola’s *The River and the Source* seems to have attracted a lot of criticism perhaps owing to the fact that it was published much earlier than the other three primary texts. There are several Masters theses that have dealt with Ogola’s novel among them: Ann Baraza’s “Character Portrayal by Margaret Ogola’s *The River and the Source* and *I Swear by Apollo*”; Immaculate Frodwa’s “Margaret Ogola’s imagination of Masculinities in three of her Novels”; Pamela Oloo’s, “Language and Gender: A Transivity of Choices Analysis of Margaret Ogola’s *The River and the Source*”; Wabende

Kimingichi's, "Moulding a New Image: Gender Perspective in Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source* and Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's *Coming to Birth*". Scholarly papers have also been written out of the novel among them Wanjiku Kabira and Amos Burkewyo's, "Creating Women Knowledge: A Case study of three Women Writers"; Ann Jerono's "An Examination of Catholicism as Social Vision for Women Emancipation in Post-independence Kenya in Margaret Ogola's *I Swear by Apollo* and *The River and the Source*, and Tom Odhiambo's "Writing Alternative Womanhood in Kenya in Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*."

That the novel has attracted a long list of scholars cements its space as one of the major texts in African Literature by women writers. In spite of this fact, critics have not studied this great novel in line with the generational transmutation that reflects the history of Kenya in particular and Africa. A close analysis of heterodoxical women characters in the text offers an opportunity to reveal how women have sequentially gained emancipation thus helping in reflecting on African's women's journey towards liberation from patriarchy. The study aims at filling that gap.

Tom Odhiambo elucidates *Kintu* as a novel that invites Ugandans, East Africans and Africa in general to rethink their history. In his interrogative article, "Of Kintu, the witty, sensual and provocative page turner" appearing in the Sunday nation on June, 24<sup>th</sup> 2014, the day the novel was launched in Nairobi, Odhiambo celebrates the inclusivity of all major literary spheres namely: Africanists, Feminists, neo-traditionists, nationalists and historicists. The Africanists are represented by Muganda, the father of Muntu from where all human beings descend. The feminists have the three women characters namely: Suubi

the survivor of childhood epilepsy-like disease, Bweeza the clan's philosopher and Kusi the army general on whom the clan's leadership is enthroned. The neo-traditionists have Muganda, the Cambridge-educated modern Seer who tries to rally the tribe back to its tradition while the nationalists marvel at the retelling of their empire and therefore need for them to reclaim it. Historicists will find tracing the history of Uganda, East Africa and Africa from 1750 to 2004 (the story starts in 2004 and takes the reader back and forth through flashbacks) a rich repository. This study focuses its interest in women generational metamorphosis across the centuries represented in the novel in order to identify the transitional changes that women have undergone over the centuries.

Kenneth Harrow's article entitled "Suturing two worlds: Aminata Forna's the Memory Lane" reads Aminata Forna's novel *Ancestor Stones* within the framework of historical perspective. Harrow observes that, the novel takes its readers back a few generations to Forna's family and, indeed, to the emblematic African family. This kind of writing creates a space that links the present with the past through tracing inter and intra gender relationship across time. Thus it offers a platform through which African women transformation across time can be interrogated with a view to understanding how the structures established by inevitable changes, including but not limited to those introduced by the colonialists, have helped women to diffuse patriarchal powers and offer them inclusion into familial affairs. Forna's approach in writing these gender interrelationships is proof that "contemporary African women writers who choose to write across generations do not disavow history but rather rewrite it according to social-cultural needs of the day" (13). Thus Forna's novel is a rich repository for African women erudition whose

interrogation is necessitated by the need to understand African women's pre and postcolonial position in the male dominated arena.

### **1.7.3 Full Length Books Focusing Exclusively on African Women**

Ifi Amadiume, in her book *Male Daughters, Female Husbands*, focuses on sex roles in Africa specifically her home town, Nnobi. The study is based in Idemili local government area of Anabra State in Nigeria. In an attempt to discredit the ethnographies of western views of African who have always assumed powerless African marriages, motherhood and family, Amadiume offers a realistic explication of the lives of her sisters. Amadiume arrived at her conclusions through fieldwork, interviewing and helping her people of Nnobi to re-write their own history, especially from women's point of view. Amadiume points out that Igbo women were the first in Africa to gain attention in the history of anthropological literature when they participated in peaceful and later violent mass demonstrations, riots and finally open war with British Colonial government in 1929. Amadiume takes particular interest in the structure of the Igbo people and how it worked. To achieve this goal, Amadiume divides her study into four sections namely, Pre-1900, Pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial sections. The study demonstrates that, during pre-1900 period, there were powerful women who were even allowed to marry their own wives and own property. In the absence of a boy child in the family, they could be allowed to inherit their father's property. In post-1900 when the Igbo hinterland was invaded by the British, the well-established indigenous institutions were suppressed, Christianity and Western-style education imposed and polity introduced. Later interactions with colonizers through colonial conquest, according to Amadiume, brought with them Western concepts,

linked ideologies and cultures that continued to water down the effects of the Nnobi women over the years. Amadiume's overall argument is that, the pre-colonial Igbo people in particular were more powerful than the post-colonial ones. Western culture and ideologies destroyed the established cultures that could allow women to become "male daughters" and reduce men, in some circumstances to "female husbands" when traditions allowed them to take over full control of their family.

Our research, while agreeing with Amadiume's argument that indeed there were powerful women who possess heterodoxical characteristics take a slightly different trajectory from the one taken by Amadiume. The research relies on data from historical novels from different parts of African to examine the gradual transmutation of women in line with the changes brought about by Western "civilization". It analyses four generations of women from the four texts categorizing them into pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial, and contemporary African women. The analysis of these characters shows a changing trend where women from other parts of Africa whose position was not well defined in the pre-colonial period gradually gain definable power and inclusion into major spheres of life.

Sadiq et al in their book *Women African Writers from Northern Africa* have concentrated on issues that are specific to Northern African women. The book draws from the linguistic diversity of the region and utilizes the advantage of existence of literacy in the early African civilizations to enable it use collections dating from as early as 4<sup>th</sup> century. There is an attempt to reconcile Arabo-Islamic culture with feminist consciousness spanning over many centuries. The concerns raised therein are thus entwined with North African history owing to mimetic nature of literature. This research,

while acknowledging that historical concerns by women have been put into focus before, endeavoured to interrogate the changes that women from West and East Africa have undergone across several decades as presented by later day African women writers.

Another full-length book which is specific to women's concerns is Esi Sutherland-Addy et al's *Women Writing Africa (West Africa and the Sahel)*. Interdisciplinary in nature, the book presents the reader with an overview of the region's history and social context presented in form of fiction, interviews, oral literature, and historical texts. The text illuminates the experiences of African women even as it concentrates on specific historical events and aspects of women's lives from 13<sup>th</sup> century to the present. Consequently, the book highlights the prejudices and stereotypes that have dogged Africa and African women for a long time. With the negative stereotypical aspects with regards to African women in mind, the authors offer an avenue through which women's lives can be analyzed using books written by them. Our research raked in the aspect of interrogating women's own words presented in novel mode. The focus was, however, on East and West African women with regards to changes that have occurred across history with creation of the heterodoxical women characters by the women writers that the study focuses on.

From Eastern Region, there exists a full length book by Amandina Lihamba et al: *Women Writing Africa (The Eastern Region)*. The book's collection is inter-generic and inter-religious. Its collection covers a wide range of settings; from (a) 1890 Christian hymn to a 1711 Muslim letter up to recent lectures of the 2004 Nobel Prize winner – Wangari Maathai. The concerns include Motherhood, education, religion, workforce participation widow's rights, prostitution, circumcision, and rebellions examined in an array of genres

such as prose fiction, poetry, epistles, oral histories, speeches and other historical documents spanning three decades. This study stuck to novel genre in examining historical changes inherent in women fraternity as presented by women writers in the four novels from both East and West Africa.

From Southern Region, J.M. Daymond et al in their book *Women Writing Africa (the Southern Region)* offers an in-depth interrogation of issues that map diverse and extraordinary landscape of African women's oral and written literatures. The book revolutionizes the understanding of African women's literary and cultural production with settings ranging from the mid nineteenth century to the present. Its multi-generic nature provides a rich repository for analysis of that which pertains to women. The sub-genres included in the book are: communal songs, letters, diaries, political petitions, court records, poems, essays and fiction. This collection of diverse women writings provides a vivid, heretofore largely invisible, picture of African women's lives. Women's experiences of cruelty from colonialism, wars and patriarchy are clearly demonstrated. The study used women's concerns captured in these books and expanded them with an aim of interrogating how women and their concerns have changed across centuries.

### **1.8 The Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

The research delimited itself to four novels by four African women authors from East and West Africa. These are: Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*, Jennifer Makumbi's *Kintu*, Adenike Campbell-Fatoki's *Thread of Gold Beads* and Aminatta Forna's *Ancestor Stone's*. Though the authors have written other fictional texts, the reason

behind choosing these four books is that women characters cut across several generations and their gradual change across time is intertwined with their countries' history.

Margaret Ogola's novel *The River and the Source* employs fiction intertwined with historical reality to present four generations of women, with a setting in Nyanza-Western region of Kenya and later Nakuru, Nairobi and Murang'a from where the generations spread to other parts of the country. It is, thus, a platform on which transmutation of Kenyan women can be evaluated. Its fusion of fiction with Kenyan history spanning over a century also makes it an ideal text.

Jennifer Makumbi's *Kintu* merges fiction with history to present four generations of women from Baganda Kingdom and to a large extent Uganda. It affords the study an opportunity to explore the significant changes that women undergo across the period of its setting. The two novels aptly represent the East African region.

Adenike Campbell-Fatoki's novel *Thread of Gold Beads* though fictional taps on historical fact of existence of Danhomè kingdom in the present day Republic of Benin to present several generations of women. Set in West Africa, it takes the study outside East Africa and affords it an opportunity to explore the divergence and dynamism of women in different settings by authors from a different backgrounds and cultures. It afforded the research an opportunity to review the diversity of women as characters with the aim of finding out whether the historical representation cuts across regions.

Aminatta Forna's novel *Ancestor Stone*, set across both pre and post war Sierra Leone, revolves around four women with whom the narrator interacts and learns about the history of her country. The novel strengthened the West African's sojourn to bump up the research

on the transformation of women characters across history. Being a recent publication by a West African woman author, it will provide a platform for the research to explore the representation of women characters across generations in West Africa. The four novels from different regions provided a reflection of African successive historical changes regarding women world.

### **1.9 Theoretical Framework**

The study employed New Historicism Literary theory complemented by Feminism, specifically African Feminism strand. New Historicism Literary theory is built on ideas of Stephen Greenblatt. Greenblatt argues that we define ourselves in relation to what we are not, and thus we “otherise” what we are not by demonizing and objectifying them. We view the “others” as disruptive, foreign and perhaps mad but they are there as the evidence of our own power. The major tenet of the theory is that since the historian contextualizes historical texts in many discourses of a culture, so the critic interprets literary texts by viewing them as part of the same interchange. A work of literature is no longer read as an autonomous entity (Greenblatt, 167). Despite being ignored, scorned, or disapproved or in other words silenced, and without an awareness of them, they are there and without them one cannot understand the power structure itself.

The theorists make assertion that all documents are social documents and thus they both reflect and affect the world that produces them. Thus the theory accepts a new understanding of what a text is instead of assuming that it is a static, reflective artifact of definable culture. This approach treats literature as a participant in a dynamic, changeable culture. The potential for change is important because it means literature has a role to play

in societal reformations and, therefore, powerbases can be restructured and the marginalized recognized. In line with the above, the critic accepts the interrelatedness of all human activities, making it necessary to examine how all discourses, ones within a text as well as those that are introduced by the reader, affect the interpretation of literature. It leads to the acceptance that what is deemed acceptable is not the same in all eras; it becomes necessary for the reader to admit the prejudices that have been generated by his/her own culture. This theory was used to analyze the texts through reading them with a view to identifying power structures that existed between the two genders in the first generation presented in the texts when women were, arguably, submissive.

Further, the study utilized the perspective taken by New historicists that texts are not static rather they are participants in a dynamic changeable culture. Consequently, the study analyzed the texts with a view to bringing out the modifications that have taken place within the two genders across time as reflected by the generations in the texts through introduction of heterodoxical women characters in the texts who seem to challenge the patriarchal dominance. The same was done alongside the factual history of the author's countries of origin.

New historicist literary theory was complemented by feminist literary theory which, according to Rosanne Kennedy, is a critical form of knowledge which analyses the role that literary forms and practices, together with the discourses of literary criticism and theory, play in perpetuating or challenging hierarchies of gender, class and sexuality (306). Feminism is, therefore, the belief in and fight for full social, economic, and political equality for women. Feminism arose to challenge Western traditions that restricted the

rights of women. It, however, gained global manifestations and variations with other parts of the world joining in the fight for women liberation.

Several strands and approaches exist within the framework of feminist literary theory. Most of them, as Barton and Hudson posits “are allied by their critical analysis of patriarchal and phallogentric institutions and practices, and their interest in promoting women’s issues and concerns” (70). There are four main types of feminism: Liberal feminism, Radical feminism, Marxist and Socialist feminism. Liberal feminism tries to work within the structures of the society with the aim of integrating women into the society and making it more responsive to women’s rights. It, therefore, does not challenge the system or ideology behind women’s oppression. Radical feminism is the opposite of Liberal feminism. It considers patriarchy and sexism as the main causes of women’s oppression. It seeks to understand the main roots of women subjugation in order to defeat them at race, age and cultural levels. Marxist and socialist feminism attribute women’s oppression primarily to the capitalist economic system where global corporate power prevails. It views the class system that characterizes the Marxist as the main contributing factor to women’s subjugation.

Other more recent categorizations include: Eco-feminism which views patriarchy and its focus on control and domination as of women as not only harmful to women but also to Mother Nature. Eco-feminists, therefore, consider their attainment of power which is linked to political, economical, social and cultural as being beneficial to both genders. Its main principle is that, there should not exist any kind of discrimination and domination. It

emphasizes the importance of the interrelationship between humans, non-humans and the earth. To eco-feminists, earth and life form are considered sacred and must be preserved

African feminism strand, which the study utilizes, theorizes that the general feminism tends to exclude the experiences of continental African woman. Feminism, which is anchored in Western perceptions, seems to exclude particular issues faced by the African women at the intersection of both their blackness and their womanhood.

Hazel Carby in her essay “White Women Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood” notes that, while white feminism has been considered as the normative experience of all women, feminism cannot afford to erase Africa or African women from feminist theory or feminist advocacy, because as the Mother Continent of humanity, the narratives and experiences of Africa’s women will always be relevant. Such exclusion is bound to repress the African woman’s historical trajectory and specific experience. African feminism, therefore, voices the realities of women from varying African countries while bearing in mind that women’s needs, reality, oppression and empowerment can best be effectively addressed if women have an inclusive and accommodating understanding of the generic and more general issues and the peculiarities and group attitude to self-definition as women.

Regarding the same, Naomi Nkealah in her essay “West African Feminism and Their Challenges” opines that African feminism “strives to create a new, liberal, productive and self-reliant African woman within the heterogeneous cultures of Africa” (66). Feminism in Africa can, thus, be said to be aimed at modifying culture as it affects women in different societies. While bearing in mind that Africa is not monolithic and thus there exists

differences ethnically, regionally, politically and in religion which work to impact on how women conceptualize what feminism and freedom looks like to them, the fact that African women's challenges which results, particularly, from both patriarchy and neo-colonialism cut across the continent make it possible to group African women together and isolate challenges that cut across all the regions in the continent.

The common challenges prompt women to form a social group that shares common interests that override differences between them hence they struggle as African women to overthrow patriarchy. The fundamental aim is to change gender relations with view to eliminating male power or male values in favour of women values. This strand of feminism was helpful in reading the texts under study, specifically to analyze how women characters' generations born across centuries have organized and supported each other as African women to challenge the patriarchal powers and the successive achievements gained across the centuries in this cause up to the standpoint of the contemporary woman.

## **1.10 Methodology**

### **1.10.1 Research Design**

This research is qualitative in nature and it gives an in-depth examination of the given texts leading to conclusions arising from them. C. R. Kothari describes qualitative research as that which concerns itself with qualitative phenomenon i.e, phenomena of quality or kind (63) and thus the research was aimed at discovering underlying motives and desires. Mugenda and Mugenda posit that in a research applying qualitative methodological principles and procedures, information is obtained from the source without intentionally

manipulating the environment. Thus the key assumption of the qualitative research is that reality can exist in multiple ways and can be understood in different ways.

This study is descriptive in nature as it states situations, as viewed in the text, as they were, owing to the fact that a researcher has no control over variables; they can only report what has happened or is happening. Descriptive research also includes attempts by researchers to discover causes even when they cannot control the variables.

### **1.10.1 Data Collection**

This research was a textual study in which data for analysis was collected from primary texts: selected contemporary novels authored by African women. The novels were read with the express aim of establishing how different women characters have been presented in different generations inherent in the texts and how they have changed to align themselves with historical facts in their countries of origin in particular and Africa in general.

The second source of data was literature dealing with criticism of both women and men authorship in Africa and the way these writers have depicted women characters at different points in history. This study employed a qualitative research design. It used the paradigm that our knowledge of reality, including human action, is a social construction and therefore multiple meanings must be accommodated. The study examined and interpreted how change manifests itself in the speeches, what the narrator and other characters say about women characters in study, as well as their actions across the generations. The research was mainly based on library research because of its textual nature.

### **a) Primary Data**

#### **Sampling**

Purposive sampling was used to arrive at the sources of primary data which are Margaret Ogola's novel *The River and the Source*, Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's *Kintu*, Adenike Campbell-Fatoki's *Thread of Gold Beads*, and Aminatta Forna's *Ancestor Stone's*. Other novels the four writers as well as other African women writers were sampled. The criterion used to choose the four authors is; firstly the writers are all African women writers and secondly, the writers have employed a similar style of packaging several women generations in the same text.

Data was derived through analysis of the characters' interactions, speeches, events and authorial intrusions by the authors pitting successive generations of women against history in order to establish whether there are changes that have occurred within female fraternity and their standpoint. Motifs such as the senior wife position in pre-colonial period, the effects of resistance to wars preceding colonization, the transition from informal to formal education and how it affected women's social lives, the gradual emancipation of women characters upon acquisition of formal education, and the inclusion of women in positions initially earmarked for men came in handy in this research.

### **b) Secondary Data**

Primary data was enriched with secondary data. The secondary data comprises of relevant books with theoretical discussions on the wide range of issues centering on the (re)presentation of women in general as well as critical commentary on the primary texts.

Data was obtained from books and journals from university libraries and literature resource centers.

### **1.10.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Data analysis involved a close reading and interpretation of primary data. Content and textual analysis was employed. Content analysis enabled me to discuss and analyze motifs, metaphors and symbols that demonstrated generational change taking place within history among women sorority. Textual analyses made it possible to resolve the texts' inherent problem of open-endedness, indeterminacy and contradictoriness through reliance on the same texts' functioning as significations (Eagleton, 33).

Data from the texts was broken down into various component parts such as passages, quotations, images, symbols, defining structures of stories among others for analysis. To achieve this objective, data analysis was done in two stages. The first stage entailed reading of texts and taking notes and then interrogating the same notes within the objectives and theoretical frameworks of the study. The second stage involved concentrating on individual sections where transmutation of women characters was evident with a view to determining how women's roles had changed over a period of time and the motivation(s) (if any) behind these changes.

### **1.11 Organization of the Study**

This thesis is made up of five chapters. Chapter one introduces the thesis, demarcating the problem, specifying the objectives and capturing the limitations of the study. Also discussed in this chapter are: theoretical framework, justification of the study and methodology. In chapter two the research delves into the first objective analyzing the

spheres of life in which first generation women find themselves victimized by patriarchal indulgence.

In chapter three, we focus on how the second and third generation women have started overcoming the circumstantial victimization by patriarchal indulgence. Buoyed by both formal education and Christianity, the two generations' women start re-inventing and asserting themselves to challenge the structures that patriarchy uses to subjugate them. Chapter four looks into the gains that the fourth generation woman has brought on board regarding women emancipation. It identifies and discusses the strategies that the contemporary African women have managed to employ in order to reduce the effects of patriarchy. Formal education and taking up of professions initially meant for men comes into focus. Once women penetrate into male territory, they are able to gain inclusivity thereby joining their male counterparts in managing the societal affairs. Chapter five recaps the major features of the thesis and gives recommendations for further studies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PRE-COLONIAL AFRICAN WOMEN'S HETERODOXICAL SPACE IN THE PHALLOCENTRIC WORLD

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter instigates a brief interrogation of trends of African writing with a view to demonstrating that texts authored by African women have occupied the position of subalternized Other in African literary canon. The chapter analyses the text within the New Historicist Literary Theory tenet that Power is not confined to a single level of society rather it circulates within a culture. From a new historical perspective, no discourse can singlehandedly explain the complex cultural dynamics of social power that influence history adequately. They believe that there is no monolithic (single, unified, universal) spirit of an age, and there is no absolute explanation of history. Instead, there is a dynamic, unstable interplay among discourses which keep overlapping and competing with one another. The discourses are always “negotiating” exchanges of power at a given time. New historicism is strengthened by feminist literary theory that in a patriarchal society, the woman is marginalized, she is the ‘other’, and she’s only defined in her difference from male norms and values.

The chapter explores the four texts with the aim of demonstrating that since they are historical novels, African women writers attempt to present an honest account of historical materials that are subject to analysis in their fiction. Consequently, the pre-colonial woman character who lacks formal education is pertinently presented as being under the tight grip of the patriarchal mechanism. To validate the victimization depiction, the chapter interrogates the mythologies that the society uses to convince women that the subjugation

status they find themselves in is in line with the dictates of the society. It further unveils how the pre-colonial women characters in the texts under study in particular and Africa in general had embraced the myths without subjecting them to objective scrutiny. It also points out some of the women characters in the text who begin showing heterodox behaviour which paves way for the beginning of women emancipation. Additionally, the chapter incorporates the tribal, racial, and other wars that characterize historical happenings within Africa. It approaches wars as a metaphorical double – edged sword since in the event it breaks, women suffer twice in such circumstances – firstly, as a group that does not participate in the war hence lacks the capability to decide the destiny of its community, and secondly as major victims of war bearing in mind that the war eliminates a father, son, and/or a husband – the breadwinners of the society. Lastly, the chapter interrogates how the pre-colonial girl child has been psychologically and socially socialized into accepting the patriarchal ideology introduced to her in her formative years with the aim of making her accept the belief that she is a minor in the hierarchy of humanity.

## **2.2 (Re)-imagining the Historiography of African Literary Canon**

African literature stems from orature which precedes written literature, particularly the novel which did not exist among African artists until it was borrowed from the West when formal education was introduced to Africa. Obioma Nnaemeka in her paper “From Orality to Writing: African Women Writers and the (Re)Inscription of Womanhood” opines that in the beginning was Africa/reality/the word and the word was women’s” she goes ahead to ask a rhetorical question, “Can *one* claim reasonable knowledge of modern African women

writers without taking a measured walk in *their* mothers' gardens? (1)." Nnaemeka's sentiments reinforce the belief that women were at the forefront in ensuring oral literature, which contributed immensely in offering a foundation from which African literature sprung, was preserved.

In her introduction to the book *Women Writing Africa: West Africa and the Sahel*, Eddy Sutherland – Addy observes

Women often use their artistic talents and cultural literacy to document their daily lives and entertain themselves and their families. As Age-mates, co-wives, new wives and mothers, friends, and family members, they are vital to the region's oral literary heritage. These women return to themes that speak about their work or their relationships, or attach ontological principles, even as they also capture ordinary daily life and its trials, disappointments and joys. (13)

Evidently, women were involved in African literature at its initial stage. Among them were the specialists who held forth in the courts, sacred graves and family or guild shrines. Many would also be called to serve elite families. Other areas of daily lives were arenas for "ordinary" women who used them to voice social commentary. The centers of towns and market places, women quarters, kitchens, bedrooms, children's playgrounds, and, areas reserved for manufacturing household items lend to performances before audiences intimately familiar with the genres concerned. In such contexts, audience becomes both critic and part of particular cultural engagement (Isidore Okpewho, Diedre Badejo).

Accordingly, there can never be a holistic interrogation of African literary canon without exploring women input vis-à-vis that of the male gender towards the

intensification of oral literature since it is the oldest genre of literature since both genders have made their contributions. Any pre-colonial African literary canon that occludes women's contributions to the preservation and development of oral literature – and later written literature - ought not to be accorded the status of African literature exemplification because it is not a holistic representation of the same. Unfortunately, until much later when women started publishing their texts, it was typical for them to be marginalized from the literary arena despite their contribution in initializing African literature.

This marginalization of women involvement in literature was carried forward to written literature after Africans embraced formal education and started writing other genres of literature. Indeed Chinua Achebe is considered to be “the father of African written literature in English” owing to the fact that he was the first African to write an internationally acclaimed novel *Things Fall Apart* which was published in Britain in 1958. It did not take long for Flora Nwanzuruahu Nwapa whom Stratton considers to be “The Mother of African female tradition in fiction” (80) to have her novel, *Efuru*, published by the same publishers in 1966. The few years separating the publication of these two pioneer African novelists in English, however, created an unjustifiable gap on the attention accorded to them. This gap could be attributed to two things: the perspective from which the two authors were basing their fiction, and the historical phallogentric nature attributed to patriarchy.

While the “father” of Anglophone African literature was recreating life and traditions from a paternalistic viewpoint, the mother of African literature was, as Susan Leisure observes, “recreating life and traditions from an [Igbo] woman's viewpoint” (12). It is

interesting to note that both writers drew their fictional raw materials from the Igbo community. When criticism of the two “parents” of African literature started coming out, it is apparent that the exclusion of women from African literature continued to manifest itself. Achebe’s novel was hailed as one of the greatest African texts that would make Europeans realize that Africa had its own working structures even before they came to Africa. Owing to the fame that the first novel brought to Achebe, Doug Killam would later opine that Achebe [is] “the best known writer of fiction and possibly the best known writer of fiction from black Africa” (515).

In contrast, Nwapa’s work was dismissed by Eustace Palmer and Eldred Jones as “[...] nothing more than idle chatter, chit-chat prittle-prattle, gossip of a woman (83).” It is undeniable that the artistry exhibited by a writer depends on their creative genius and propensity to manipulate language to enable them articulate their concerns effectively. The artistic impress of the two writers may not be at the same level but seemingly, Nwapa’s work is dismissed on the basis of her concerns rather than her stylistic impression. Nwapa writes from the viewpoint of an African woman and concerns herself with subjects that pertain to the women experiences. Arguably, other than historical marginalization, gendered matters of concern that are drawn from the community from which the two pioneer writers write have no other basis for being looked upon, with those of women writers being dismissed while those of her male counterpart are celebrated. Thus the argument fronted by Palmer and Jones regarding Nwapa’s novel *Efuru* is informed by phallogentric inclinations rather than objectivity considering that male and female domains are dissimilar.

This idea of looking down upon women writing reverberates with Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie's observation that gender in its biological and social definitions in African society influences writers' discourse and thus the criteria of critiquing women writing should also include viewing their work as artists, as women, and as Africans. Leslie is of the view that critics who engage themselves in the analysis of women's works of art ought to do justice to their art at the highest level of enterprise. They should demonstrate willingness to stand for their commitment to their womanhood, an endeavour that entails telling what it is to be a woman and destroying male stereotypes of women (30). This is what male critics have failed to do while comparing the "mother" and "father" of African literature.

One cannot deny that African female literary writers did not grow at the same rate as those of their male counterparts. The slower growth of women writers is anchored in Abasi Kiyimba's observation that "[b]ecause of Africa's multiple legacies – colonial, cultural, social, educational etc the list of Africa's writers has been dominated by men" (194). The male writers who had an opportunity to write texts whose concerns cut across the two genders' concerns, celebrating each gender's achievements seem to have overlooked women's accomplishments in their writing. Mostly as Mule Katwiwa observes, they pre-occupied themselves with nationalism issues which were driven by men to a point of ignoring women concerns. He cogently points out that

[the] late entry of African women into the literary arena created new imperatives that they had to confront, ones that the earlier generation of writers and critics had taken for granted because of their preoccupation with the nationalist sentiment and

the question of new roles for women for whom the recent social and economic dispensation gestured towards a blurring gender boundaries (2).

Giving male writers' works prominence over and above those of their female counterparts is not rooted in any verifiable reason other than the historical marginalization of women. The time separating women's writing debut from their male counterparts is considerably short. After the "father" of African literature was unveiled, the "mother" was also unveiled within a short period of time. Meyre Ivone da Silva decries this indefensible anomaly...“(f)or a long time African women writers have been invisible from what is characterized today as African literature or Postcolonial literature. Their works were excluded from African literary criticism or the African literary canon” (129).

There seems to have been a well calculated move to have male-oriented criticism of African literature, which for a long time, has given a skewed representation of African literature in the arena because of the exclusion of women's texts. African concerns have been treated as exclusively male product while in real sense the same concerns both genders in equal measure. Regarding this exclusion, Lloyd Brown points out that “the women writers of Africa are the other voices, the unheard voices rarely discussed and seldom accorded space in the repetitive anthologies and predictable male-oriented studies in the field” (3).

The question that begs to be answered is: what contributed to the marginalization of women from the African literary canon? The answer to this question is twofold. Firstly, the peripheral place for women observed above is historical with everything patriarchal being considered as main and that which is related to women being accorded the status of the

“Other”. Secondly, the truism in African history is that women did not have the same educational opportunities as their male counterparts. Consequently, fewer acquired university level education which was to a large extent a prerequisite for writers to write in European languages. The African women’s limited access to formal education is interconnected to forms of oppression: to the racism of colonialism and to indigenous and foreign structures of domination. Thus colonial policies combined with indigenous attitudes contribute to denying African women equal opportunities to access formal education (Carole Davies, 5). This imbalance has yielded a low number of women writers as compared to their male counterparts. Not even did the Postcolonial university, consciously, try to improve this matter as observed by Amina Mama

Although the postcolonial universities did not exclude women, they remained exclusive male-dominated institutions to which only a few women were able to gain access for many decades. I would suggest we include the likes of Funmilayo Ransome Kuti and Margaret Ekpo of Nigeria, Constance Agatha Cummings – John (granddaughter of Africanus Horton), as well as considering the political thought of grassroots activists like Bibi Titi of Tanzania or Gambo Sawaba of Nigeria, who did not have formal education but held and disseminated radical ideas across a range of subjects, including the rights of women. (11)

Of major concern for women is that with limited number of them engaging in writing, women’s concerns was left to be narrated by men who have limited understanding of the same. Da Silva points out correctly that

African women's voices have been unheard, thus the images of African women in pre-colonial as well as colonial periods were mostly presented by African men who were in charge to write the African literature and through patriarchal view tell their female counterparts' experience. (130)

Undeniably, the similarities between both genders are minute especially because there seems to exist an antagonistic relationship as women struggle to unshackle themselves from the clench of patriarchy while men work hard to tighten the clasp. It is, therefore, obvious that the female experiences as narrated by male writers do not honestly depict women's subjects.

Again, male writers whose texts have been elevated have given prominence mostly to male characters at the expense of female ones. Citing Achebe, the "father" of Anglophone African literature as an example, I am in agreement with Da Silva's observation that Achebe's major preoccupation was;

[to] tell the consequences of imperialism, from the disempowered perspective; in this case, the African people. Achebe's hope was to restore the African people's dignity through the recreation of pre-colonial, social, political, and religious institutions. (130)

This noble cause, according to Stratton, did not materialize at least in so far as a holistic depiction of Africa that is accommodative to both genders is concerned. Achebe only succeeded in the restoration of the African man's dignity since he did not have the same intention with the African woman.

To counter this perceived exclusion, Stratton opines

One of the tasks of African women writers is to refute works like Achebe's, and start to present an alternative view of colonization and of African society, one which challenges underlying assumption that things could not fall apart for African women because they never had been and would never be together. (38)

Ideally, women had to start writing for themselves in large volumes presenting diverse subjects that entirely concern them as women if they were to achieve the target set by Stratton. However, I tend to differ with Stratton on the last part of her view that [things] could not fall apart because they were never together and *would never be together* (my emphasis). While agreeing with her view that things had never been together, from her women counterparts' historical novelistic genre writing, it is evident that things are, to a greater extent, together now in terms of gender inclusivity that has been hailed by writers as a great step for women in the twentieth century (23).

African women's writers in later years have followed the footsteps set by Nwapa and started producing large volumes of literature with themes that entirely concern women's realms. The most featured concerns are those that aim at countering the male historical dominance in all spheres of life. Ama Ata Aidoo is of the opinion that women are justified to write exclusively about themselves considering that their life is dominated by and revolves around concerns of women (164). Regarding the power differences between male and female, Toril Moi advances the idea of continuity of women writing by opining that it offers them an opportunity to bring into focus femaleness/femininity which is an avenue for dichotomizing the two genders. Moi further posits that "female writers bring into focus their femaleness/femininity in their narratives and in so doing highlight power differences

between men and women” (112). Until women started to tell their own story, it was next to impossible for men to do so meritoriously since they do not fully comprehend the women dominion.

To be able to represent their world view effectively, women writers have adopted different styles, often times different from those used by their male counterparts. One of the unique styles that they have adopted is that of presenting several generations of women characters within the same text with a view to demonstrating the changes that have taken place within a certain duration of time, including what was happening in their cocoons when they were either not in a position to write, their work had not attracted critics, or their worldview was being represented by male writers on their behalf.

This style of African women writers presenting women characters cuts across several decades or even century(ies) is a form of backdating that which had hitherto not been told regarding women. Intertwining a backdated reality of women’s concerns with the historical realities of their countries and creating heterodoxical women characters that stems from the fact that literature is mimetic in nature offers an avenue to analyze the transmutation of African women across time over the major African epochs – pre-colonial, colonial, postcolonial and contemporary.

### **2.3 Cementing Victimhood through Senior Wife Motif**

Myth has been used as the most effective tool the world over to tame and ensure human beings toe the line. The colonialists used myths, both from the Bible and anthropological research, to prove that an African is inferior to the Caucasian race. It became easy to tame the African into subjugation. In the same vein, women in general and

African women in particular have been exposed to myths that have been used by men to usurp authority over them.

Paul Zeleza, in his essay “Colonial Fictions: Memory and History in Yvonne Vera’s *Imagination*” highlights the interface between literature and history by bringing to the fore how history and literary imagination are intertwined. Zeleza opines that African history and literature share powerful deconstructive and decolonization impulses. He goes on to argue that this relationship is transcending especially because both literature and history are narrative, interpretive disciplines that offer representations of experiences, images and ideas (11). Though Zeleza’s focus is on a different context, it is indeed true that the historical novels, more than other works of fiction, are geared towards highlighting experiences and ideas of the time. The experiences, images and ideas are captured, not in isolation but rather in concomitant with the prevailing history of the setting of the texts. The same experiences, ideas, and images of any given time are encapsulated in the myths of the people whose experiences are being captured fictionally. Literature intertwines people’s experiences and myths in a bid to offer an honest depiction.

Regarding the role of literature in perpetuating cultural myths, Lionett, in the essay “Geographies of Pain, Captive Bodies and Violent Acts in the Fictions of Gayl Jones, Bessie Head and Myriam Warner-Vieyra” is of the opinion that literature can either act as a perpetuator of cultural myths or create new ones with the capability of changing the perception of the writer and the reader:

Literature as a discursive practice that encodes and transmits as well as creates ideology, is a mediating force in society: it structures our sense of the world since

narrative or stylistic conventions and plot resolutions serve to either sanction and perpetuate cultural myths or to create new mythologies that allow the writer and the reader to engage in constructive re-writing of their social contexts. (205)

In this regard, African women writers in an attempt to candidly, albeit fictionally, record the history of their communities and backdate their concerns to the time when male writers seemed to misrepresent them have incorporated myths that the institution of patriarchy has been using to assert its superiority in their writing with a view to revealing the source of their subjugation.

The African women writers in their endeavour to present an objective account of their foremothers, especially during the pre-colonial period, do not find it necessary to debunk the myths that portray the pre-colonial woman as weak, subdued, and, an affiliate of man. The same would amount to an attempt to present a skewed subjective perspective of the existing relationships of the two genders owing to the fact that in as much as there is fictionality in writers' works, the fictional works cannot be devoid of nuances from the community in which the work is set.

The African men created and mythologized a senior wife institution in a bid to demonstrate a "senior" position which women could hold. The motif of senior wife position is prevalent among both male and female creative writers whose writings incorporate pre-colonial women. The four books of interest in our study have recognized and prominently featured this mythologized position created by the male institution to make women have a sense of belonging.

Jennifer Makumbi's *Kintu* features Kintu Kidda Ppookino (governor) of Buddu province which is part of Buganda kingdom under the kingship of Kabaka Kyabaggu. Kintu Kidda is a patriarch who is forced by the prevailing circumstances surrounding marriage of twins among the Ganda ethnic group to marry twin sisters, albeit against his wish. Through a stream of consciousness, Kintu Kidda questions the wisdom of the Ganda custom that puts him into the predicament of having to keep two women in the same house

This made the Ganda wisdom of marrying female identical to the same man preposterous. It goes against their very nature, Kintu thought. Twins split because they cannot be one. Why keep them as such in life? Besides, identical men did not marry the same woman." (10)

The governor's initial aim is to marry Nnakato, the younger of the twins but he is told he must either wait for Babirye to get married or marry both. He chooses to wait. Many years pass without Babirye getting a husband. Kintu Kidda's father dies thus paving way for him to be elevated to governorship. He requests to be allowed to marry Nnakato claiming "...that as governor he was naked without a wife" (11). The twins' parents who now fear Kintu because of his power as the new governor offer Babirye first at half dowry and then for free but Kintu adamantly refuses. Unfortunately, once the parents allow him to marry Nnakato, she turns out to be barren thus complicating his options. The subjects are not used to seeing a "bachelor" governor. Under pressure, the governor agrees to take in Babirye as a conduit through which he would sire children in the strict understanding that the whole matter will remain a secret between the three people. It would be in public

domain that the biological mother of the children is Nnakato. The plan turns out to be a success

Babirye gave birth to twins. She nursed the babies until they started to run. Then she returned home to her parents. Over the years, she bailed Nnakato out four times. Each time, Babirye gave birth to identical twins. However during pregnancies, Kintu stayed away. He travelled to the capital or toured his province. (13)

Owing to the virility of siring twins the governor is christened Ssabalongo (he who sires twins) while Babirye and Nnakato are christened Nnabalongo (she who gives birth to twins). The subjects reinforce the high esteem in which they hold the couple with a saying that “A strong man may wake up late and still get to do as much as we who woke up with the birds” (13).

Polygamy catches up with Kintu as his reign continues. He marries other women for various reasons

Kintu married other women besides Nnakato. The women were brought to him as tributes: some from ambitious parents, others were daughters of fellow governors. His wives’ homes were scattered all over the province for his convenience when he toured. The families, especially in the far-flung regions were also a reminder to the local populace of his presence. *Nnakato was in charge of the wives* (my emphasis) (16).

As the senior wife in-charge of Kintu Kidida’s Mayirika (his principal residence), Nnakato is in a pivotal position to decide a variety of issues surrounding the co-wives’

lives. She decides the name which a new bride will be given, the duties to be allocated to the new brides depending on their talents – crafts women, farmers and so on.

Kintu Kidda's sojourn on Kabaka's assignments also opens an avenue for Nnakato to visit the wives to check on the children and the state of the land where they live. She gathers older children and brings them to Miyirika for instructions. Likewise, she acts as Kintu's informal spy, gathering information and the prevailing mood for him from his far away subjects.

The position of a senior wife seems to give women a feeling of elevation, respect and self-worth. But does it make them deputy designates of their patriarchs? Hanrahan and Antony's argument can be used to attempt to answer this semi – rhetorical question. They posit

[The] thing that makes the assumption of authority dangerous for women is that it feels transgressive to claim authority. Persons who have been socialized to accept subordinate status may well have internalized the view that they cannot be legitimate authorities in whatever they do, that they have no right to set themselves up as authorities. (76)

Thus Nnakato, despite the enviable position she occupies as a senior wife, does not demonstrate any attempt to arrogate the authority to herself owing to her socialization. She feels that the authority she has does not belong to her rather she can only act on behalf of her husband Kintu Kidda the patriarch. Hence she only does as directed, without any external contribution from her viewpoint. It is worth noting that despite being socialized

into believing that women occupy peripheral position Jeniffer Makumbi in this case creates an heterodoxical woman hence foreshadowing liberation for women.

The senior wife motif is also featured prominently in Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*. Owuor Kembo, just like Kintu Kidida, is a Chief of Sakwa village in his ethnic group – the Luo. Just like his counterpart, the urgency of marriage is informed by the fact that his father Kembo K'Agina had died in office prompting his eldest son to take up the reigns of chieftaincy which is hereditary. The need for a leader to have a wife is equally emphasized in the introductory speech by the old wizened man on the day they go to betroth Akoko, that

We would have come earlier had we not been mourning our chief Kembo K'Agina who died last moon, but we came as soon as we could for my nephew, Owuor Kembo, now Chief in his father's place, urgently seeks a wife. It is unthinkable for a chief to be unmarried, a situation that has arisen only because of the sudden death of his father – the young Chief himself being only twenty seasons old (19).

Among the Luo ethnic group from which the novel is set, just like among their Ganda counterparts, the leader must be married or at least should marry immediately after assuming leadership. The importance of the position that the first wife occupied is emphasized in the explanation

[...] Owuor Kembo, though not such a great chief, was wifeless and therefore, whoever he married would hold the envious position of *mikai*, the first wife, whose house would hold the center stage directly facing the gate and to whom all other wives and also her husband would defer. (19)

Akoko, unlike Nnakato, does not get the privilege of lording over other junior wives as her husband obdurately refuses to marry another wife despite the push from his mother, his wife, and the council of *Jadongo*. It is his unequivocal love for Akoko which drives him to lack interest in other women. Unfortunately, she is unable to conceive as regularly as the community deems fit.

Nike Campbell – Fatoki’s novel *Thread of Gold Beads* is set in Danhomè kingdom in Benin which was part of the larger current Nigeria. The story is told from first person point of view with Amelia the narrator introducing her grandfather king Glele on the throes of death to pave way for his son, Kondo (Gbehanzin – the great shark) to become the new king in the hereditary set up. Unlike the other two leaders *Threads of Gold Beads*, Kondo is already married to four wives when he becomes king of Danhomè. The leadership configuration in Dahome kingdom is structured in a way that allows for the king to have a sort of two deputies that must be women. They are given the titles *Kamlin* and *Kpojito*. The two are inherited from the outgoing king. The narrator expounds on the qualities that Kamlin possesses

Kamlin was one of the wives of my grandfather, Glele. She was an enigma in our land. She was tall and elegant. Her complexion was lustrously dark – the type that glistened. Her hair was woven intricately with beads down to her neck. Her eyes were shaped like a cat’s - small and slanted, the type that could see into the soul (4).

The first “deputy” is thus presented as a powerful woman who possesses great powers, including the capability to decide who occupies the throne. The inheritance of the kingdom

is being contested by Kondo and Visseگان. To demonstrate Kamlin’s power, the narrator tells her step-brother, Akaba: “Well, Kamlin is here to make sure Visseگان doesn’t win and Father becomes King.” (5) True to his words, their father is eventually crowned as King of Dahome.

The second “deputy,” just like the first one is inherited from the previous King. The narrator notes: “Every Dahome king had a female companion who ruled alongside him. Often times, the *Kpojito* was the wife of the King’s predecessor, just like Kamlin.” (6)

This is one category of women that has been elevated in Dahome kingdom. The position of senior wife is also eminent in the Kingdom. Thus there is creation of heterodoxical characters who foreshadow a future gradual attainment of women’s elevation. This is despite the attempt to suppress women even as they are assigned the aforementioned positions that are specific to Dahome Kingdom. This elevation, however, serves the purpose of mythologizing women power as being close to that of a man.

Aminata Forna’s *Ancestor Stones* features four women- aunts to the author, intertwined with the narrator’s experiences at different times of her growth. In the opening remarks by the narrator, she describes them, each with their traits, roles, and physique

Asana, daughter of Ya Namina, my grandfather’s senior wife: a magnificent hauteur flowed like river water from the mother’s veins through the daughter’s. Gentle Mary from whom foolish children ran in fright, but who braided my hair, cared for me as if I was her own and talked of the sea and the stars. Hawa, whose face wore the same expression I remembered from my childhood – of disappointment already foretold. Not even a smile to greet me. And Serah, belly

sister of my father, who spoke to me in a way no other adult ever had – as though I might one day become her equal. (9)

The senior wife motif is thus featured in this novel with Ya Namina being given the status. The narrator expounds on each of her aunts at this early moment to foreshadow what her future engagements with them would be. The audience is further informed at this early stage that the four aunts do not have husbands “[...] Not only my aunts but rather my husbandless aunts. Asana, widow. Mary, spinster. Serah, divorcee. The fate of Hawa’s husband had never been quite clear; it remained something of a mystery.” (9)

The fact that the aunts featured in this novel do not live with their husbands for various reasons sets the arena for interrogation of women writers who have been hitherto overshadowed by their male counterparts who do not pay much attention to women empowerment. The opportunity for women to write their own texts that are devoid of men’s creation offers them an opportunity to embody women’s concerns candidly. The implication of emphasizing that the narrator’s aunts are husbandless sets the pace for the future demonstration of freedom for women who opt to stay single, divorce or resist the overtures of potential inheritors after their husbands die.

That the senior wife motif cuts across all the four works is evident. There is no doubt that the position existed, and still exists in African polygamous family set up. Women writers seem to have taken it upon themselves to use the senior wife position to prefigure an heterodoxical future woman ready to challenge the dictates of patriarchy. Despite that the women characters are not fully engaged in full family leadership, the position helps them to feel part and parcel of leadership hierarchy at home. They are, however, presented

in a better way than those in literary texts authored by male writers. The Nnakato we interact with in *Kintu*, the Kpojito in *Thread in Gold Beads*, the Asana in *Ancestor Stones* and the Akoko in *The River and the Source* are distinctive elevated self as opposed to, for instance Anasi in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* who despite being "tall and strongly built with authority and looking every inch the ruler of womenfolk," the only assignment she is given is to taste palm wine ahead of her fellow women with her knee on the ground (18 – 19). This act of submission prompts Stratton to remark that:

“[...] Achebe's women are indeed (and by extension, women featured in male authors texts) 'down on one knee', if not both, before their menfolk and they are regularly making an exit, no doubt 'in their proper order', from all spaces in which power, economic or otherwise is exercised” (25).

Unlike in the texts authored by their male counterparts, the senior wives in these texts are the archetypes of the backdated women characters as per the society that is devoid of tendencies to lean towards elevation of men while women are subjugated.

Women writers are careful to capture the historical facts that the male writers could have excluded, or ignored. Their inclusion in running political affairs as is the case with Nnakato and *Kpojito* is a testimony to a society that is ready for an inclusive leadership. Despite the exceptional role played by the *Kpojito*, the Queenmothers in the political hierarchy of Danhomè, their historical position seem not to have been captured in the recorded history. Edna Bay decries the exclusion of Queensmother, the *Kpojito*, in the history of Africa. Bay points out that

Some Dahomean Queensmothers were very wealthy. For their outstanding service and loyalty, kings rewarded them with titles and gifts. They enjoyed a great amount of prestige and were extremely influential, so much that the palace in Danhomè became “the political and economic nerve center of the power” (254).

Being powerful in the leadership hierarchy, the Queensmothers, perhaps, should have featured prominently in the earlier male authored texts but they seem to be ignored for the mere reason that they are women, the powers bestowed to them by the Kings notwithstanding.

Thus Danhomè kingdom seems to defy the early historical order in which women’s participation in socio-political arena was checked. They seem to have an edge over and above their colleagues in other African jurisdictions. But it is worth noting that their elevation seems to have been not been captured in the male authorship that has been considered as the canonical representation of African literature. For a woman writer to bring to the fore this historical fact which is itself an elevation of women to heterodoxy is, thus, to start gearing towards future gender inclusivity which is among the things that women are fighting.

The senior wife position has been mythologized by men to offer a resemblance of leadership to women. Though the sort of leadership they are involved in, unfortunately, is restricted to their fellow women in the domestic space of a family household thus continuing a peripheral position, at least it marks the beginning of women involvement in some nature of leadership. The senior wife as presented in male authorship such as Achebe lacks in the tale-tale signs of defying the subjugation position that has been occupied by

women over a long period of time. While the position happens to be a male creation to help men carry out their leadership duties without much interruption, it prepares women for future engagement in the fight for recognition, and elevation.

I am making this assertion fully aware of the standpoint that scholars such as Hellen Ware, Dominique Meekers and Nadra Franklin, Obioma Nnaemeka, Michael Boyle and Cynthia Cook have taken – that the institution of polygamy in the African traditional context is advantageous to women. These scholars point out that polygamy offers women an opportunity to share responsibilities therefore reducing the labour due for each wife. They are of the view that the higher the number of wives in the household the less toil women experience in the family. In the same vein, Yamusy Ng’umbi in her article “Re-imagining Family and Gender Roles in Aminata Forna’s *Ancestor Stones*, while using Ya Namina as an example avers that a Senior wife “maximize(s) [the family’s] economic benefits by selecting hard-working wives, and limiting intrafamily conflicts by choosing those junior co-wives [she] likes and the ones who can respect her as a wife” (89). She gives an example of Ya Namina who controls Gibril’s junior wives.

Ng’umbi’s argument is supported by Nakanyike Musisi in her article “Women, ‘Elite Polygyny’ and Baganda State Formation” whose focus is on the Buganda Kingdom. Musisi “warns against the dangers of misrepresenting the polygyny system in Africa. She calls for a critical distinction between the polygyny systems practiced in precolonial, colonial and postcolonial times. For Musisi, the precolonial polygyny system was strategically used by elites “to create and ultimately to control not only economic but, political and social components of state apparatus” (758). Musisi further argues that the

Baganda women were not excluded from the political process rather [they] “played an important role at the state level in balancing internal and regional politics” (786). While I agree with Musisi regarding women being used in economic, political and social components of state apparatus, I would wish to ask; on whose behalf were they controlling the state apparatus? Were they benefiting in any way from these actions? Were they recognized as co-administrators in the continuum of leadership? Further, when Musisi argues that women were not excluded rather they balanced internal and regional politics, did they partake in the governance or they were just used as “balancing stones” in the scale of patriarchy-controlled politics?

The answers to these questions can be found in a scenario vividly described by the author regarding the role polygamy played to Governor Kintu Kidde’s administration. His wives were scattered all over the family for two reasons – to offer him comfort and convenience when he toured the regions and to remind the population in far-flung regions of his, the governor’s, presence (16). Nnakato acted as the senior wife, visited and oversaw their activities whenever Kintu Kidde was not in a position to. She did not, however, act as a co-administrator in any way. It is, therefore, evident that the inclusion of women into politics was, initially, not meant to elevate them in any way. However, the experience they get from occupying these positions come in handy in shaping the future and destiny of future liberated women.

## 2.4 War as a Double-edged Sword to Women

War features prominently as a historical reality of pre-colonial, colonial, and even postcolonial African literature. Indeed literature thrives in times of conflicts. African conflicts during the three epochs the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial have prompted several writers to come up with volumes of books about the same. An example of such is *Writers, Writing on Conflicts and Wars in Africa* by Okey Ndibe and Chenjerai Hove. In their introduction, they avers,

African writers, like writers elsewhere, respond to the stimuli, provocations and challenges of their specific political and economic realities. Their art seeks to reflect as well as transform their people's immediate and historical realities. They vivify Africa's "beauty, scars, oppression, inequities and hard earned victories." By the very nature of their vocation, writers commune with the people. (11)

The scars, inequities and oppression being referred to here are mostly skewed towards women owing to the nature of their participation in conflicts. Whenever war breaks out, women and children suffer most. Despite the fact that they do not go to the battlefield, they are exposed to psychological travail as they worry about the husband, father, son or any other male relative who must protect the community in the battlefield. Male writing is not devoid of incidences of war and its consequences to the community. However, most of the male writers seem not to bring to the fore the psychosomatic anguish that women are exposed to during the process of combat. The male authorship canon that has been for a long time considered the African literature exemplification is defective in that it does not pay much attention to this misery on the part of women actuality.

Women writers, whose part of their mandate, is to backdate the parody done by their male counterparts at a time when they were not in a position to tell their own story have had an opportunity to highlight the psychological suffering that characterize their lives during the times of war. While not writing off those who have written texts with shorter temporal setting like Chimamanda Ngozi-Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* that aptly captures the happenings during the Biafran war in Nigeria, women authors who have set their texts within a long period of time with several generations involved have managed to bring out women's sorrow during the times of war in a better way.

The four women writers focused on in this research have set their texts across a long spell of time with several characters involved in each text. In their reflection of African kingdoms, chiefdoms and empires, they have captured wars that characterized the pre-colonial Africa. The woman has been presented as the prime victim in these skirmishes.

Makumbi's novel *Kintu*, through Kintu Kidde one of the Ppookinos (Governors) in charge of one of the several provinces of Baganda kingdom, tells of intra-kingdom wars which are managed by rival queens in the palace. At the first encounter, Kintu Kidde is travelling to Lubyia to pay homage to Kyabbagu the new *Kabaka* who had dethroned Kabaka Namugala, claiming that he had abdicated, a claim which is refuted since "the *ba kabaka* did not give away their thrones like that" (4). As per the streams of consciousness going on in Kintu Kidde's mind, it is evident that Kyabbagu had assassinated his blood brother Namugala in order to seize the kingdom. Kintu Kidde is surprised how assassinations have become the order of the day in the palace. He points out

Kyabbagu had toppled his own mother's child. Normally, the mother was a binding force among sons, but then again, royals were hardly normal. These were terrible times to be of royal birth. Kings and princes lived the shortest lives. Any prince could stake claim to the throne at any time. The victor always massacred his siblings and cousins. *Clever women did not declare their sons as princes. Cleverer women watched the throne and alerted their sons when it was ripe for seizure* (5).(my emphasis).

The involvement of women in intra-kingdom succession battle is a pointer to how directly they were affected by these wars. In the process for the struggle to have one's son take over as the *kabaka* of the Buganda kingdom, one could lose their son, leading to immeasurable sorrow. The succession battle is complicated as demonstrated by the number of kings that Kintu Kidda had served under. Some governors had ignoble personalities as is the case with *kabaka* Kagulu who "[i]n his short reign, Kagulu had slaughtered more subjects than goats" (5). He is said to possess double personality alternating like that of Nnalumbaale Lake – now serene; now agitated; now deadly; now laughing... But it is the killing of his half-brother, Musenje for killing another brother, Luyenje while wrestling that puts him into major problem. For the first time, a princess, the wrathful Nnassolo is involved in intra-kingdom war.

Nnassolo is a sister to the two brothers murdered by Kagulu. She flees together with Musanje's three of Musanje's boys. Later on, she comes back "crumbling like Kiyira, the Nile" (5). Kagulu flees but she pursues him. Kagulu hides in ditches and caves in Buto region. When eventually he is captured, he, ironically could not face his own death like a

man although he “had put masses to the spear... mercifully, Nnassolo had him drowned. Nnassolo then installed the softly-softly older brother Kikulwe as *kabaka*” (6).

A series of assassinations and coups continued for some time. Within a short time as the Ppookino, Kintu Kidida had, so far, served five kings.

The instability of leadership in the kingdom is blamed squarely on women’s interference. The narrator observes

Kintu put the instability of Buganda’s throne down to the women. Unlike commoners, a *kabaka*’s children took after their mother’s clan. Though this ensured the distribution of the *kabakaship* to the different clans in Buganda, the custom bestowed the immense power to a king’s mother, the *namasole*. To protect their position, incumbent king mothers encouraged brothers to inherit the throne (6).

It is thus noticeable that there is power balance between men and women in trying to install kings. Women, especially the kings’ mothers, the *namasole*, are influential in deciding who should take over leadership. Where they are absent or unable to execute their mandate directly, their fellow women, like is the case with Nnassolo who flees only to come back and dispose her step-brother in order to install her blood brother; is involved. The mothers of the would-be kings, therefore, suffer a great loss as some do not declare their sons as prince despite having been bestowed that privilege. They would rather their sons be “commoners” than have them risk assassination. However, although these categories of women are able to determine who will be the next king, the system does not allow them to become queens. They can only clear the way for their preferred men to take up the leadership. Having invested all their energy in these men, whenever they are

harmed, women suffer the consequences of having lost their only conduit through which they can exercise power.

Margaret Ogola, likewise, brings to the fore the psychological grief that Akoko, the protagonist must contend with in her novel *The River and the Source*. Colonization of African countries gives the colonizers rights to own their subjects hence a right to take them to participate in the war pitting their colonial masters against their overseas enemies. Thus when British take up Kenya as their colony, they tap human resource from among their subjects to fight in the First World War. The war has *Jo-ingreza* (English) against *Jo-jermany* (Germany) as conceptualized by the Luo mind from which the novel draws its literary materials (59). Obura Kembo, son of Chief Owuor Kembo and the heir apparent of chieftaincy is incorporated into the squad of those going to participate in this Great War by Ambere K'ongoso and Nyaroché Silwal. Obura Kembo sneaks out of the village without the knowledge of his parents. Obviously, they wouldn't have allowed him to leave since he is being groomed to take over the chieftaincy which is hereditary. Seeking permission to go would have, therefore, been an exercise in futility.

Obura Kembo's leaving hits the family hard but it is his mother, Akoko, who is exceedingly affected. Between the time she learns of her son's disappearance and the time she gets to learn he was killed in the war, Akoko is painted as a woman in massive distress. On her daughter Nyabera's checking his hut early in the morning and discovering that he has left, Akoko is said "[to have] arrived on the spot almost before the words were out of her daughter's mouth" (53). She fervently prays to their Deity, *Were*, desperately to help her son out of the predicament he has put himself in: "Great Were, please spare my son.

Protect him, remember all the sacrifices I have offered you on his behalf and be merciful” (54).

When scouts are dispatched to try and intercept Obura and his colleagues the earlier ones come back with a confirmation that Nyaroche Silwal and Ambere K’ongoso were heard talking to the third party hence confirming Akoko’s fears that her son has really gone away, she sinks into frenzy. The scene is aptly captured by the author:

They were gone for two days and two nights and while they were gone, Akoko lay prostrate on her papyrus pallet. She dared not sleep for she was haunted by nightmares. She was beyond even praying to *Were* and she lay there hour after hour staring, dull eyed, into space. (55)

The psychological suffering she exhibits in this incidence on learning that her son has left is superseded by her reaction when she learns that her son has already boarded a vehicle and thus it’s a foregone conclusion that he has joined the Whiteman. The vivid description the author offers points to a woman on her breaking point because her motherhood is on trial. After the explanation by the scouts who have come back home desolate and empty handed with a report that leaves no doubt that Obura Kembo has decided to make off from his duty of Chief designate in order to join the Whiteman’s war

A low moan from the direction of the main hut was heard, the first sound from that poor suffering woman. Her voice rose as she keened in a high tone, lonely, lost sound terrible to hear. It was almost as if the boy was dead, not just lost. The fearful premonition of doom that only a mother, closely connected as she is to the child, can sense was in the air. (56)

Akoko's suffering continues up to the time the official report of the three villagers, Obura included, is brought to the village by two messengers from *sirikal*. They confirm that indeed Obura Kembo, Ambere K'ongoso and Nyaroché Silwal went to fight the Germans in Tanganyika which is a country of black people ruled by the Germans. They go ahead to confirm the fears of everybody, particularly Akoko, that Obura is indeed dead. Upon receiving this distressing information, the whole village joins in wailing as it mourns its kind – hearted chief that was never to be. But the bereaved mother, in full understanding of the implication of losing her first born son, wails even more: "Above and between the sounds of the wailers an eerie sound was heard once again. It was the keening sound of the bereft mother." (60)

The woe that Akoko endures as encapsulated in this description is only comprehensible to a mother owing to her close connection with her child. Hers is a symbolic forceful disconnection of mother's umbilical cord by the cruel hand of the colonialist as she does not get an opportunity to give her consent for Obura, who she considers a minor, to join the British army. All along she lives hopefully that her son would come back home safely. The information that he is dead climaxes her suffering and paves way for even more suffering in the hands of patriarchal indulgence led by her brother-in-law Otieno Kembo. Her firstborn son's death exposes her to the societal realities that war, whether one understands its significance or not, is a double-edged sword to female fraternity. They don't get an opportunity to participate in it. They only wait for the consequences of their sons, husbands, and or brothers who participate in it actively.

In an almost similar case of war pitting Africans against Europeans, Fatoki's *Thread of Gold Beads* features a French – Danhomè war in the onset of dismantling of the empire and subsequent colonization of the yet to be created Nigeria and Benin Nations. Princess Amelia who doubles as the narrator recounts how the imminent war forces her to leave the lavish life of a princess to venture into a dangerous journey of seeking refuge in an unknown land. The two, with her half-brother, Dare, are sent away to seek refuge from the Alake (king) of Abeokuta Kingdom. The only possessions that she leaves with are: "...the letter to Alake, three sets of gold ear-rings that I knew were family heirlooms passed down generations, silver bangles, a medium sized pouch that held cowries, and there were my thread of gold beads from mama" (219). All the posh possessions a princess is entitled to are left behind as the war tears the family apart. The journey that they engage in proves to be a dangerous one, full of challenges and hitches.

On the onset of the journey, soldiers come within a radius of their camp. They have since been joined by Boy, her grandmother's slave. On the first night they are forced to sleep in the middle of a forest with banana leaves for a mattress with only crickets and frogs as their companions (207). To save the prince and the princess from death, Boy opts to sacrifice himself to the soldiers, confessing that he is a slave running away from his mistress where upon he is roasted alive despite his pleas for clemency (209). The brutality of burning a fellow human being, the smell of a freshly burned flesh of a human being, and the experience of having to sleep in a potentially dangerous place is agonizing to a princess who was used to a life of affluence complete with maids to attend to her.

Once Boy sacrifices himself for the safety of the King's children, the two engage in a journey full of hardships and devoid of the privileges associated with royalty. The first hurdle comes about when they are kidnapped and Amelia is supposedly married off to the son of a chief after finding them bathing in Mawu- Lissa waterfall. Dare is forced by the prevailing circumstances to lie that Amelia's name is Yemisi (adopting her former maid's name) in his attempt to hide their identity. Amelia is taken in, blindfolded, and hidden in a room as she awaits the performance of the rituals to pave way for the consummation of their marriage. The news that shakes Amelia to the core is that Dare is due to be sacrificed on the night the marriage is effectuated: "... your brother will be killed tonight. The very moment of your consummation with your husband he will be sacrificed as a token gift" (221). Knowing that the brother with whom they have walked through thick and thin is due to be killed is the lowest moment for Amelia. The guard offers to help them out and in conjunction with Dare kills his colleague tasked with the work of handing in Amelia to the King's son. The elimination of the cruel guard affords them an opportunity to escape.

The two trek through the thick forest with hunger and exhaustion dogging them. At Biro village they are forced to barter their familial silver bangle for food: "We had gone in the village once during the day, disguised in order to trade for some food" (223). In exchange for the silver bangle, the King's children are given fish, gray, and adire (some sort of clothing for women). It is during this interaction with strangers in pursuit of food that Amelia painfully learns of the fall of Danhomè from a woman: "The French have finally infiltrated the great Danhomè. The great Gbèhanzin has fled into the forest" (225). This information proves to be too painful to bear. The pain takes a great toll on her and she

almost collapses. Dare is forced to lie that the near collapse results from hunger that has tormented her for days. Further information that Gbehanzin had set fire to his palace so that the French should not gain control of it and that he has started waging war in the forest brings Amelia to breaking point. She had been his father's closest friend but now here she was, helpless, in disguise bartering for food after trekking for months.

Amelia and Dare's entry to the Alake in Abeokuta kingdom is the most agonizing part of their journey. On arrival, they are received by Ake, the principal caretaker of the kingdom and a major in the army. The kind of life that ensues is not befitting for royal children. Ake accommodates them in a small hut where his own children are. The children expose the two to brutalities upon which they are transferred to another benefactor Iya Alata - a sister to Ake. She introduces them to trade but one morning Amelia discovers her casting a spell so that she may outcompete other pepper sellers. On realizing that her evil act has been discovered, she accuses the princess of stealing her pepper and chases them away. By the time they get an opportunity to meet the King and prove their identity, the two have suffered a great deal.

It should also be remembered that before leaving Danhomè kingdom, Amelia was newly married to Dossou but she was forced to leave her lover behind and flee when war broke. She is exposed to psychological suffering of having to leave her husband behind and bolt from the kingdom for her own safety.

Forna's *Ancestor Stone* just like the other three novels under study features women's psychological anguish resulting from war. The narrator talks of forthcoming loneliness that she must endure following the death of her mother and now the enlisting of her brothers

into the army under the command of the queen. She considers them lucky and feels inadequate because being a woman, she is not entitled to join;

Ibrahim and Idrissa, they were the lucky ones. Not so long after my mother died men appeared in the village, one a white man. They set up a table in the middle of the village next to *barrie*. The *potho* sat behind it. The other one a – Koranko, so told the short scars that marked his cheekbones – stood next to him. The *potho* said he was the Queen's representative, recruiting soldiers to fight in a war to save the Empire. The Empire to which everyone of us belonged. The pair was travelling throughout the country enlisting soldiers. They had orders from the queen that each village must nominate at least six men to the cause (76).

The act of men joining an army to, ironically, fight a war whose grievances they don't know, is considered godsend rather than endangering oneself for a cause for which they are not part of. Considering that the narrator considers it a source of providence points to a wishful thinking that characterizes pre-colonial women. She wishes that she could get an opportunity to engage herself in what is considered to be exclusively men's domain, an opportunity she is not bound to get at that time of history. The colonizers reinforce women's marginalization as observed by Aminata Diaw:

Colonial indifference to female tradition of power in West Africa was especially staggering. The inevitable result of diminishing the political importance of secret societies, paramount chieftaincies, and spiritual leaderships was to perpetuate the perception of women as voiceless outsiders in the public arena. In general, colonial

administrators preferred to form alliances with African men, thereby tightening patriarchal control of women (2).

Thus the infiltration of colonizers into Africa did not provide relief to marginalization of women from some perceived men-only arena, rather it reinforced it. In fact the colonial policy was, in most cases, backhanded to strengthen male hegemony. As a result, the pre-colonial woman continued to readily accept that without a man, she is incapacitated in almost all spheres of life. This is in line with the narrator's concern when her brothers are incorporated into the army. She views herself as a woman in need of protection by her male relatives and the departure of her two brothers leaves her vulnerable and defenseless: "Ibrahim and Idrissa were being sent away to fight in a war, but still it made me envious to watch them go, and sad to think that I was left all alone. The question nobody cared to answer was who would take care of me" (77). From the concern she raises, it is evident that the pre-colonial woman lacks the will to fight her own battles within the framework of social-economic milieu. She constructs herself as an appendage of man who has to provide not only the sustenance but also the protection.

Viewed from across the four texts whose setting predates formal education for an African woman, the pre-colonial woman comes out as the absorber of the psychological anguish that men must undergo as a result of war. Historically, social constructs at this point in time are not in favour of women engaging in male-defined duties such as going to the battlefield.

Thus by highlighting wars in African history viewed from a woman's perspective, the four women writers capture the emotional anguish that women must endure whenever wars

break. Indeed all citizens undergo suffering but women's vulnerability makes them direct recipients and greater sufferers than men.

## **2.5 Psycho-social Orientation of the Girl Child**

Psycho-social orientation is a method used to manage the mind of a human being and align them into accepting one's point of view without giving it a critical analysis. For instance for the colonizers to be able to arrest the minds of Africans, they had to present a narrative that showed the African culture as barbaric, backwards, uncouth and uncivilized. They made Africans to have a (mis)conception that they were incapable of abstract thinking and that their mind was closer to that of an animal than of a normal human being. To augment their notion, they used evolutionary thinking advanced by Charles Darwin which centers on Darwin's ideas about the origin and survival of biological species. Folklorists who were influenced by these ideas saw in traditional tales remnants of an earlier worldview or a set of ideas about man and his environment. The Africans' minds were, therefore, socialized into believing that direction of evolution was upwards – a progress from the crude communal stage of primitive life towards the civilized and differentiated culture of contemporary Europe hence they were bound to ape the European in their pursuit to civilization (Stanley, 71). I have used this long example to demonstrate how radicalization works in the minds of those viewed to be subjects.

In the same vein, for patriarchy to thrive, a sort of mindset that portrays women as weaker, inferior, and subjects to men had to be inculcated into women's mind, passed from one generation to another. Notably, women, having been cultured to accept their peripheral position in the society, took part in passing the same ideology to fellow women of the next

generation without much ado because it had been accepted among them as the norm. However, with emergence of feminism, feminists have come out to question the rationale behind the subaltern position women occupy. They have come out strongly to challenge the principles of gender socialization that have made them to believe they are not equal to their male counterparts. Feminists have preoccupied themselves with bringing to the fore the fact that other than biological roles that are sex-defined, determined by different anatomies of the two genders, the other differences are socially-constructed hence they can be successfully challenged and re-constructed to offer equal opportunities to both genders. Before this realization, women had been socialized into accepting their place in the society that had been created by men without any biological basis. Solomon Azumarana, while studying the representation of women by Chinua Achebe argues

Achebe's women characters have been ideologically conditioned that men are biologically superior to women physically, intellectually and emotionally hence women only come and go with mounds of *fofoo*, pots of water, market baskets, fetch kola, and bear scolding and beatings. (19)

According to Azumarana, the reason male characters ideologically suppress women is the desire to maintain their grip in control and domination of the economic structure of the society through exercising authority over them.

This kind of socialization is in line with the metaphor used by Sylvia Kamale in her article "When Hens begin to Crow" which indirectly refers to women's realization that the position they occupy is a creation of men. As a result, they start challenging the patriarchal

structures. Using the metaphor of the hen in a flock where there are cocks, Tamale observes

Female chickens normally do not crow. At least popular mythology claims they cannot. Hence, in many African cultures a crowing hen is considered an omen of bad tidings that must be expiated through the immediate slaughter of the offending bird (13).

Tamale uses the hen – cock metaphor to capture the gender interrelationship at this point in history. Metaphorically speaking, the slaughtering of the offending bird referred to here is the maligning of any woman who tries to resist the peripheral position created for women with the socialization guidelines. Thus there is no room for resisting this exterior position.

The pre-colonial girl child is born with subaltern position tag on her neck. The pre-colonial African society places a lot of importance on the shoulders of the boy child to an extent that a girl is not prioritized. She exists to receive orders and directions from her male counterparts which she is not expected to question. Any deviation from perceived norm of submissiveness is construed as an anomaly on the side of the woman. The inculcation of these gender roles is done both consciously and unconsciously.

In Makumbi's *Kintu*, Babirye and Nnakato's marriage is determined by their parents without their input. When Kintu Kidda decides to go against the dictates of the Ganda community by courting Nnakato ahead of her elder twin sister Babirye, the parents, in an attempt to persuade him to adhere to the edicts of the community in ensuring that the younger sister is not married off ahead of the elder one "[...] offer(s) her for free but Kintu would not have her" (12). These women are unconsciously socialized into believing that

their marriage need not be based on love, rather once they grow up, they can be “sold off” by their father regardless of whether they have any feeling towards the suitor. Although Kintu marries Babirye later after a prolonged barrenness of his preferred wife Nnakato, the circumstances of marriage are the same. The union is not informed by any form of love, rather it is an aspect of necessity dictated by the fact that Nnakato wanted children of her own and the only conduit through which she could get them was through her fertile sister.

In further demonstration of women commodification, when Kintu establishes himself as the Ppookino, he marries more women who “[...] were brought to him as tributes: some from ambitious parents, others were daughters of fellow governors” (16). To a certain extent, such women are commodified and given off without considering their emotional attachment to the groom: “His wives’ homes were scattered all over the province for his convenience when he toured. The families, especially in far-flung regions of the province were also a reminder to the populace of his presence” (16). As it were, the wives have to await Kintu’s visit away from what is defined as matrimonial home until such a time that a need arises to prompt him to visit that part of the province where a certain woman is. Consequently, meeting their emotional interests as wives is only “accidental” when Kintu visits them on his stopovers. Markedly, the Ppookino uses his wives as human props to mark his territory. Their major purpose in his life is not to have them partake in the bliss of matrimony but to scare his subjects into acknowledging him as their leader. The women remain docile; they don’t even seem to realize they are being commodified.

Makumbi, in what appears to be a foreshadowing of women emancipation in future, creates an heterodoxical woman character who tries successfully to delink herself from the

shackles of men's emotionless marriage. Gitta, a respectable elder and neighbour to Kintu Kidda, marries a relatively young bride; Zaya. She resists her husband's advances and runs away at night. Men who narrate to each other what happened offer different opinions as to why Zaya behaved the way she did when her husband decided to make sexual advances with some saying she was not properly nurtured into accepting her position as a wife while others feel Gitta's first wife should have prepared her until she was ready then handed her over to her designated husband. In a humorous manner, the narrator captures the resistance that Gitta met with

This particular night, Gitta was to get his dowry's worth. When he got to her quarters, Zaya started the childish game of: *Leave me alone, I don't want*. Gitta gave her few whacks to let her know that he was serious. Zaya stopped fighting. He made his move but Zaya went wild. She grabbed him – you know how huge she is now – swung him like a fiber doll and ran. Gitta thinking he was the bull he once was gave chase. Zaya ran into shrubbery behind her quarters, Gitta in pursuit. In the darkness, he ran into acacia shrub. Somehow, the stems locked around his neck. When he pulled his neck out, the stem tightened (22).

Gitta does not get to consummate their marriage with Zaya as she eventually ends up in the Ppookino's home. Women get an opportunity to laugh at Gitta's action christening him "*the aged bull that grazes among calves* (23). Though Poking warns his teenage sons against making sexual advances towards her, and requests that they treat her as their sister and respect her as a married woman, the sons, just like everybody else are apprehensive of her. They laugh off their fathers warning wondering who wants to have a relationship with

[...] a pugilistic bride, who took strides like a hunter, whose feet grasped the earth like a man's, whose voice when she spoke, carried the whole house on top of her head and who, as if her mother never breastfed her properly, said that she had dreamed of becoming a warrior (23).

When Zaya is let free in Kintu Kidda's house, she forgets that she is a married woman and joins his sons in laying traps and shooting birds out of trees upon which boys keep on reminding her that she is a woman.

Zaya's behaviour may be dismissed as a rare abnormality among women by men who would vouch for the status quo to be maintained. Nevertheless, this assignment of heterodoxical trait that defies the societal established norms is a pointer to the beginning of women liberation that has started manifesting itself. The hitherto submissive nature of women in which they seem to accept every decision made by their male counterparts whether favourable to them or not is challenged by Zaya who foreshadows the path that the future African women will take.

Ogola's *The River and the Source* also feature a subdued pre-colonial girl child encapsulated in young Akoko although she starts demonstrating tinges of emancipation at an early age. Her birth appears not to have brought the kind of glee her father, chief Odera Gogni of Yimbo, had anticipated when he discovers the child born to her second wife Aketch is not, metaphorically speaking, "another rock for (his) sling" (11) after all. The rock refers to a son and going by the attributes that a stone possesses, one can deduce how important a son is to the patriarchal pre-colonial Luo community. Although the Chief in

turnabout makes an infamous remark that “a house without daughters is like a spring without a source” (11), it is evident that boys are the preferred sex.

The position of the pre-colonial African woman is demonstrated once Akoko reaches teenage and is, therefore, ready for marriage. She does not have the freedom to choose her own partner. Her husband-to-be is chosen by her brothers and father with their own preferable qualities being put into consideration. Twelve suitors come tumbling over each other and they are all men or sons of men of ability, from good families without *juok* or witchcraft, madness, habitual thievery, laziness or any other undesirable trait against them. “One and all they (meet) twenty one hostile brothers and an impossible - to - please father” (17). Although it’s Akoko who is going to live with the husband after marriage, she is not given a chance to participate in any slightest way in the choice of her future life partner.

When a suitable suitor is found as per the qualities of men, the negotiations that follow are evidence of a “commodity” in form of a human being being sold off to the highest bidder. The marketing strategies that go on as the elders highlight the qualities of their “good” are akin to any other marketer trying to attract a potential buyer. Oloo K’Olima the father’s spokesman highlights the qualities that make Akoko a high quality “stock for sale”

Our daughter Adoyo Obanda is a great beauty whose assets have been praised and sung by many *nyatiti* singer from here to Chumbu Kombit, from Sakwa to Loka Nam. She is as fleet as a gazelle and her flying feet have been incorporated into sayings of our village so that mothers sending their daughters on errands tell them to run like Adoyo of the flying feet. She has been carefully brought up and has been

taught all the requirements of *Chik*. She is a very apt pupil who will therefore not bring shame and ruin to her husband by improper conduct (21).

Indeed these qualities are desirable in a wife but they ought to be discovered, and perhaps nurtured during courtship. In this one, however, they are used as marketing points in order to ask for a higher bride price. Further, neither Akoko nor her mother is allowed in the negotiation. The mother's duty is only to bring Akoko "to be seen" once the deal has been struck. To highlight women's peripheral position in this period, there is a definite way in which she should appear before her "buyer". She should come in as a picture of demure shyness, her eyes fixed firmly on the floor, and her hands held together in front of her mouth. Thus at this point in history, women are commoditized.

Once the bride price is paid and men are sent to bring Akoko to her matrimonial home, the whole village troops in to evaluate the bride and, by their standards, decide whether she was worthy the amount of bride price that the chief had parted with: "Everybody wanted to see with his own eyes this bride that had cost the chief thirty heads of cattle" (30). Though people get satisfied that her beauty can fetch that much, this is a demonstration of how commercialized women are. While the father of the bride keeps her purposely to sell her to an individual of his choice, and choice here is based on the groom's ability to pay, the husband's people meet up to assess whether the bride was overpriced judging from the qualities they consider suitable to fetch high prices.

The same trend of devaluing women is continued by Otieno, brother to Chief Kembo, who is a polygamous man per excellence. He marries women just to satisfy his ego and fails to provide for their basic needs. Within a short period of time, Otieno has married

four wives and he has eighteen children. He is said to “(be) a weak man who seemed to have a knack for marrying one shiftless wife after another, with the result that he was entirely depended on his brother” (47). The result of having women that he can’t afford to provide for is indicative of the fact that he does not accord them the respect expected from a responsible husband. He is said to have “treated his wives like sluts and they did not fail him” (47). That a man can mistreat his wives and fail to provide for their basic needs and they still cling to him and meet his expectations is indicative of the desperate position that the pre-literate woman finds herself in more so the need to be attached to a man.

The socialization of women to accept their position without questioning is further demonstrated by Owang’ Sino’s widow; Nyar Uyoma. After her husband is choked by a meal of fish, she does not take time to reflect on what she should do with her orphaned son - Owuor Sino. She leaves him with her ageing mother-in-law and goes ahead to get married to one of the husband’s numerous cousins. The narrator insinuates that Nyar Uyoma is resigned to the fate of the subaltern position occupied by women of that time. The reason behind her quick marriage to a cousin is that: [...] she was not a sort of a woman to fight for her rights leave alone her son’s. All she wanted was a husband and some security...” (74). The implication herein is that the mentality advocated by men to women that they are affiliates of men has sunk consciously into her mind. Without a man by her side, she would feel insecure.

Despite this resignation of women to the dictates of patriarchy, Akoko demonstrates heterodoxical qualities from an early age. She is assertive in demanding for what belongs to her, especially in her relationship with her elder brother; Oloo. Her first words at ten

months were *dwaro mara* which she screamed to her elder brother who dared take something she was playing with. They meant “Want mine” (15). On her betrothal day after men have agreed on the amount of bride price at which she should be “sold”, and, therefore, she is called in front of them to be “inspected,” she defies the order of walking in as an epitome of shyness and instead “[...] she walked in, steps measured, head held high, hands at her sides her head swivelled around a bit and then her gaze rested on Owuor” (24). The confidence which is not a characteristic of women at that time in African history is to the chagrin of Otieno Kembo, the men’s representative who considers her a brazen lass who should not cost thirty heads of cattle.

Later in life when she is already married and unable to give birth to as many children as the community expects, prompting her mother – in – law to accuse her of witchcraft, she initiates the first detachment of a woman from her marriage by walking back to her parents in Yimbo. This happens after waking the whole village with her powerful scream and explaining to them in no uncertain terms that children are a gift from *Were*, god of rising sun. She challenges the men’s representative by daring Otieno Kembo, who threatens her with beatings to dare her. He is forced to retreat (37). Consequently, Akoko is the pioneer of some sort of separation of married people thus going against the age-old belief that “a man own(ed) a woman’s body and soul” (36).

The same emancipation would continue when Akoko’s eldest son, Obura, dies in the First World War, her husband, Owuor Kembo, dies relatively young and her youngest son Owang Sino also dies two years into chieftaincy. Akoko drives her herd of cattle back to her father’s house together with Owuor Sino the only surviving grandson and severs her

attachment with her former husband's people because they don't seem to value her. She resists inheritance which is the norm in the Luo community. She would later become the first woman to make contact with the Whiteman's government – the *sirkal* – and successfully gets rid of a sitting Chief who had shown no signs of relinquishing the chieftaincy which he was supposed to hold as a custodian awaiting young Owuor Sino, the chief-in-waiting to mature.

Just like Zaya in Makumbi's *Kintu*, Akoko's behaviour projects a later day liberated African woman, capable of making her own decisions and adhering to them without requiring the guidance of a man. Future generation born after her would continue with her determination.

Campell- Fatoki's novel *Thread of Gold Beads* also captures a woman in the tight grip of patriarchy but who has accepted the position she finds herself in. Na Zevoton, popularly known as Grandmother is evocative of women who have been made to believe they should act as conveyor belts through which a king gets his heir without their emotional attachment to the child (the future king). Na Zevoton explains to Amelia, her granddaughter, how she came to be in the palace

I come from Abeokuta, which is across the Ogun River. Like most kings of Danhomè before him, King Glele preferred to choose the woman who carried his heir from the young girls captured from Abeokuta. These kings mated with them, impregnated them and then tore their offsprings from their breasts the moment they were born. They were then sent back to their homeland. And so king Glele did the same (196).

Na Zevoton seems to be contented with this seemingly inhumane treatment. The emotional attachment to the child, the mothering duty, and the psychological emptiness the mother is exposed to after being separated from their children is not a priority to this arrangement. Judging from the tone with which Na Zevoton relates the story to her granddaughter, it is evident that she, and by extension, other women who have had to go through the same ordeal take it to be the norm rather than an act of subjugation of African women.

Despite having performed such an important act of delivering a King to be, Na Zevoton is send back to Abeokuta without any provision. Such an important person in the palace has to rely on a cripple for survival

I was banished from the palace-this very palace that lies across that Kana bridge... but I didn't lose hope. I set forth on foot from here, begging in the villages along the rivers, scavenging for food. I did not have a permanent place to put my head. That is the way I lived for countless harvests... until I met Low One. My good friend Low One found me, fed me, clothed me, and brought me back to this village.  
(197)

The picture created by this vivid description is reminiscent of an inhumanely treated woman whose work as “carrier” of the heir is accomplished and, therefore, must now be disposed of.

Despite the mistreatment that she receives, Na Zevoton encapsulates hope for women since she possesses heterodoxical characteristics. She does not go back to Abeokuta without laying strategies on how she would come back. She makes a mark on her boy with

the aim of proving in future that she is the biological mother. Her wisdom helps her much later when she comes back to the village. Coincidentally, the King falls in love with Ajoke, another woman abducted from Abeokuta during the war. When he marries her, Na Zevoton, by virtue of being from Abeokuta, becomes *his* mother –in – law. That relationship neutralizes the threat that would have seen her put to death. She explains how the threat was neutralized: “[he] wanted to throw me to the dogs... that is, until I told him where his scar was... only a mother and wife could tell you where that scar is” (197).

This act of courage and wisdom serves to give women hope, that they are conscious of the ill-treatment they are exposed to and that they can employ their own maneuvers to, at least, make a comeback. Thus this act of putting a mark on king Gbahezin as well as gathering the courage to come back prefigures a courageous and focused woman cognizant of her position. The courage demonstrated in risking oneself to regain the position of a king’s mother proves the potential women have towards unchaining themselves from the peripheral position that they have been socialized into believing is their sanctioned position. the next generations of women in Fatoki’s book would depict a more liberalized approach in dealing with gender constructed issues.

Forna’s *Ancestor Stones* is not devoid of women socialization to believe that they should operate at the whims of men. So deep is this socialization that women have offered themselves to be used as vessels for victimizing their counterparts.

Ya Namina is singly responsible for the marriage of Saffie the tenth wife of the narrator’s father. On her way back to Rofathane after staying in the court with her husband, she notices Saffie, a young girl carrying a pot on her head. When the girl, out of respect,

steps out of the way to let her pass, Ya Namina beckons her to come close and just like that she becomes the tenth wife! Saffie is exposed to realities of pre-adolescence marriage that does not even involve courtship. The husband must wait for another five years for her to mature in order to consummate the marriage: “Three years later, she saw the moon. Two years later she was taken to her husband’s room” (82). Ya Namina is fully aware that “[a] tenth wife has no status. No much better than a servant” (81). Thus it is the acceptance of women’s commodification that makes Ya Namina, an experienced woman, to lead her fellow woman into the anguish of occupying a lesser than servant position in matrimony – tenth wife.

Later, after she has matured and given birth to two children, Serah and Yaya Kholifa, the man of the house would invite a mason to build their house. The children had nicknamed him “Cementman” from the work he was doing. Perhaps owing to the negligence originating from the position she occupies, Saffie involves herself in extra-marital affair with “Cementman.”

When Mr. Kholifa discovers her adulterous behaviour, he invites her in the evening to swim with him in a river. Little does she know that the whole exercise is pre-arranged to force her into confession. Her husband holds her firmly in a bid to force her into confession

At first she thinks little of the firmness of his grip, the finger digging into the flesh of her arms. Her nervousness, the current. Together they swim to the other side, far from the houses. A tenth wife. Alone with this man, who is her husband. Confused.

Growing less hopeful that this behaviour is the manifestation of a sudden ordour (93).

Her confession is got under duress. To get her to confess, he pulls her out of sight into the darkness under the mangroves, and confronts her with what she knows – that they had been seen and overheard. With no other option, she confesses.

Following this turn of events, once they go back with her having confessed, the court imposes a fine for “woman damage” (93). The aim of the elders is to teach young men who cannot afford a wife of their own a lesson. While teaching the young men a lesson may be well intentioned, it reduces women to a commodity that can be “damaged.” Consequently, the whole process serves to derange women. This point of view resonates with Lerner’s point of opinion

The contradiction between women’s centrality and active role in creating a society and their marginality in the meaning-giving process of interpretation and explanation has been a dynamic force, causing women to struggle against their condition. When, in that process of struggle, at certain historic moments, the contradictions in their relationship to society and to historical process are brought into the consciousness of women, they are then correctly perceived and named as deprivations that women share as a group. This coming – into-consciousness of women becomes the dialectical force moving them into action to change their condition and to enter a new relationship to male dominated society. (5)

It is against the backdrop of the consciousness referred to by Lerner that Kholifa’s wife stages an about turn. She reneges on her confession, portraying the heterodoxical position

characteristics that women characters possess which foreshadows future liberation. Faced with no other way of proving their allegation, elders call *sassa*, some sort of a man only court; but still the woman refuses to confess. “Now she claims her confession was falsely given. The elders looked at each other and around... together they looked down at her. This woman is neck deep in woman trouble. How could it be so?” (92). The surprise created by the woman’s turnaround is incomprehensible to the elders. The firmness of a woman standing to decommodify herself is a new phenomenon.

The surprise turn of events also catches Mr. Kholifa by surprise. The narrator commends that “And my father, he overplayed his hand, he underestimated his tenth wife” (94). The narrators’ mother refuses to be intimidated by being forced to confess and, instead, instigates a divorce. She moves with her children to her mother’s home and commits to pay back Kholifa’s bride price so that she can free herself from him and be free to marry (94). Just like Akoko in *The River and the Source* who had threatened to ask her father to return the bride price to her matrimonial home, she breaks the enslaving culture of men having to own women on the basis that they have “bought” them.

Her desire for independence fails to contain her within her mother’s house and she moves with her two children to town where she rents a small house and sets up a business of selling boiled eggs. She is not perturbed by the court’s verdict that lists the items that she should, singlehandedly, return to her former husband in order to be granted freedom:

Our mother’s bride price equaled to the price of one carat diamond. Cash only. On top of which she received a cow, which was hers for the milking. Non-returnable. Two country clothes and four double lengths of waxed cotton, one dozen sticks of

salt at two shillings each, cowries, rice, cocoa beans, gold and one umbrella, distributed to guests and family; all were listed by the court and added to the debt. To be repaid in full (97).

The desire for freedom makes her work hard in her business, involving her two children to acquire eggs, and firewood in order to make the business a success. When it is evident that the profit may never be enough to provide for her family and repay the debt, she heads South, leaving her two children to go back to their father's house upon which Ya Memso, her best friend from among the co-wives receives and takes care of them. She "[remains] in debt for the rest of her life, like the men whose lives he owned, unable to marry again until such a time as she repaid her bride price" (101).

Her undertaking of gaining freedom after paying back the bride price may have backfired but she sets precedence for future women to know that emancipation from the colonizing mentality of owning a woman on the basis of having paid her bride price is achievable. She demonstrates that the gendered constructs that a woman can be bought is open to be challenged. It is not cast on stone. Thus despite the push from patriarchal powers, heterodoxy among women characters in resisting subjugation is seen, building up slowly.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The history of writing in Africa favours men. They have had a head start regarding the historical privileges such as education that have placed them in a better position compared to their female counterparts. The same has been translated into their writings and

canonization of African literature. The result has been exclusion of matters that are exclusively of women domain from African literary canon.

When African women writers eventually get an opportunity to express themselves through fictional writing, they present a truthful picture of their realm. Those who choose to write historical novels featuring several generations of women in the same book backdate reality as it was before women started writing hence capturing the pre-colonial African woman as a victim of patriarchal ideology. To maintain her within the subaltern position, men have used myths that were devised with maintenance of status quo in mind with regards to men's elevated position. Women have, often times, adopted the myths and passed them from one generation to another with little resistance. However, when women writers started writing their own stories, they started creating heterodoxical women characters to demonstrate future emancipation of African women. The position of a senior wife has been given a portfolio within the hierarchy of leadership in the family in women's writing. Through creation of senior wives' positions, there is semblance of leadership within the family.

Again, this period in African history is characterized by both intertribal and interracial wars that expose African women to dual suffering: first as mothers who lose their male relatives in the war, and secondly as victims of the enemy's brutality since they are left at home as men go to the battlefield, or they are captured as slaves to become wives of men they don't have emotions towards. The chapter also demonstrates that the pre-colonial African woman has been oriented into believing that the marginal position that she is pushed to by men ought to be the norm rather than a creation of men as they try to assert

their position in a gendered society. On a positive note, the pre-colonial woman starts to show signs of asserting herself to challenge patriarchal ideologies through women heterodoxy. There is hope that the next generation of educated women will untangle itself from the fetters of patriarchy.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **CROSS-GENERATIONAL HETERODOXICAL AFRICAN WOMEN AND THEIR TRANSMUTATIONS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter interrogates how the African woman has metamorphosed over time. The analysis of the texts is built on the premise that according to New Historicists, literary texts are cultural artifacts that can reveal the web of social meanings operating in the time and place the text was written. The general understanding fronted by New Historicist, therefore, is that both history and literary texts are “narratives” to be analyzed. In the task ahead, this point of view works alongside the feminist belief that women are oppressed economically, politically, socially and psychologically, and this happens through patriarchal ideology. The chapter attempts to interrogate the dynamics of women’s oppression by looking at the four historical texts as narratives that need analyses in order to fathom the changes that redefine the oppressive patriarchal ideology across time.

The chapter builds on existence of women characters with heterodoxical characteristics during the pre-colonial era foreshadowing a more liberated African woman as years progress.

It traces formal education as an agent for women’s change of attitude towards their place in the two genders’ world. It analyses the socio-political impediments that slowed down the African woman’s acquisition of formal education and how she successfully negotiated around them. Further, the chapter demonstrates how education acts as an initial stage for African women to acquire a significant amount of independence from the shackles of patriarchy. From historical perspective, the chapter interrogates the reality of

gradual attainment of freedom by African women in the mid and late twentieth century. The chapter also focuses on the concept of polygamy's diminution as an avenue through which women gain more power. This is achieved by giving the husband an opportunity to focus his energy on only one wife. This close familial relationship offer the wife ample time to challenge the husband's authority. Further, the chapter looks into ways through which matriarchy starts establishing itself as a way through which the hitherto dominant patriarchy is challenged and, unconsciously, reconstructed.

### **3.2 Formal Education as a Liberating Instrument for African Women**

African history, especially from 17<sup>th</sup> Century onwards, is intertwined with that of foreigners particularly Europeans and Arabs. Arabs came to Africa earlier and spread Islam whose form of education was mostly religion-based; the *madrassa*. Their influence is still enormous in Africa, especially the Maghreb, where Islam remains the dominant religion. The education system in the predominantly Islamic religion is governed by their socio-cultural and religious beliefs.

Europeans remain the most influential foreigners with regards to the way postcolonial Africa is constructed. During the scramble for and partition of Africa, different nationalities infiltrated Africa with the aim of spreading Christianity, exploiting resources, getting man- power for plantations, "civilizing Africa" among other interests. Christianity and formal education came as one package where, initially, only those who converted to Christianity were allowed to partake in the formal education whose major aim was to prepare Africans totake menial jobs in the European administration. Chandra Mohanty in her article "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." posits

In fact the first effect of education is to improve the value of colonial production by raising the level of intelligence among the mass of indigenous workers as well as the number of skills. It should; moreover, set free and raise above the masses of labourers the elites of collaborators, who as technical staff foremen or overseers, employed or commissioned by the management will make up for the numerical shortage of Europeans and satisfy the growing demands of Agricultural, industrial or commercial enterprises of colonization. (380-81)

As such, in most parts of Africa, sons of chiefs, kings, emperors and Converts were introduced to formal education as their fathers signed treaties to allow Europeans to take up land and other resources. Later, the educated Africans would start their own schools which were accommodative to both Christians and pagans. Eventually, formal education became open for everyone who wished to learn the European culture regardless of religious affiliation.

It is worth noting that the African socio-cultural set up was favourable to the boy child to receive formal education. Allman and Tashjian observe that the influence of education to Africans was “disaggregated – episodic and uneven, gendered and generational” (222). It was unimaginable to have an educated girl in the initial years of proliferation of formal education. The general notion was that an educated girl would definitely be a threat to the dictates of patriarchy, eventually challenging the status quo in socio-cultural and political milieu. The culture of the day across most African communities sought to prepare girls for marriage after which they were expected to bear children, and bring them up as they

performed other household chores. The colonizers, especially the missionaries, came to reinforce education tailored towards attaining a domesticity goal. Stephanie Newell avers;

Mission schools imparted a gender-differentiated education: In 'vocational' classes, girls were taught European domestic skills and received a thorough 'bride training' based on Biblical models, which urged them to enter monogamous marriage as subdued and domestic wives (60).

Evidently, a formally educated girl with a career would attract a jeer rather than applause. Thus the gendered education made boys to have an upper hand in formal education.

With time, the acculturation that had made women to believe that they were meant for household chores started melting away as the quest for education took a gender inclusive trajectory. The few African women who acquired formal education began to write about their own world. Diaw observes that

The writing of women during the early years of the twentieth century reflects the desire of the independent - minded to take their lives into their own hands, an opportunity offered to them by the ambiguous political situation. Their words express a profound awareness of the complexity of the shifting new world they lived in. Their writing reveals their power to deride an already vanishing world and to greet with sarcasm or irony a prediction of better days to come (44).

In line with my earlier argument that women's writing that cuts across several generations is, in most cases, a backdated attempt by women writers to present their realm as it was, I would wish to isolate women characters represented in the second generation in the texts under study as I demonstrate how they, buoyed by the factors already mentioned

in the introduction of this chapter, begin engaging the available structures to challenge patriarchy. They take up the heterodoxical characteristics of the first generation discussed earlier and push it to the next level. This generation is marked by its inquisitiveness as opposed to most members of the first generation whose members were passive, with miniscule effort to disentangle themselves from the grips of patriarchy. Their curiosity opens up chances for them to acquire education. Nevertheless, they didn't receive formal education on a silver platter. There were numerous obstacles as patriarchy fought back to dissuade women from taking up this one of the emancipating agents.

In Makumbi's *Kintu*, second generation women characters go beyond the passive pre-colonial women characters: Babirye, Nnakato and Suubi. The main woman character of the second generation is Suubi Nnakintu whose thirst for formal education is unquenchable. Suubi emerges, initially, as a girl on death throes resulting from starvation and epilepsy-like disease that she suffers from. A neighbour doesn't mince her words in foretelling her fate when her aunt, Kulata, complains: "If she is your blood... give her food while fate makes up her mind. Look at her: she looks half-dead already" (107). Our first encounter with Suubi paints a picture of an individual in desperation originating from three aspects: her failing health, her lack of somebody to love her, and her starvation. She has been dumped at aunt Kulata's house in her absence and against her consent. Kulata claims that her relatives have picked on her because she doesn't have children. She has had so many miscarriages that her husband has eventually divorced her. Kulata's attitude towards Suubi is supercilious. She reveals that Suubi's father, Waswa, hacked his twin brother – Kato – to death. Kulata's attitude is summarized in her explanation to neighbours

The last I heard, this child was taken on by the grandmother, Waswa's mother, but as the saying goes: *When it rains on a pauper, it does not allow his clothes to dry.* The other day I heard the grandmother had also died and I said to myself, what kind of misfortune does that family have? I did not expect this child to be still alive. I mean, look at her (109).

Thus Suubi does not expect any kindness from her aunt. The only positive thing that Kulata does to Suubi which, ironically, is meant to be punitive is to take her to school: "The following day, Kulata took Suubi to Mother's Union Nursery School. She asked the teachers to keep her all day" (109). Suubi's landing in school marks the beginning of her self-aggrandizement. Though she has to go through a lot of hurdles, including being threatened with prospects of being sacrificed by abductors who had offered to help her acquire a pair of shoes because her feet had been gnawed by rats due to the poor condition in the room she was staying in, she pulls through (127-130). She is also threatened with excommunication from the Palace by the landlady since aunt Kulata later finds herself in the throes of death after suffering from an incurable disease. The narrative goes

A month later, during the second - term break, the landlady called Suubi to the annex and told her, in a congratulatory way, that she had found her a temporary job. Suubi looked at her in consternation – she had not asked anyone to find her a job, she was young, she was still studying. The woman explained: look. Such a chance does not come every day. You don't have a home. You don't have any one. Your aunt Kulata is on her final lap. Where will you go when she dies? In any case she has never cared for you. You could be knocked down by a car and that woman

would walk past your corpse. As a house-servant you will at least live in a proper home, you will be fed and there will be grownups to watch over you. You can save your money towards a stall in the market (133).

Such an obstacle to formal education characterizes the challenges that girls must endure in pursuit of formal education. Where the environment is not conducive for early marriages, they are seen as potential house helps. On hesitating to agree to the deal, the landlady does not mince her words in informing her that she is not being forced to take up the job but the worst awaits her should her aunt die

It is Ok, if you don't want to go, ... but I don't want to see you around my house except if you are living with your aunt. She dies, we pack you with her corpse on a truck and you will be taken to wherever she will be buried. You don't come back to my house. Suubi cried like a spoilt child...(133).

This impediment to formal education can be construed to mean that Suubi's education is now coming to a halt. Her acceptance to go to work as a house help in Mr. and Mrs Kiyaga's home is informed by the desire for security but it turns out to be an opportunity for her to acquire formal education and help her change from a dying destitute child to a strong human being ready to face the challenges ahead.

She joins Mr. Kiyaga's family together with his wife, Muwude, and her three children: Katama, a boy of fifteen, Kulabato, a girl of fourteen, and Katiiti, a girl of ten. At first, she is treated as part of the family and allowed to sleep in the family's house with other children, until they accuse her of stealing from them. At this juncture, her formal education is threatened because Mr. Kayiga decides she should be taken to wherever she was got

from. Fortunately for her, aunt Kulata is dead and there being no other known relative, they have nowhere else to take her. The conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Kayiga goes

‘Didn’t I say I wanted that girl to be removed when I left for work this morning?... I don’t want her mixing with my children anymore. We now have three servants and that’s enough. Besides, you know things have been disappearing since she arrived’. ‘What do you want me to do,’ now the wife’s voice came from further in the house, ‘throw her out on the streets? I took her back where I had found her but her aunt had died. She does not know her relations.’ ‘She is lying. Where did she come from? How can she not know where she came from?’ ‘Suubi was very young when she was abandoned and no one had seen any relations visiting. I can’t just send her away; she is too young.’ ‘Then take her to the police.’ ‘And where will I say I found her?’ (141).

The motherly approach by Mrs Kiyaga to Suubi’s predicament coupled with the absence of any known relative saves her metaphorical education boat from capsizing. She, however, does not survive from being ejected from the main house. She is taken to the servant quarters. As fate would have it, she suffers from severe falciparum strain whereupon the family is forced to re-admit her to the main house, take her to hospital and be accommodative to her. Even Kulabato, their daughter, hitherto her number one enemy, softens her stance and starts donating her dresses to her. Suubi’s dream of acquiring education survives hence stabilizing the metaphorical boat. Once she recovers, she goes back to school. The narrative goes

One morning she woke up early and walked back to old Kampala Primary. She told the headmistress that she had been unwell and joined the primary seven class. At the end of the term when she brought home a fantastic school report, her parents could not believe that a child could walk for so many miles to school and still manage to study so well. ‘Katama, Kula, Katiiti, look at this report!’ Mummy said to Suubi’s spoilt siblings (150).

Indeed Suubi’s fantastic school report softens her foster parents to a point of wishing their children, who have all along been enjoying wonderful facilities both at home and in school, to emulate her. She gets celebrated for her good performance and is accommodated to the family on account of her resilience and determination.

Though Suubi’s case may be exceptional in terms of the challenges she faces as an orphan and a sickly child, to a certain extent she represents the African girl child in pursuit of formal education as an emancipating agent. The second generation African woman is exposed to challenges in pursuit of formal education since she is not considered to be cut for it. She is meant to be prepared for marriage. The challenges that the girl child receives in her pursuit for education is, however, unique to the environment they find themselves in.

The later day Suubi that we meet eighteen years later is an emancipated mature person with an own job and a boyfriend, Opolot, to boot. She is already an employed graduate from what we gather from the story that she relates to her boyfriend. She has fully been adopted by Kiyaga’s family. She proudly informs her boyfriend: “My full name is Suubi N. Kiyaga. *N* is for Nnakintu but I don’t use it really. Nnakintu is the feminine version of Kintu” (158). Their mother dies of cancer and, although they go for the funeral as family,

her children are never mentioned. Again, when their father dies of stroke, the number of children are not mentioned either. Then follows the after burial rites for Mr. Kiyaga. This happening exposes Suubi to the reality that the extended family does not fully recognize her as Mr. Kiyaga's child though she has fully been integrated into the family. Once the budget is set, she suggests that the children should contribute according to their means and goes ahead to give the highest amount. However, hers is not appreciated.

The celebration rites also expose the readers to the character of each of Suubi's foster parents' children. The narrative goes

However, while everyone else's contribution was met with approval, mine was met with stony silence yet it was quite substantial compared to everyone else's. You see, Kula, a teacher, is a single mother and Katiiti didn't have a man at the time. Katama doesn't part with money easily even though he is the eldest, the heir and the only son (161).

This elucidation allows the reader to see the financial superiority that characterizes the later day Suubi despite the challenges she faced in her initial stage of life. By virtue of contributing the highest amount, it means she is engaged in the highest paying job even above that of the man of the family – Katama. The implication here is that there is already a significant systematic independence the second generation women are gaining as a result of acquiring formal education. Nevertheless, it is not blanket liberation as seen from the fact that it is conventional for Katiiti to be broke because “[she] didn't have a man at the time” (161). Consequently, the second generation woman is presented with a choice; to

either acquire formal education, secure a job and gain full independence or acquire education and still embed herself to a man for financial support.

However, it is evident that there is a humongous difference between the two generations' of women. The passivity that characterizes most of the first women's generation as well as total reliance on men for direction has reduced considerably. That a woman can choose to remain a single mother, rather than enter into a polygamous or loveless marriage marks the beginning of the manifestation of individual choice. Kula, a teacher, chooses the life of single motherhood. This can be juxtaposed against the desperation that characterized Babirye's parents when Kintu decided to marry Nnakato ahead of her. Kula, and, to a greater extent, Suubi, have been given the heterodoxical characteristics to depict the changing world regarding women's position in Africa in particular and the world in general. It was unheard of for a younger sister to be married ahead of her elder one let alone to remain single. Notably, other women across the province choose to be married to Kintu, whom they get to see only when his excursion is necessitated by administrative rather than familial duties.

It is also worth noting that men have reduced the desire to demonstrate their macho considerably. The power relation between the two genders is like a seesaw. The African woman's acquisition of formal education leading to financial and cognitive independence definitely challenges the gender hierarchy of power. The Kintu Kidde we meet among the first generation women is, by all means, a representative of patriarchal dominance. His presence must be felt by women as a means of elevating patriarchy. Contrastingly, Katama of the second generation does not attempt to make his patriarchal machoism to be felt. The

decision of how much money ought to be contributed is made by Suubi, a woman, while he remains aloof. Failure to demonstrate his financial muscles by taking up the duty of organizing for his late father's rites through directing what should be done and contributing more than the women involved is indicative of the metaphorical seesaw beginning to tilt in favour of female gender through heterodoxical women characters. The desire for women to act independently started by Zaya continues to grow as personified by the two characters. Thus the future of fully educated woman is foreshadowed as an undertaking that will lead to full liberation.

Ogola's *The River and the Source's* second generation's main woman character is personified in Nyabera, later christened Maria. She is the only surviving child of the first generation matriarch—Akoko. Like other women during this time, she starts as a submissive wife, married to Okumu, a neighbour. Just like Akoko before her, the marriage is not informed by attraction between the two. It sprouts from convenience; being the only child, it is essential that she is not married far away from home. Akoko, a widow who had refused to be inherited, was the main player in her daughters' life with all decisions placed solely on her shoulders. The narrative goes

Akoko decided that she would not let her daughter go through what she herself had gone through. Besides, the death of her son, the apple of her eye was still too raw on her heart. Three suitors came and went. The fourth one, a young man from the next village by name of Okumu Angolo, nice enough but whose main attraction was that he would not take his bride too far from her mother, was chosen; and Nyabera left to start her own life and hopefully a large family (67).

Curiously, the only person involved in deciding Nyabera's groom is Akoko, a female figure. This reality is a paradigm shift from the previous generation where Akoko's betrothal was a man's affair. In Nyabera's case, women participation in vital communal affairs has started manifesting itself.

Notably, the patriarch's power shows signs of dwindling. While Owuor Kembo's source of attraction was his position as a chief hence a source of authority and resources associated with patriarchy as the focal point of power, Okumu Angolo is chosen on the basis of his proximity to the mother's home. Thus the African woman at this point in history seems not to be interested in materialism rather she prefers personal convenience. At the same time, just as is the case with Katama in *Kintu*, it is evident that man's dominance has started to lessen. The intricate authority associated with Owuor Kembo as the male figure in the first generation is not present in Okumu Angolo's case. He seems to have taken a passive position as Nyabera, with the support of her mother, demonstrates some sense of presence.

Okumu and Nyabera are blessed with six children out of whom only one, Awiti, survives. Okumu dies at an early age following a short illness leaving Nyabera a devastated young widow. Unlike her mother, Nyabera tries the option of being inherited according to the dictates of the Luo community. The women's consciousness with regards to the inconsiderate nature of rules set for widows is starts to manifest itself. It is at this point that heterodoxical characteristics in second generation women begin to manifest. Nyabera dares to question the wisdom of *Chik* (tradition) regarding the position of women:

To be a widow and young was an untenable situation. A husband had to be found from close relatives of the dead man, but such a man had no real rights over the woman, his job being that of siring children to maintain the dead man's name and to keep his widow from wandering from one man to man (a scandal). This was called *tero*. Even the children he sired did not belong to him – therefore, he was under no obligation to provide for them. His duty was to his own wife. So in reality instead of being protected the widow was left in a sort of limbo. *Nyabera felt that here Chik had erred*, the first time such a thought had crossed her mind (my emphasis) (99).

I am making this assertion fully aware that *tero* was not as elaborate among all other African communities as it was among the Luo from which Ogola draws her raw materials. However, almost all the communities had put structures to deal with widowhood amongst them which were tailored in a way that they were unfavourable to the women they were meant to help. With time, women start to realize the injustice inherent in the patriarchy-initiated provisions.

Nyabera thus encapsulates the era in which African women begin to consciously query the dictates of negative traditions that are designed by patriarchy with the aim of subduing women to toe the line. She ruminates being burdened with children by an individual who is not bound in any way to provide for them, a stratagem construed by men as an antidote for taming women from seeking love outside the family set up once their husbands die-an unwarrantable injustice. This consciousness of subjugation of women spells the beginning of disentanglement from the chains of negative traditions. The liberating agent for women

from the tight grip of negative tradition hitherto readily accepted by women, is the new religion-Christianity-which comes with formal education in the same package.

Backed by the conscious realization that she, and, to a greater extent, African women, are exposed to maltreatment that their foremothers were not conscious of, Nyabera decides to seek the New way. She departs from home leaving Awiti, her only surviving child, under the care of her mother Akoko who is Awiti's grandmother. This journey is significant as it marks the inauguration of writing another chapter in the African woman's life. She becomes the pioneer of both formal education and Christianity to her community. She would later travel to Aluor mission, join catechism class, get baptized, learn simple arithmetic, and come for her mother Akoko, her daughter Awiti, and her nephew Owuor Sino.

Nyabera emerges as the pioneer with regards to Christianity, the one to lead her tribesmen and women to the new way. As an individual, she only acquires functional literacy, she doesn't go beyond learning how to read and write because she joins formal education as an adult. Nevertheless, Nyabera's realization that women's subjugation is a mindset rather than the norm opens the flood gates for the pursuit of emancipation especially by the next generation that fully embraces literacy and numeracy. She lays the base for future women, her daughter included, to immerse themselves into education hence acquiring the hitherto elusive liberty.

Later in life when it comes to Awiti, her daughter's education, Nyabera supports her in spite of the trepidation informed by the fact that Awiti happens to be her only surviving child. She fears losing her when she is admitted to join the teacher training college (133).

Thus the pioneering spirit started by the pre- colonial woman in the embodiment of Akoko is carried forward by her daughter, Nyabera, who recognizes that she can disentangle herself from the unfairly constructed injunctions of patriarchy regarding widow comportment and decide on her own what suits her.

Canpell – Fatoki’s *Threads of Gold Beads* features Ajoke, popularly known as Ajo as the second generation woman, her mother-in-law, Na Zavaton being the first generation. She is present around the palace and stays close to Grandmother who everybody believes is her biological mother until the reader gets to know about reality much later in the novel. Through flashback, readers learn about the reality surrounding Ajo’s parenthood when her daughter, Amelia, together with her step-brother – Dare – are sent away to Abeokuta for their own safety. The same is occasioned by impending war between French and Danhomè. We get to realize that it is the cruel hand of war between Abeokuta and Danhomè Kingdoms that brought Ajoke to the palace as a young girl. Ajoke was separated from her mother when she was captured during the war. Ajoke’s mother’s life in Abeokuta, to a great extent, parallels that of Akoko in Sakwa.

Ajoke’s mother, just like Akoko in *The River and the Source* had only one daughter who she got after several miscarriages. Her mother-in-law, just like Akoko’s had complained of her inability to get children, accusing her of being a witch and eating up her own children (235). Unlike Owuor Kembo, however, her husband married another wife and got two other daughters. Though still alive, “Ajoke’s father did not interfere in raising Ajoke, giving full rein to her mother. She was not male and would soon take someone else’s name” (235-6). This non-participation of Ajoke’s upbringing by her father which is

a silent protest against his wife's inability to give birth to male children typifies the first generation Africans during pre-colonial epoch who attach value to male children. It, however, comes as a blessing to Ajoke's mother because it affords her an opportunity to enroll her in school fully aware that literacy will be her liberating agent from the dictates of patriarchy:

Ajoke was enrolled in the missionary school established by the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Ajoke's mother wanted to ensure her daughter was literate. Her friends had shaken their heads. Telling her she was throwing her daughter to the wolves. **What would happen when she started growing breasts?** They had asked. **The only girl in a school of boys.** Ajoke's mother had laughed at them. That would never happen in a Missionary school (236).

Evidently, some visionary women can foresee that formal education is the only agency that will liberate women from the jaws of patriarchy. However, as demonstrated by the comments that people make, it is evident that changing people's mind set to see the role that an educated girl can play in the society is a tall order that is bound to take long. Ajoke's father does not want anything to do with her upbringing because after she grows up, she would take someone else's name. He only sees her as a candidate for marriage. In terms of her ability to see the inevitable change encapsulated in formal education that both genders must acquire, Ajoke's mother emerges the better. She is ready to convert to Christianity so that her daughter can be allowed into missionary school: "Ajoke's mother had been true to herself why she associated with missionaries—to give her child an education" (238). By being supportive, Ajoke's mother joins other heterodoxical women

characters in the other texts under study- Mrs Kiyaga: Suubi's surrogate mother and Akoko, Nyabera's mother in foreseeing the need to support girl child's education and, single handedly, actualizing it. Likewise, Ajoke's father joins Katama, Suubi's surrogate brother, and Okumu Angolo in diminishing the patriarchal influence.

The effects of war make Ajoke to drop out of school prematurely. When Danhomè attacks Abeokuta, Ajoke together with another girl who later becomes Dare's mother are abducted and taken to Danhomè. Ajoke eventually finds her way to the Kings palace where she becomes one of the many queens. Her liberated mind is still evident in the palace as she plays a key role in its administration. She is the only woman with functional literacy in the palace, with permission to keep and read her Bible notwithstanding that the King does not trust the infiltrating Christianity and the missionaries. She gives it as a gift to her daughter, Amelia, when the imminent war forces her to flee her motherland

She picked up the beaten – up book. “Oh, my Bible? Yes, of course.” She smiled at it wistfully. “Aah, Kondo did not want to hear about the white man's religion. Not one bit! According to him, it was just a means for the outsiders to gain access to our lands and goods (152).

Thus despite Ajoke's formal education being nipped off the bud when she is abducted by the warring Danhomè soldiers, she proves to be the only one with the ability to read the Bible. And for that ability, the King allows her to keep and read it although he banishes all the missionaries from the palace. Her educational ability is reflected in the status she is accorded in the administrative duties in the palace. She is the only wife of Kondo who sits in the meetings that the King holds. She is the only woman allowed to keep and read the

Bible, attend meetings in which, with the exception of Kamlin whose position in the leadership of Danhomè we already know, all the other members are male. This elevation of women demonstrates the extent to which formal education has enhanced the second generation's African woman. It is indeed a liberating factor for women who acquire it.

Aminata Forna's *Ancestor Stones* features Asana, daughter of the first generation woman: Serah. The family is governed by Islamic *sharia* hence she acquires formal education that is governed by *sharia* law. In addition, she acquires informal familial training in preparation for marriage offered by mothers to their daughters. She is an epitome of discrimination that women in this generation in the Islamic world continue to endure under the *sharia* law. She is a victim of female circumcision (recently and aptly christened female genital mutilation), domestic violence, and co-wives' rivalry. Despite these challenges, she devices her own way of dealing with patriarchy encapsulated in her husband Osman Iscandari.

In her preparation for marriage, her mother teaches her how to survive within the institution of marriage which is dominated by androcentricism. Her mother instructs her: "Before you are married, keep both eyes open and after you are married close one eye" (107). Closure of one eye is a metaphorical reference to acceptance of the subjugated position that a woman must endure – that she should not see the suffering that womenfolk are, unjustifiably, exposed to. Asana regrets later that she failed to obey her mother. She is married as a third wife to the wife – battering Osman Iscandari. To her, marriage is a very important learning platform

Where to begin? I gave myself away. Not to become a first wife, no. Nor even a second. I threw myself away to become a man's third wife. And would you think perhaps that man came from a ruling family, or was rich, or respected, or held an honourable position in the men's society? I would understand why you might think so. But, no. It's true to say Osman Iscandari was none of those things (107).

From her own confession, it is evident that despite lack of an opportunity to acquire a structured formal education, Asana is aware of what she is getting herself into. She is not forced to marry Osman Iscandari, she chooses to herself. Again, just like in Nyabera's case highlighted earlier in this chapter, it is evident that unlike the first generation women who were keen on attaching themselves to men of wealth and authority, the second generation women are beginning to shun materialism for partnership.

As for menfolk, just like Katama and Angolo, Osman's lack of power as defined in patriarchal circles is evidence that women are working hard to assert themselves rather than be an adjunct of men. The tradition of men being the custodians of power is beginning to diminish. Marriage becomes an avenue for women who are conscious of their subalternized position in the society to re-discover themselves, and emerge as worthy challengers of patriarchal dispensation. Asana in her narration reveals that her marriage offered her an opportunity to discover what constitutes the institution of womanhood

After I married I learned a lot. I did not learn so much about men – after all, Osman Iscandari was not all men. Rather I learned about myself. I learned about women – how we are made into the women we become, how we shape ourselves, how we shape each other (107).

Given that she is in an abusive marriage (wife-battering is seen as a norm rather than an exception at this time in history), Asana devises a stratagem to arrest the problem. After being forced to stand naked throughout the night by her husband once while Osman Iscandari is asleep, she gets a knife and holds it over his head. Upon waking up and finding a knife above his chin, he stops the abusive behaviour forthwith.

Threatening her husband with a knife can be read as a metaphorical awakening of women as they start to consciously realize that some of the traditionally- sanctioned facets of patriarchal extremities can successfully be challenged, and aligned to fit within the dictates of respectful co-existence. Again, considering that Asana's husband does not repeat the abusive action is a metaphorical beginning of a successful challenge of misuse of patriarchal power as women demonstrate their heterodoxical character in challenging the patriarchal powers that be. Later on in marriage, Asana leaves her matrimonial home and goes back to her parents further challenging the hitherto held belief that a married woman must stick to their husband and the challenges that come her way.

The first time her father instructs her to go back to her matrimony when Iscanadari comes for her but not without foreshadowing future resistance

'You will be going home as soon as your husband comes.' My father spoke in statements.' I replied: 'Perhaps but this is my home, too.' *Te ting*. True. But a wife's duty is to be with her husband in his home and any day now he'll be here to take you back... of course you should make him win you again. But when he has done that you will accept him and you will go.' This is the way things were done in those days (121).

Asana's father directs the happenings in her life not only in his capacity as her father but also as the representative of patriarchy. Although Asana appears to plant seeds of independence by challenging the patriarchal power when she makes her own choice to leave her matrimonial home in protest of her husband's abuse, to make her own choice, she still obeys her father.

Asana further exhibits the heterodoxical characteristics by challenging the silence that characterizes women at this point in history when she demands the presence of her husband in their matrimonial home. She is irked by Iscandari's constant absence from home. This level of women's consciousness of their rights is a notch higher from that of the first generation where we encounter, for instance, women being offered to Governor Kintu Kidde as tokens by their parents. Kintu only gets to meet them when he decides to tour their lands. When Asana is sent away by her husband, she considers it to be good riddance because after all she had been living in loneliness. She makes up her mind not to go back and refuses to be persuaded otherwise. The second generation is thus characterized by discovery of the brutality women are exposed to by their men and how to arrest the problem. The heterodoxical characteristics keep on improving with from generation to generation.

### **3.3 Culture-Sanctioned Inhibitions to Third Generation Women's Formal Education**

The introduction of formal education marks a turning point for both genders. As pointed out earlier in the chapter, formal education becomes a must-have for everyone, gender notwithstanding. The African patriarchal set-up that has always favoured men becomes an impasse to the girl-child as she struggles to access formal education. The third

generation of women in the novels under study presents individual women characters struggling to acquire religious teachings from missionaries who also double as the custodians of formal education. Consequently, they mirror a retrospective reality of challenges experienced by women whose parents were progressive enough to enroll their girls to start formal schooling. At this time in African history, various denominations have infiltrated Africa and all of them use formal education both as a bait to convert the deeply traditional Africans and to “civilize” them. The educated and “civilized” are also being prepared to provide semi-skilled labour for various African colonies. Dominance of one denomination depends on the Western country of origin and the relationship between that country and the colonizers of the African country in question.

*Kintu*, Makumbi’s novel features Faisi, the wife of Kanani Kintu who is in the patrilineal lineage of Kintu Kidda the patriarch of the pedigree. Numerous changes within women characters have taken place since the times of Kintu Kidda the polygamous governor. The ideal African woman as per the dictates of patriarchy has been thoroughly reviewed, with introduction of heterodoxical women characters, paving way for women to play key roles in the family set up. Christianity has also taken central roles in the lives of some Africans hence diluting the effects of patriarchy. The Eurocentric culture that is packaged in both formal education and religion offers women an opportunity to contest and re-define the culturally accepted practice of women subjugation. The couple, Faisi (The Ganda version of Faith) and Kanani (the Ganda version of Canaan) who belong to one of the many denominations called the “Awakened” come into focus here. While both of them are preachers in their church, it is their family revolving around their daughter

Luusi (Ganda version for Ruth), their son Yobu (Ganda version for Job) and their grandson resulting from incest between the two twins also named Yobu like his father (later Nsobya meaning a corrected mistake) that I would wish to focus on.

Ruth represents the third generation woman owing to the time she grows when formal education is a basic rather than a secondary need for both genders. She is enrolled in the same school with her twin brother as their parents continue sowing (preaching the gospel) in vehicles. Their schooling is, however, not devoid of incidences as the two become inseparable. At home, their parents allow them to sleep together even up to teenage. Their parents are so much engrossed in the missionary work to notice the lagging danger behind such an act. The twins engage in incest resulting to Ruth's pregnancy. Out of shame, their father opts to hide her at aunt Magda Bweeza's house at Nakaseke. Later, Ruth gives birth to a baby boy who she names Yobu after his father but whom her father later on names Paulo Nsobya (A corrected error). The paternal lineage of Paulo is contested, with everybody, except the twins, believing that Kalemanzira, a Rwandese who was a water vendor in their family, is the father. This was attributed to an happening after the twins were through with primary leaving exams. Kalemanzira had shown his affection towards Ruth

Initially , Kalemanzira annoyed the twins by claiming that the family had Tutsi roots...Then one day, Kalemanzira was so tempted by Ruth's voluptuous body he sneaked a finger to poke her bottom. Job was so incensed that he picked up a stone and hurled it at Kalemanzira's head. Kalemanzira passed out. After recovery, Kanani gave Kalemanzira so much money that the water – man went back to

Rwanda. Shortly after Kalemanzira's departure, Ruth was taken to Namirembe hospital with a fever. The rest of the family came along – Kanani to make sure that a doctor who was a friend saw Ruth quickly so he could go to work, Faisi to guarantee that whatever the problem she would still go sowing and Job had to be where Ruth was. Hence all four were stunned silent when Ruth was pronounced pregnant (195).

As pointed out earlier, the third generation women seem to have overshadowed the initial subjugation that always pushed them to the periphery. This has been achieved by aligning themselves with missionaries whose advocacy was for one to marry only one wife. Given that Christianity was intertwined with European culture that seemed to have a check on male chauvinism that characterized African men became a relief to women especially those whose husbands converted.

Nevertheless, the sexist ideology of perceiving women as vessels for pleasure has not fully been erased in the minds of men. That explains why despite being a worker and, therefore, of low status, Kalemanzira's perception of Ruth is that she is a woman hence below him in the hierarchy, her status as his boss' daughter notwithstanding. Again, he sees her as a source of sexual pleasure. Though, as we get to learn later, he is not responsible for Ruth's pregnancy, Kalemanzira represents phallogentric men that threatened the third generation women keen on acquiring formal education. Though governments would later enact laws to safeguard the girl child against the prying eyes of men who exposed them to not only early pregnancy but also an early marriage, the problem has not been fully arrested.

Notwithstanding that Ruth's pregnancy stems from incest which is uncommon among Christians, a religion that her family practices, the act of the girl child dropping out of school to bring forth a child as the boy responsible for her pregnancy continues with education is a manifestation of gendered injustice. While Ruth is exiled to aunt Bweeza's home at Nakaseke, Job continues with his education unimpeded. Many African governments do not allow girls who fall into early pregnancy trap to go back to school. They, therefore, fall into waste even as their male counterparts proceed with education.

In this understanding, James Onyango opines that abolishing illiteracy has been top on the women's agenda for emancipation. Onyango, however, admits that in many patriarchal societies in Africa, educating a male child is more of a priority than educating a girl child (36). While some of these impediments to girl's education may be circumstantial like is the case with Ruth, some African societies have tried to stick to the culture of women exclusivity hence making it difficult for them to acquire education.

It can thus be observed that both Christianity and European culture acted as a major relief for African extremities of patriarchy. However, the perception of women as men's vessels for pleasure leading to early pregnancies and dropping out of school as a result of conception still threaten the total emancipation of the third generation African women. As a result, their going through the formal education system is a troubled one hence they are not yet at par with their male counterparts with regards to other spheres of life that acquisition of formal education enhances. Women do not give up the struggle though. Ruth, despite being delayed by the process of pregnancy and giving birth, she is able to enroll herself in another school and proceed with formal education up to completion. The

heterodoxical characteristics of women characters, therefore, continue to manifest itself in third generations' women.

Ogola's *The River and the Source* features Awiti Okumu, later christened Elizabeth and married to Mark Anthony Oloo Sigu. Awiti is the granddaughter of Akoko, the first generation woman character in the novel. Her grandmother's change-oriented mind becomes instrumental in ensuring that she becomes the pioneer in formal education in her family and village. Having successfully engaged the new administration of the Whiteman in a bid to secure the chieftaincy from Otieno Kembo, her brother-in-law, Akoko shows tinges of trust for the Whiteman's structure. After she is introduced to Christianity, she takes to it with lots of enthusiasm and when her grandchildren – Awiti and Owuor Sino – come of age, she is the main architect of ensuring that they enroll for formal education.

Despite being a strong adherent for formal education, Awiti is not spared the challenges that dog the third generation African women. From the beginning, she shows mastery of content in prayer both in Latin and vernacular as opposed to her cousin whose competence is in catechism and numbers (116). The only shortcoming of this kind of schooling is that only religion, reading, and simple arithmetic was being taught. As foreshadowed earlier, Owuor joins Seminary upon which it is decided that Awiti

[...] should join one of the newly founded primary school in which English, Mathematics, Geography, Nature Study and History with a heavy colonial slant were taught. ... Awiti was enrolled in the school – one of the only two girls. The other *thirty two* were boys (my emphasis). The drop-out rate was extremely high

that by the end of the second year the other girl who was almost sixteen dropped out to get married. (128)

Evidently, the ratio of boys to girls at the onset of formal education is extremely lopsided. The fact that only one girl remains in school is suggestive of a false start to the girl child regarding education. Through authorial intrusion, the novelist highlights the difficulties that faced the third generation woman

If it was hard for a boy to get an education – it was well nigh impossible for a girl. The purpose of female existence was marriage and child bearing – and by the same token to bring wealth to her family with the bride price. In fact a poor man with absolutely nothing to his name except some daughters had a guaranteed wealth if they could hang on long enough to come of age. If education was not necessary for boys, it was superfluous for girls (129).

The insignificance of education for girls cannot be over emphasized. Furthermore, an educated girl is treated with suspicion. Awiti's brilliance when she emerges the best in her class is treated with contempt. Instead of celebrating her, the patriarchy condemns her, prophesying doom – that she won't get anybody to marry her (130).

The girl child's predicament does not stop with going through the primary education. It becomes even more difficult for girls to be released from the watchful eyes of the parents to join college. It takes the pioneering spirit of her grandmother Akoko to prevail upon Nyabera, Awiti's mother who is out to prevent her daughter from scaling the height of education. When it becomes necessary, Akoko even reprimands her daughter in a bid to ensure Awiti does not take the route of illiteracy. On joining college, the predicament of

the girl child does not end. Awiti is not spared the overtures by men whose patriarchal orientation makes them to believe that women should be sex objects rather than serious learners projecting to become future professionals.

It thus takes determination for a third generation woman to shake off all these disablements and join the educated league. Contrastingly, the boy child's trajectory is clear, at least in terms of uninterrupted progress with only problems coming in where the parents can't afford fees. Inevitably, many of them are bound to acquire literacy as opposed to girls who, arguably, require a pioneering individual to help them overcome the challenges. Thus despite the struggle witnessed in the attempt to push the girl child to acquire formal education, the impediments are very pronounced. The takeoff for the boy child starts at this level.

Forna's novel *Ancestor Stones*' third generation woman features Mariama Plaba, whom other girls have nicknamed Marie Palaver. Concomitant to other parts across Africa, the white people had come to Sierra Leone with, among other reasons, the aim of introducing formal education to Africans. Formal education's entry into the country is comparable to that of Ogola's *The River and the Source* in Kenya since it was brought by the Catholic Church. However, unlike in Ogola's case where Nyabera was proactive in her daughter's acquisition of education, in Forna's *Ancestor Stones*' Sierra Leone, the missionaries settle in a place where they are not wanted. The school established on graveyard at this point in time is run by nuns. The school is allowed to operate not because there is a feeling that the citizens need western education but because "the *obai* was worried about giving offence, so he let them have a piece of land no one cared about (131). With the world changing, the

local people are forced to change too. Consequently, they send their daughters to the Nuns' school.

To make Christianization and acquisition of formal education possible, the missionaries establish Pagan-Baby Project. Thus the girls' baptism is paid for through this project (132). To "civilize" the girls, they have a schedule of six girls per week to sit at Sister Monica's table to watch and copy how she ate. The experience made girls to leave the dining room hungrier than they entered it with most of the food on the floor going to waste.

Despite the efforts made by the Nuns to "civilize" Africans by intertwining education with Christianity which in turn brings about general "civilization", it proves hard to achieve the goal at once. Though the need to avoid pagan practices is implanted into the consciousness of the learners, they still practice paganism. When Marie and her friend differ with Ma Cook, they engage the services of a soothsayer – *moriman* - though they have no definite reason to do so. She says she wants to "just because". Sister Eadie had warned them against such practices terming them "Pagan antics. Satan's pastimes" (135).

Manifestly, the third generation woman's education was marked by numerous obstacles. That the girls were being prepared to take up household duties complicates the matters further. In addition to formal education laced with religion, they are invited to learn the so called table manners through conditioning. It also proved difficult to separate the African from tradition. Despite all the grilling, the mission educated girls do not shy away from seeking protection from the *moriman*.

In a society filled with patriarchal orientation, people fail to understand how Nuns can remain unmarried. The *moriman* represents the thinking of the African masses that cannot understand how a grown up woman can remain unmarried. As per the understanding of the *moriman*, and by extension, that of the masses, the Nuns are married to Father. The importance that men attach to marriage underlines the strain that lies ahead of women who are keen on attaining formal education. As per the men's point of view, such women should be married at an early age instead of being in school. That notwithstanding, men, as represented by *moriman*, are fully aware of the emancipating power that education is bound to bequeath to women. The *moriman* admits that the Christian God is a powerful "spirit" and literacy is a powerful "witchcraft". On behalf of the patriarchy which is concerned with the emancipating agent that the women are acquiring, he inquires whether "[...] so they are bringing you up to worship that spirit too? That's good. It is a powerful one. But tell me, do they teach you their witchcraft? Or keep you just to work for them?" (137). The concern on whether the girls were being let into the secrets of the white people is a concern to patriarchy because it can be responsible for diminishing their power.

In spite of the difficulties that women go through as they navigate through formal education that is not fully sanctioned by the whole institution of patriarchy, the renaissance engulfing Africa is irresistible. Male dominance is being pushed away slowly through the help of formal education for both genders. To encourage women to acquire the so called "European witchcraft" which is the secret behind African's success, a myth is narrated to girls before they leave home for school. The myth can be summarized as follows:

Kuru (god) made heaven and earth followed by men – both black and white. Then Kuru instructed the angel to bring all sorts of tools upon which he gifted the black people with the plough, the hoe, the hammer and the anvil. He then let them be farmers and blacksmiths and sent them to live in the hills and forests from where they hoed the land, built themselves houses and thatched them with palm leaves. Then to the white people he gave a compass, a ruler and a sextant. The whites built ships, sailed seas, traded and grew wealthy. On realizing he had been unfair, Kuru added power of divination to black people. But instead of using it to grow wealthy, the blacks opted to consult and seek advice from the ancestors on how to live (143).

Orature being the major instructional medium among Africans, especially during pre-colonial times and even later, used to initiate curiosity to the potential pupils before they leave home. The myth serves to awaken the girls' desire to acquire the whiteman's education in order to share the wealth which they acquired through effective use of Kuru's gifts to build ships, sail the seas and to trade. In other words, the gift being referred to here by the narrator is formal education and its packages that are beneficial to the African in general and women in particular. Acquiring formal education is a catalyst for women's heterodoxical characteristics that, to a greater extent, helps to emancipate African women.

Ironically, the same community that sends its girls out to learn with elaborate information regarding the benefits that will accrue from acquiring western education is the same one making it difficult for the girls to acquire it. This act is attributable to the fact that men are aware of the impending loss of the power they exercise as superior sex should their girls acquire education. Consequently, the difficulties that girls go through in their

quest for education are attributable to men's resistance to any attempt that may result to power imbalance. Nevertheless, with formal education being embedded in religion which has the support of colonizers, the resistance by patriarchy is evidently an exercise in futility.

### **3.4 The Monogamy Motif**

Over the years, men have used polygamy as a one of the many weapons to subjugate women. The same is used to weaken women in two ways: firstly, a polygamous man in a subtle way communicates to the wives that he has (an) alternative(s) hence they are bound to behave or be isolated as he sticks with his other wive(s). Therefore, the wives are subtly coerced into obedience as they try to impress in order to remain in the good book of their husband. Secondly, women in a polygamous setting seem to compete against each other, a situation that weakens their resolve to fight against patriarchy. Their energy is directed towards internal squabbling, an act which is detrimental to their unity against a common cause. This co-wife competition is demonstrated by Aminatta Forna in *Ancestor Stones* when Ngadie offers to cook for Asana, three nights in a row when it is her turn to share a bed with their husband, Osman. Ngadie deliberately uses additives that prevent their husband from rising to the occasion in order to make their husband hate her. She also offers bitter kola which "has the power to wet a man's tinder" (129). Asana realizes too late that her rival co-wife had intentionally made her husband food that made her "cold" when for three nights in a row he is unable to anything. She feels cheated by her co-wife whom she trusted and decides to leave.

Notably, as women continue to overcome the culture-sanctioned obstacles to formal education, the power associated with men is challenged as women gradually get emancipated by formal education. Manifestly, there is a notable increase in autonomy among the third generation women as they demonstrate signs of emancipating themselves from the shackles of patriarchy. One of the notable happening among the third generation women is the considerable diminution of polygamy among men which allows women to have a substantial amount of influence on their husbands. The same brings matriarchy and patriarchy at the fore hence setting a stage for the hitherto unarticulated war on gender inclusivity, equity, and equality. With men focusing on only one wife, it affords women an opportunity to consciously challenge them in their endeavours.

In her novel, *Kintu*, Makumbi's third generation women characters are in monogamous marriages. The way Kanani and his wife Faisi relate with each other is a total contrast to the way, for instance, Kintu Kida related with his many wives. While Kintu Kida was an authoritative individual whose authority was felt and respected by all his wives as a husband rather than as a Ppookino, Kanani and Faisi behave like partners in their marriage without a definite head of the family. The two complement each other in their preaching. They belong to the Denomination of the "Awakened" who preach the gospel in buses with a lot of zeal. The "Awakened" is a denomination that claims to be the only one on the right course. They declare the other Anglicans to be asleep, Catholics to be heathen for worshipping idols and a woman, and Moslems to be a primitive tribe (176). So enthusiastic is the sect that in their "sowing seed" sojourn Faisi opts to lie to the audience

in a bus that she has had abortion on several occasions and killed the children of her co-wife. The falsehood has the support of Kanani, her husband (179).

Christianity is partially responsible for monogamy among Africans as one of the components of its teachings is that a man must have only one wife. Monogamy seems to have a long time effect of diluting masculinity. Kanani for instance appears impotent within his own house. The terrible cooking Faisi does is never reprimanded. He is only left to admire Mr. Lane who, when his wife fails him in the kitchen department, does the cooking himself (186). Even Ruth and Job, their twins understand the almost equal status that their parents have. They refer to the mother as “she” and the father as “he” without distinguishing extra authority that goes with the title (191). The two pronouns demonstrate the status each individual occupies within the family set up.

When Ruth’s pregnancy is confirmed at the hospital, a very hard decision has to be made with regards to where she will stay because she has put the parents and the church to shame. The expectation is that such a decision would lie squarely on the shoulders of Kanani the head of the family but it happens to the contrary. The narration goes

A week later, Faisi called the family to get together in prayer. Instead of Kanani, she led the prayer and beseeched God to give them wisdom so they would make the right decisions. When they got off their knees, Faisi smiled as if she had had an epiphany. First she wiped the dining table with her hand even though it was clean, then announced that Ruth was going away to live in Nakaseke – Bulemeezi for the time being. Kanani’s heathen cousin, Magda had married there (197).

That this decision which is of great import to the family is made by Faisi without Kanani's input is indicative of the distribution of familial power, a break from the norm. The assertive characteristics of patriarchy appear to cede some power to women to partake in family management. The peripheral and passive role that women hitherto have been known to take is challenged and redefined.

Kanani and Faisi's lives become intertwined with that of Magda, Kanani's heathen cousin who must take care of Ruth until she is "untied". Interestingly, Faisi refuses to take Ruth to Nakaseke. Despite the duty being a woman affair, the onus of escorting her falls on the shoulders of Kanani, the man. The lame excuse offered for Faisi's refusal to accompany her daughter to her aunt's home is not convincing: "Only Kanani accompanied Ruth to Nakaseke because Magda was his heathen cousin. Faisi could not bring herself to go to the Devil's lair. Besides, "she had sowing to do" (198). The refusal indicates that the male gender is becoming accommodative to the decisions and wishes of women. Under the "old dispensation" Kanani would have invoked his powers as the head of the family to force his wife to take her daughter to Nakaseke. Instead, he opts to do it himself.

The whole scenario revolving around Ruth's pregnancy, the decision to take her to her aunt's place, and the act of taking her there reveals reversal of roles. Kanani is expected to make such a weighty decision and direct his wife to execute it. On the contrary, Faisi makes the decision and "directs" Kanani to implement it.

The onus of going for Ruth from Nakaseke once she gives birth rests on Kanani's shoulders just like previously when he had to escort her to her aunt's place. Faisi does not bother to perform a duty that is feminine from both historical and biological perspective

where women relate closely with each other during the early years of birth. The encounter between Magda and her cousin Kanani as he arrives to pick his grandson reveals the different worlds to which the two belong – Kanani to Christianity and Magda to heathen. The issue of Ntwire, the Rwandese whose son Kalemanzira was murdered by his foster father, Kintu, but not before he (Kalemanzira) had impregnated Zaya, crops in. While Magda wants to interrogate the possibility of Kalemanzira having reincarnated in Ruth's son, Yobu (later Paul Nsobya), Kanani dismisses it as heathen reasoning that only exists in the minds of non-believers. She wonders

But why choose Luusi (Ruth)? ... You would think if the lad wanted himself reincarnated, he would go for a male's child... well what do we know about the world of the dead? Maybe over there they don't erect boundaries between daughters and sons (214).

This stream of consciousness happening in the mind of the character Magda is an indication that the gender disproportion witnessed among men is not sanctioned by the ancestors. This conclusion stems from the questions that Magda asks herself which demonstrate human understanding is not the same as that of underworld. Though the remark is meant to disparage Kanani owing to the different religious dispensation they belong, unconsciously, it serves to show the position of the two genders at that point in history. The message from the author is that inequality in all spheres of life is only endorsed by the living. It is, therefore, justifiable to have it redefined as it is happening within the monogamous family set up. This intrusion by the author resonates with Lihamba et al's postulation that writing provides avenues "through which women may be seen not

as passive or barely visible entities, but as articulate and talented producers of art and knowledge, and as heroic makers of history” (1).

In Margaret Ogola’s *The River and the Source*, Elizabeth Awiti whose education is marked by insurmountable challenges gets engaged to ex-Sergeant Mark Antony Oloo Sigu, while a student in a Teacher’s Training College. The type of engagement between the two lovers is a break from the formerly male dominated betrothal where men had the express right to choose a husband for their daughters as is the case with her grandmother, Akoko. Mark and Elizabeth’s engagement remains a secret until Awiti breaks the news to her grandmother and mother about the impending visit by Mark and his entourage to seek consent for the wedding to take place. The news is broken two weeks to the planned visit. Maria Nyabera cannot fathom how a lady could consider friendship with a stranger. She wonders through a series of rhetorical questions

And why child have you not told us about this man before? Two weeks indeed. Where does he come from and what are the names of his parents? ... what do you mean you don’t know! How can you even consider having friendship with a man whose roots and antecedents you don’t know? What is the world coming to? (142)

This incident marks the beginning of change that has started creeping into the social set up and, specifically, in the marriage. Akoko, representing the first generation of women, fail to understand how a lady can plan a marriage that is not sanctioned by a man, the head of the family. Change is indeed in the offing.

Once the marriage takes place and the two lovers start staying together, the aspect of change is evident. The practice of polygamy, like most other places in Africa, is dwindling.

Thus Mark Antony Oloo Sigu remains monogamous throughout his life. Monogamy allows for closer interaction between couples hence paving way for the power of the wife to manifest itself. From the onset, the union seems to be complimentary rather than male dominated where the man dictates what the happenings in the marriage. Neither Elizabeth nor Mark holds absolute power. They bring on board what each is good in.

This power balance coupled with Elizabeth's inability to give birth at the initial stage attracts the wrath of her mother-in-law. She feels that her son is not producing grandchildren as fast as he ought to. The common believe among Africans especially the pre-Christianity Africa is that if the marriage is not producing children as quickly as it ought to, the man in that marriage should marry another wife. Such an incidence does happen between the couple when after taking long without getting pregnant again after miscarriage, Oloo Sigu's mother comes to demand for an explanation. The complimentary nature of the couple is seen in the way Oloo Sigu handles the situation. He does not let his wife intervene which would have been a cause for enmity between the daughter and mother – in – law. Instead, he confronts his mother

When the third year of marriage came and went with no visible offspring to show for it, Mark's mother arrived to demand for an explanation. A woman with education was an object of suspicion. Who knows what she had been up to before marriage? To Mark's credit, he told her in no uncertain terms whose business she was not allowed to mind. ... the old woman was beside herself with fury but Mark had the determination of a mule, so she went. (161)

The interference of mothers-in-law in marriages of their sons is not an isolated case rather it is a replica of what had earlier happened between Owuor Kembo's mother and her daughter-in-law, Akoko prompting her to leave her matrimonial home. However, Mark proves to be more assertive by ensuring that his wife does not feature in the exchange. In so doing, he compliments his wife despite the bitterness he has because of the long time they have taken without having a child after he inadvertently led his wife to miscarriage.

Eventually when their children are born, Elizabeth emerges to be a force to reckon with in ensuring that they are well brought up. Mark finds it easy to entrust the upbringing of their children with her when the war between the MAU MAU and the white johnnies intensifies. She moves to her teaching job at Aluor with their three children leaving Mark in Nakuru. With the newly acquired freedom, Mark involves himself with a girl and almost forgets his family. He is jolted by the girl's declaration that she is pregnant upon which he sends her away and opts to go back to the family. The exchange between him and his wife is a proof that she, and to greater extent women, no longer belong to the periphery. Mark is taken into task with regards to neglecting his paternal duties: "You have remembered us at last... did you receive my letters? The girls had a bad attack of malaria. I thought Becky would die. ... why didn't you write at least to console us?" (170)

Mark's fear is evident as he tries to conceal his guilt of having involved himself with another woman behind his wife's back. But for the change that has swept the continent as a result of Christianity and education, it would have been considered normal if Mark married another wife or even wives. But here he is, afraid of the repercussions because he had erred in veering outside the matrimonial vows. That Mark does not dismiss her wives suspicion

and continue exercising his patriarchal powers bestowed to him as a man is a demonstration of paradigm shift regarding gender relationship. There is a move towards diluting patriarchal powers as women usurp some powers as well.

The directive issued by Elizabeth proves that she is at the center stage of the family affairs: “We are going back together. We are a family and it is clear that you need someone to constantly remind you of your duty all the time” (170). Mark obeys without questions. The incidence above serves to buttress the co-existence between the third generation couples which is characterized by efforts towards achieving gender equality.

With the family having expanded, Awiti is overwhelmed by the chores especially owing to the fact that she is a working lady. Buoyed by the need to surround his family under the ring of love, Mark sheds off the phallogocentric compartment and offers a helping hand in matters that would have hitherto been considered unmanly

He did things for Elizabeth that would never have even crossed the mind of a full – blooded man with a low opinion for women bred into him. She was constantly overworked in spite of the house help they had. Seven children at home and forty children in a classroom are a lot of work; so Mark took to helping her around the house – especially taking the children off her hand. His friends derided him for a while but when he proved adamant, they gave him up as lost case (173).

Change in both how women are perceived in the patriarchal worldview and the position of a working woman come into focus in this incidence. That some men deride what Mark is doing for his wife is indicative of men trying to hang on to patriarchal

ideologies, the same men who had tried to prevent girls from acquiring formal education. Nevertheless, change is foreseeable.

Elizabeth remains a force to reckon with even as Sigu's family expands. The near drowning incidence by Odongo and his twin brother Opiyo when they accompany their elder brothers to a swimming spree again brings to the fore the import of having a hands on mother. Being hot-tempered, Mark is threatening to put the older boys – Aoro and Tony through a life-threatening punitive experience for exposing their twin brothers to the danger of drowning. Elizabeth comes in to save the situation:

He thought of the near drowning and his face darkened with anger. Elizabeth took one hasty look at him and decided to take over. "You boys go to your room. When I come there, Aoro, I expect to find you bathed and ready for bed. The twins will have their dinner. You two will not. Off with you. (178)

The move by Elizabeth demonstrates a woman in charge of the destiny of her children. The outsider phenomenon previously occupied by women where an interference with a man's department would have been construed to mean direct affront to patriarchy is gradually being erased. The same is being replaced with a career woman who has benefited from formal education that has combined with religion to water down the powers of patriarchy. Transformation from an inert partner in a marriage to an active partaker of family affairs is, therefore, evident.

Aminata Forna's *Ancestor Stones* as well features third generation women characters who travel overseas for further studies. Serah travels to England for her studies while Yaya goes to Germany to study design and then England to study architecture (214). It is evident

that the hurdles that characterized the second generation woman with regards to access to formal education are no longer as pronounced as they were. In England, Serah meets Ambrose with whom she falls in love. Having stayed in England, Ambrose has adopted the “Gentleman’s” behaviour which in turn affects the protocol as defined by African principles. Serah observes that whenever they go out for a date, the waiters would serve her first. This is in contrast to the African setting in which women ate what was left after all men had eaten (215). This reversal of norms forms a basis for their future marriage in which the woman has acquired a considerable amount of freedom.

Further, modernization triggered by Christianity has caught up women of third generation as we see Serah spending her own money to finance their wedding, specifically a three tier cake. Serah points out the contrast between women of her time and those of the first generation with regards to the attitude they brought to the institution of marriage:

I changed my name to his. It had become the fashionable thing to do among African women, to take our husband’s names. Now, of course your generation is busy holding on to your father’s names, to show how sophisticated you all are. Well, then, it was all the other way round. To the African way of thinking, we took our husband’s names to show how sophisticated, how Westernised we were. And most of all how different from our mothers who kept the names they were born with all their lives (217).

These matrimonial “reforms” lay the bases for a variety of changes in the marriage institution. Among the most pronounced one is increasingly adopting change from polygamous to monogamous marriage among men. As observed earlier, Christianity

coupled with education inhibits men from practicing polygamy. The complimentary aspect of marriage is evident as when Ambrose is unable to get his study grant from their country, Serah gives up her postgraduate studies in order to take care of their son – Junior as well as work at Lyons Teapot in order to support Ambrose to finish his studies (218). The period in African history parallels recent wave of independence witnessed in Africa. As Janeh the journalist and Ambrose the lawyer-to-be engage in their argument regarding the remedy suitable for African leadership, we learn of immeasurable disillusionment that has characterized the newly independent Africa. Ambrose argues that there is no African country that has been a success to itself after the whiteman left. To him, the Blackman is not yet ready to govern himself because he hasn't learned how (221-222). The same confusion is transferred to gender roles especially to those who have not gained exposure. The couple's interchange of duties where Serah works while Ambrose is studying is frowned upon by people when they learn of the arrangement in England.

When the couple travels home, things become different. Through a request, Serah stops working in order to take care of Junior and Little Yaya – their children. There is reversal of duty as Ambrose takes to working, like Serah was doing during his studies when they were in England. In spite of accepting to stay home, she is conscious of the need to utilize that which she had learned as demonstrated by her sentiment: “though sometimes I wondered what the years of study had been for” (224).

“Civilization” that has monogamy and freedom of choice among its packages is manifest in the lives that the couple lives once they go back to their home country. Despite Serah remaining a housewife for some time, Ambrose doesn't seem to wind authority over

her especially regarding the meals as was with the first and second generation women. When he comes home with a friend and finds Serah together with her children have eaten, he lacks the moral authority to force her to cook, instead opting to go and eat roast meat with his friend. His friend in a mocking language insinuating that women are there to, among other things, cook for men; an assertion Ambrose doesn't seem to validate: "Let your woman cook rice for us. What do you think a wife is for, my man? Or don't you know? Maybe you would like me to tell you" (227). When he doesn't get the desired reaction from Ambrose who urges him to move out to get roast meat, he wonders whether that is what they are taught in England (228). Ideally, a polygamous man would have opted to go to one of his wives to get supper but a monogamous man is forced to seek food from hoteliers.

In a characteristic women's space that the African women writers try to bring to the fore, the couple's peaceful co-existence is disrupted by none other than Hannah, Serah's close friend with whom they relate very closely, sometimes borrowing her clothes. Hannah keeps on praising Serah for having found a husband who really knows how to take care of her. Perhaps in an attempt to hide her evil intention, she keeps on requesting Serah to find one for her. Just like Mark in *The River and the Source*, Ambrose finds himself involved with Hannah, in an extra-marital affair. On learning about it, Serah confronts her and beats her up. Ambrose's intervention when he gets to learn about the fight tends to defend Hannah, unlike Mark who is remorseful for his mistake. He declares that they are in Africa and he is an African man (230) in apparent reference to an attempt to re-introduce the lost patriarchal glory oblivious of the fact that acquisition of education and exposure has made

women liberal thinkers. He tries to shift blame to her, claiming that she had brought shame to him by acting on the impulse of gossip. Ironically, he makes it to appear like Serah was the one to blame.

Consequently, Serah opts out of her matrimony to start a life of her own. Owing to her good qualification from England, she secures herself a job, goes to driving school, acquires a license and buys herself a car. She ruminates on her mother's predicament who, having been in a polygamous setting, was bound by Serah's father because she could not raise the bride price to refund him. She, therefore, attributes her newly found freedom to the binding done to her mother by her father. She further mocks Ambrose's mindset at the time he was ordering her out of their matrimonial home

I think Ambrose was bluffing when he ordered me to leave our house, imagining I would soon beg him to take me back. He did not know I was my mother's daughter. He did not know I preferred to make my way alone rather than live with unhappiness. Yes Ambrose was wrong about that just as he was wrong about many other things. (233)

Serah's action brings two things to the fore: one, that women's mindset has been greatly changed by formal education in particular and "civilization" in general. Nevertheless, patriarchy has not yet readily accommodated the adjustment as shown by Ambrose's hope that his wife will beg him to allow her back. Secondly, the second generation's women act as a great inspiration to the third generation and the subsequent generations of women. There is evidence of successive generations picking from where the previous one left and taking the emancipation endeavour a notch higher.

In spite of women emancipation encapsulated in literacy, the society has not reached a point of accepting that a woman can become totally independent and carry on with her own life; working for herself, driving herself and living on her own. Serah's new status exposes her to gossips from members of the community. She asserts: "[... a]s for me, the gossip-mongers soon found new victims to torture with their tongues. Tongues like leather cords, tying a woman down, cutting into her every time she tried to break free." (232)

That Serah is not worried by the gossips is a pointer that the third generation African woman has resolved to ignore the forces that patriarchy may employ either consciously or unconsciously in their attempt to drag them back.

Monogamy in Fatoki's *Threads of Gold Beads* can be analyzed through Amelia and Dossou who are married. Though the marriage does not last long due to the impending war between the Danhomè and the French soldiers in which Dossou must participate, and which forces Amelia to flee to Abeokuta, during the time they are together there is a break from the largely polygamous marriage characterized by King Gbehenzin (the couple reunites many years later after the war is over). Amelia may not have a well-structured formal education like Elizabeth and Serah in the other novels but she enjoys the status of a princess and the King's favourite child. As such, she joins the league of other third generation women in the same level of emancipation as a member in a monogamous marriage offering complimentary support as opposed to the peripheral position women in the first generation are pushed to.

From the time the marriage is consummated, Dossou appears to abhor any activity that makes women feel the lack of sense of belonging. On their first morning after marriage,

Amelia tries to go to the floor as a way of greetings, the way she had seen her mother greet her father. Dossou would have none of it. He warns her never to do that (173). The new development is symbolic of change in the family dispensation. That Dossou does not want Amelia to practice the conduct learned from her father is indicative of the break from patriarchy as the country ushers in “civilization”. The classification in marriage is broken as both partners complimentary each other. This is a total break from Amelia’s father’s polygamous marriage which is anchored in the old dispensation.

When the war with the French breaks and Dossou goes with his troop to war, the role Amelia plays to maintain their home is enormous. She faithfully waits for him while relating well with his people until he returns two moons later (184). On his return, the relationship between the two is not that of master – servant as it was with the previous generations’ couples where women were expected to prostrate before their husbands. The closeness is underlined by Dossou’s declaration that: “You are what I came for. I don’t need food. I just need to be with you” (189). This contrasts greatly with, for example, the first generation women as presented in Makumbi’s *Kintu* where Kintu the patriarch had married women to act as his props to mark his territory rather than for need for companionship. The same is followed by Dossou’s declaration that he is going to always love Amelia whether she carries the child she is crying for or not.

Ideally, Dossou’s relationship with Amelia can be said to be focused on making each other feel a sense of belonging, accommodated and valued. The aspect of making a wife more of a servant than a partner is utterly disregarded. Thus the short time that the couple live together before Dossou is dispatched to the war and Amelia to Abeokuta is

characterized by equality and equity especially in contrast with the polygamous King Gbahezin's relationship with his numerous wives and children where both Dossou and Amelia stay. No wonder Amelia is highly dejected when the marriage is broken and she heads to Abeukuta to start a new life. A mistreated woman would have embraced the separation as an opportunity to enjoy the freedom up till then denied.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Writing by women has continued to expose the hitherto ignored realities surrounding African women within the patriarchal communities that characterize Africa. During the time captured in the third generation women in these cross-generational historical novels under study, formal education and Christianity started infiltrating in previously traditional African communities. The two prove to have emancipating ingredients to women who have up to this time been subjugated by patriarchal ideology, with only a few exceptional women showing heterodoxical characteristics that provide a glimpse of hope. Triggered by threat to lose power, men, through employment of culture-sanctioned means, fought hard to deny women exclusive access to formal education in order to maintain the status quo with regards to patriarchal grip they had with pre-colonial women. Nevertheless, women managed to navigate through the obstacles placed before them and started acquiring formal education, albeit at a slow pace when compared to their male counterparts. Consequently, there is an overwhelming change that has taken place across time with regards to women's position in a patriarchal setting. Acquisition of formal education by women has made them independent thinkers, working class and above all it has given them voice to debate family issues as participants rather than recipients of instructions. The effects of formal education

coupled with religion, especially Christianity, have had effects of persuading men to abandon some of the cultural aspects that act as a catalyst to subjugate women, notably the practice of polygamy. Focusing on one wife in a monogamous setting has enabled women to emerge as complimentary partners rather than subalternized other in the family set up. As a result, there is a tremendous improvement with regards to the position the third generation woman occupies in most spheres of life.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### BETWIXT ORTHODOX AND HETERODOX PARADIGMS: LEVELS OF WOMEN EMENCIPATION IN THE SELECTED TEXTS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the tenet of New Historicist Literary theory that there exists a reciprocal relationship between individual identity and culture. An individual is shaped by culture and at the same time he/she shapes and changes culture too. New historicism focuses on marginalized historical narratives through what they call “thick description”. This is where they attempt to discover the meaning(s) of a particular cultural production (e.g. ritual ceremony, work of art etc) to the people in whose community it occurred, and to reveal the social conventions, cultural codes and ways of seeing the world that gave the production of those meanings. “Thick description” focuses on the “personal” side of history-the history of family dynamics, leisure activities, sexual practices, child bearing customs, as much or more than the traditional historical topics. This approach contrasts with traditional historicists who tended to ignore or marginalize private life as subjective or irrelevant. New historicists try to compensate for this omission by bringing to the fore issues of private life in historical inquiry. This critical approach is strengthened by Feminist theory’s tenet that the theory aims at changing the world by promoting gender equality. All feminist activity is therefore a form of “activism” against patriarchy for the benefit of both genders. This activism is bolstered by the realization that while biology determines our sex (male or female) culture determines our gender (masculine or feminine). All the traits we associate with feminine behaviour are learned, they are not inborn. Thus the intersection between the two theories is that by analyzing private lives of

how characters from both genders relate with each other, we are able to learn how they struggle as the masculine gender try to maintain the status quo while the feminine gender tries to free itself from the historically subalternised position.

One of the repressive patriarchal ideologies is the gendered roles which have, over a long period of time, been used to exclude women from economic, political, and social spheres. This exclusion had served to maintain women within the fringe by use of gender orientation which brings out an ideal woman to be a believer in age-old belief that women are innately inferior to men. Patriarchy sets its own idyllic criterions for a woman who is expected to be modest, kind, morally upright, unassuming, self-sacrificing, and nurturing. Nevertheless, these traits that patriarchy imposes on women are not inborn rather they are learned from culture, and, therefore, can be un-learned. The discussion in the previous two chapters revealed a systematic, albeit gradual un-learning of these attributes aided by introduction of western “civilization” embalmed in formal education and Christianity.

This chapter builds on the findings presented in the previous chapters particularly with regards to the contemporary woman’s permeation into the economic, political and social spheres hitherto a preserve of the patriarchs. It interrogates the contemporary African woman within the framework of changes that have taken place since the introduction and full espousal of formal education to both genders. Professions such as Engineering and the rank of a general in the country’s armed forces, considered a preserve of men, are brought to the fore to amplify the argument that the contemporary African woman has successfully fronted herself as an equal, sometimes better than her brother. To achieve this objective, the chapter interrogates the new development in which the African woman is presented

with freedom of choice rather than being guided by the dictates of the patriarchs. As a consequence of this development, the jobs that were initially considered as exclusively belonging to a specific gender have been consciously re-defined hence allowing either gender to specialize and take up any available profession. This kind of inclusivity thrusts the contemporary African woman to the frontage as a contestant for equality and equity that has been elusive to female gender. Lastly, the chapter reviews the accomplishments that have been witnessed within the female gender of Africa with a view to providing the standpoint of gender interrelations at this point in time.

#### **4.2 Contemporary African Woman and Freedom of Choice**

The aspect of change within gender has produced what I have preferred to term as a contemporary woman, the twenty-first century woman captured in the novels under study as the fourth and last generation woman with heterodoxical characteristics being manifested in them. The changes that take place within the fourth generation of African women cohere with Deniz Kandiyoti's argument that "patriarchal bargains are not timeless or immutable entities, but are susceptible to historical transformations that open up new area of struggle and renegotiation of relationship between genders" (275). Hence the dynamic nature of the interrelationships between genders opens an avenue for us to interrogate the transformations that have taken place within the continuum of history covered within the time in question.

Unlike the previous generations discussed in this thesis, the fourth generation woman does not operate under the restrictive environment that characterizes women of the other generations. Perhaps she fits well in the Wolf's seemingly rhetorical question asked to the

emancipated woman, a woman who has already won her own room (emancipation) and is now waiting to decide whether she will invite men or she will share it exclusively with fellow women

You have won rooms of your own in the house hitherto exclusively owned by men... but this freedom is only a beginning; the room is your own, but is still bare. It has to be furnished; it has to be decorated; it has to be shared. How are you going to furnish it, how are you going to decorate it? With whom are you going to share it, and upon what terms? (226)

Compared with the first generation pre-colonial, passive, and inert woman, the contemporary woman has conquered almost all the restraints placed in her path by the men. She makes her own choices rather than being directed by men on what she ought to do. Men, having realized that her resurgence is inexorable, have learned to be accommodative to her. At this point in history, therefore, women have won a considerable space of their own room; they are only struggling to furnish it.

Though cognizant that the African woman may not yet be in a position to enjoy full privileges enjoyed by men in totality, the impediments are, to a greater extent, reduced, almost neutralized. It is in this understanding that Devor advocates for accommodative approach towards ensuring that both genders are empowered. Devor argues

Members of society might be taught to value adaptability and flexibility rather than obedience to gender roles, so that the most respected and socially valued personality types would be those which were able to make use of any behaviours which served their purposes in any situation. ... men and women, masculinity and

femininity, would be seen as immature stages in the process of reaching a blended gender identity and display (Qtd in Tripp, 16)

The fourth generation woman's life is intertwined with both formal education and religion – especially Christianity. It is against the backdrop of this understanding that we are looking at the accomplishments of the contemporary woman within the context of the texts under study.

Kusi Nnakintu, the fourth generation woman in Makumbi's novel *Kintu* is a re-defined and re-packaged woman. She possesses full heterodoxical characteristics as compare to women of earlier generations – Nnakato and Babirye of the first generation, Suubi of the second generation and Luusi of the third generation who, seemingly, could not fully disentangle themselves from the shackles of patriarchy, notwithstanding that the heterodoxical characteristics kept on manifesting itself gradually as each generation gained the independence from patriarchy. The position of the fourth generation woman as a participant rather than an observer is strengthened by Magda Bweeza who later in the novel comes out as a strong contestant for clan leadership. The man in this generation is Misirayimu Kintu, popularly known as Miisi, Cambridge University educated PhD holder who the villagers consider a Russian Idiot and a communist waste of education (313).

Having fathered twelve children, Miisi has only two remaining at the time–Kamu Kintu and Kusi Nnakintu. He however has many grandchildren with whom he lives in his mansion in the village. In apparent dramatic irony, the readers know that Kamu Kintu is dead. The novel begins with his death under the brutal hands of mob justice. The body is being preserved in the mortuary after being murdered on suspicion of stealing musical

equipment – 5CD Sony stereo player and Panasonic TV (xvii) but his father and daughter are not aware. Practically, therefore, Miisi's only surviving child is Kusi Nnakintu popularly known as General Salamander.

Based on the happenings in the novels, the practice of choosing what the daughters should do in regards to their profession and life in general is no longer tenable among the contemporary generations. Moreover, the contemporary generation appears determined to take up the jobs that were a preserve of the male child therefore breaking from the societal norm where women are unconsciously taught to stick to what the society considers conventional for them. General Salamander has chosen the life of the jungle on her own volition. In the process, she has risen through the ranks to become a general and hence she has men under her command, some as members of her platoon and others as her body guards (363). This contrasts with the happening earlier referred to in chapter two in *Ancestor Stones* where the narrator demonstrates the hopeless position she finds herself in. The same is occasioned by the loneliness and lack of protection she must undergo because her brothers – Ibrahim and Idrissa have been enlisted into the army by *potho* – the Whiteman. As a woman, she can't join. She is only left to lament about her unfortunate situation.

Owing to her choice, Kusi occupies a very significant position both in her family and her country. After most of other Miisi's children are killed by either HIV/AIDS or the war, she turns out to be the provider for the family. When she comes to visit her father, she comes home carrying so much food stuffs that her father is forced to invite the household to come and witness her providence: “come everyone, come and see what my girl has

done” (364). Thus her “masculinity” is celebrated, not frowned upon by her father. Tellingly, Kusi’s choice of a “masculine” profession anchored by her elevation to a senior rank in the army where she has men at her service to attend to her elevates her to the level that had hitherto been a preserve for men. Her father’s remark and the author’s comment demonstrate this elevation: “we have something important to talk about” Miisi told her sister as *if Kusi was a son and they were going to have manly whispers* (my emphasis, 265). Evidently, it is the choice that Kusi has made that earns her such respect from her father in particular and the country in general. She explains to her father that she has been busy in the Northern part of the country trying to suppress Kony’s rebellion, an important undertaking in the effort to ensure the country remains stable. She has thus positioned herself as the provider of the family and the protector of the state, a known masculine occupation by the dictates of patriarchy.

It is worth noting that, the tough choice that contemporary women make does not ostracize them from their femininity. Despite all her accomplishments, her father feels that her childlessness is a void that she needs to fill. During their meeting her father asks her emphatically when she is going to have a child. Despite her elusiveness, he makes it clear that she needs to give him a grandchild. Though Miisi desires to have General Salamander provide a grandchild for him, it is evident that as far as he is concerned, her status places her above marriage. Miisi explains: “I am not asking you to get married. I would not inflict on you any man, I am only asking for a child... I am asking for yours, at least one” (365). Despite contemporary women making choices that put them, arguably, beyond marriage, the societal expectation does not occlude them from continuing the process of procreation.

Thus the author in a subtle manner supports the contemporary woman's self – elevation through venturing into what had, for a long time, been considered a masculine profession but hints at the need not to forget the duties that nature rather than patriarchy prescribes for the female gender.

*The River and the Source* likewise depicts a revised standpoint with regards to gendered professions, a woman with definable heterodoxical characteristics. Vera emerges as a beneficiary of the revised gendered roles. In recognition of her brilliance, occupants of certain leadership positions are revised to accommodate a female school captain. The author points out; “When she was fourteen and in the top class of her primary school, they made her the school captain – *a position which had only been held by boys before*. Her father was quite beside himself” (my emphasis, 173).

It is worth noting that Vera becomes the pioneer female school captain hence breaking the patriarchal dogma that had been in operation in most African communities, and which the Europeans perpetuated, by hinting that leadership belonged to men only. Her pioneership at school acts as a preparatory ground for her future exploits. By steering the school successfully, she signals to men that the mythologized ideology regarding women and leadership has been redefined. Consequently, women can now occupy leadership positions once preserved for men.

When she matures, Vera continues with her pioneering spirit initially foreshadowed by her exploits at a young age. We later meet her having excelled in ‘A’ level exams and having chosen to study Electrical Engineering at the university, a very demanding course deemed to be the realm for men. So demanding it is that she does not get time to socialize,

and she only has one hour for Mass on Sundays (213). Her employment as an electronics engineer acts as avenue through which gender roles are revised and re-defined. Through her, the contemporary woman is depicted as having encroached into the former territorial occupation of man. The mature Vera that we meet later is an independent-minded lass with a well-paying job whose life is not intertwined with that of any man in any way. Unlike women in earlier generations who needed the support of a man, she is well paid and an independent thinker who lives her life. It is no surprise when she opts to join *Opus Dei*, a non-marrying branch of Catholic Church, and decides to live a life of chastity. Her father, just like Kusi's father in *Kintu*, is uncomfortable with the diminishing possibility of Vera having children

Vera's case had been the hardest to accept. Mark thought of the world of Vera, and deferred to her in everything. Then she had arrived home one day and declared that she wanted to join the Catholic Prelature of Opus Dei as a non-marrying member. It didn't help that Mark had never heard of Opus Dei and could not understand why Vera could not marry. But he had eventually accepted because he loved her... it was a pity though that she did not wear a veil or a habit. That way he could have bragged about her a little to his less lucky friends. Vera for one was a fully qualified electronics expert and had a lucrative job in the city with a large salary and all sorts of benefits (269).

The deep lying desire by Vera's father to get grandchildren through her is indicative of how women's re-defining of roles does not entail distancing themselves from recreation. It however gives women the freedom to choose "when" and "whether" to have children

unlike the case in the past where reaching nineteen seasons without a suitor was a case to be frowned upon and failing to give birth to children in quick succession was a cause for alarm as is the case with Akoko (17, 34).

Evidently, Vera's case presents a totally different position with earlier women such as her grandmother, Akoko, whom we learn through the author that her decision to leave her matrimonial home while her husband was away after her mother-in-law accuses her of *juok* (witchcraft) was a new phenomenon because once a man marries, "[he] own(s) the woman's body and soul" (36). In a similar setup, the community was also apprehensive of Elizabeth's (Vera's mother) show of brilliance in school as they prophesied that she would fall into catastrophic experience of not getting a man to marry her (130). This trepidation was despite the fact that formal education had started being embraced among the natives. In Vera's scenario, a departure from the accepted patriarchal worldview, a woman acquires the freedom to manage her body, soul, time, and finances as well as to become a leader.

Motherhood is not lost to Vera just because she chooses not to have children of her own rather she emerges to be a good mother as evidenced by the declaration from her ardent critic and sister – Becky. On her death bed, she confesses that Vera possessed better motherly attributes than her and confidently leaves her two children under her care

My sister Vera and I have had differences but I have no doubt she would have made an excellent mother – much better than I ever was. The children love her. So it is in confidence that I leave every aspect of their care in her capable hands with the assistance of whichever family members she chooses for I appreciate that the nature of her calling may not allow her to establish her own home (285).

Becky's declaration coupled with the success with which Vera brings up her sister's children with tender care and love is indicative of the fact that deciding not to have children of one's own is not tantamount to losing one's motherhood. The religious attachment in it, coupled with the freedom of choice, makes it an aspect of womanhood to be celebrated. Thus Vera encapsulates a contemporary generation woman who is economically, socially, and politically empowered.

*Forna's Ancestor Stone's* contemporary woman is also free from patriarchal entanglement unlike her earlier counterparts. The Mariama we meet at the end of the novel has transformed herself into an independent woman. She is assigned the important responsibility of granting an interview to Adam Lockheart, a British counsellor in a mission to comprehend numerous civil wars and conflicts from an African perspective. According to the myth, Kuru Masaba the maker of the earth made the world and placed it upon the head of a great giant. Every day the giant turned himself from East to West and then to East again. People were expected to be happy. But they fought themselves and their fight caused great pain to the giant in form of terrible headaches. He shook himself to free himself from the pain and brought down great storms that tormented him even more. When eventually the pain became unbearable, the giant lay down, became sick and, died. The world became dark.

After the giant's death, Kuru tried to turn away from the people but when they cried as a result of the darkened earth that was making them unable to function, his heart softened. He forgave them, and placed the world upon another giant that continues to turn from the east to West. He pushed all the evil spirits to the underworld and gave the whole earth to

human beings. Kuru is, however, not happy because people have been unable to love him the way he loves them. The giant keeps on stumbling. When it does, the earth shakes, crumbles and cracks thus allowing the spirits in the underworld to come to the surface and torment people. The evil spirits of war seizes people hence the countless conflicts in Africa (298). Mariama is thus an elevated African woman who is versed with knowledge of general African beliefs to an extent that she is considered an able representative of Africa in sharing folk knowledge. She also emerges as a contemporary philosopher philosophizing about the pre-Galileo knowledge that Africans have had regarding the shape of the earth. She feels that Africans had prior knowledge that the earth was round: “what took them too long, I sometimes wonder. We knew the earth was round long before that” (300). She feels the crookedness of the earth is what makes people lack direction with regards to life.

Mariama looks at Lockheart from the lens of a newcomer bent on trying to understand African philosophy, the *juju*, cannibalism, and curses. It is from her that Lockheart is bound to understand the African continent. He interviews her on his general understanding regarding God and family. The younger Mariama received her formal education from the Nuns together with her fellow girls, with emphasis on table manners. Naturally, it is expected that after the studies the girls are going to get married and bring forth children. It does not happen with Mariama who chooses to become a teacher and remain a spinster, dedicating all her life to teaching in a secondary school.

Indeed Mariama enjoys her freedom of choice that was not a characteristic of earlier generation’s women in Africa. Nevertheless, her behaviour even as she enjoys her freedom

is a little bit weird. She, for instance, forbids anybody in school from accessing her room which she has uniquely decorated with different scenery from the once beautiful Africa. Only Lockheart gets access to it after insisting for a long time. As to why she restricts people from accessing her room, Mariama explains

This was the first time somebody had seen my room, with my permission. A month before, the urgent matter of a bat's nest in the roof of the room next door had brought the caretaker over, he in turn called the matron, and she the principal. That's where the whole thing with Adrian Lockheart started, when the sessions began. They had not known quite what to do. It did not seem to occur to them to leave me just as I was (303).

Mariama's behaviour is a pointer to the fact that despite enjoying freedom of choice, African women's happenings are intertwined with historical happenings from which they come. This is in line with Elleke Boehem's view that "any piece of writing is a product of its time" (8). Being from an African country in which a civil war happened during her time, her secretive behaviour is explained from the experience of witnessing atrocities being meted to fellow citizens hence suffering from psychological effects. She tells Lockheart about the Rebels' killings, the dogs fattening because of feeding on human flesh, the fish under the bridge multiplying from plenty of food as fellow humans threw the corpses under the bridge, the public execution of Naasu and her husband by the soldier because her beauty offended a jealous neighbour among other horrible scenes that she had witnessed (308).

At the end of their interaction, Lockheart writes a report regarding Mariama's state of mind

He wrote a report for my employers. In his opinion, I was suffering from post-traumatic stress as a result of the war, the most notable manifestation of which appeared to be the habit of decorating the room in a manner that, while a little bizarre, was completely harmless. There was no reason I should not continue my work as a teacher (309).

Mariama's life is a demonstration that the contemporary African women are, indeed, free to choose their line of life. They are, however, affected by the environment within which they stay. In spite of that, they are not discriminated against as women rather they are listened to and offered an opportunity to recover.

In Campbell's *Threads of Gold Beads*, Amelia the daughter of King Gbehazin does not get an opportunity to advance in formal education, perhaps, because of the nature of her inadvertent immigration to Abeokuta kingdom. Nevertheless, while in Danhomè kingdom, she had been taught knitting skills by one of the famous experts in the kingdom – the Low One (93). The skill proves to be an asset to her when she re-discovers her roots in Abeokuta.

Once she settles down and finds her relatives, especially her aunt Titilayo, she undergoes a total metamorphosis, from the naïve endangered girl that she had become after being disconnected from her family and husband to an accomplished business woman. The moment she discovers she is pregnant, Madame Titilayo buys her a loom from which she weaves new tapestries which her aunt sells for her in her numerous business trips to Lagos

(297). Shortly after Amelia delivers, Madame Titilayo falls sick paving way for her to inherit her aunts' trade. Amelia starts travelling all over Nigerian towns to purchase and sell goods.

Meanwhile, Amelia's brother Dare enrolls for adult education classes held in a missionary school (297). He eventually graduates, relocates to Lagos mainland and secures employment as an accountant trainee at the Government Department of Railways. Amelia, having become a trader of high repute, would visit Dare in her numerous business trip to Lagos and other parts of Nigeria where they would reminisce about their home-Danhomè kingdom. In their conversations, Dare had ruled out any possibility of going back home or associating himself with his people in any way, arguing that the kingdom had been destroyed (317). Amelia is of contrary opinion. Consequently, she has to make her own choice regarding the way she relates with people from home.

Under the patriarchal ideology, Amelia is expected to obey Dare without demur because he possesses double empowerment first; as a male figure, and also as an educated man. However, Amelia emerges as an individual with ability to make own choice in spite of her peripheral position tag. She categorically differs with her brother on his suggestion that they should not interact with people from their (former) home. In her reply, she demonstrates her ability to chart her own path, devoid of patriarchal guidance:

Please remember this, Dare, I do not *report* to you so you have no right to tell me what to do... stop right there Mr. I – can – care – less – about – my – home. Now that you are a bona fide Lagosian, see where that gets you. Go ahead and forget home. (327)

The societal expectation based on the norms is that Dare, more than her sister, should remember home because as a man, he is expected to have an attachment to his people. As for Amelia, a girl, anywhere can be considered home just as Elizabeth observes in *The River and the Source* (100). Amelia's refusal to be subjected to Dare's ideology demonstrates women's ability to make their own choices which are suggestive to women liberation. Pointedly, it is this personal choice that helps her to re-unite with her former husband, Dossou much later when he travels all the way from Abomey to look for her in Lagos.

Amelia, eventually becomes a renowned businesswoman with her own rented house in Ibadan and other parts of Nigeria. She also converts to Christianity hence getting an opportunity to interact with many people of different calibers during church services. She is a neighbour to Maria, her brother Marcos and their mother Anita – the Brazilian immigrants who have come to Nigeria in search of their identity. In church, she also meets Revered Jaiyesimi who tries to be influential to her in choosing a marriage partner by recommending one of the fellow worshippers – Mr. Fred Bodunrin.

Amelia's choice for a marriage partner, however, is Marcos, an architect with whom she sticks up to the eve of their wedding day. On that material day, Dossou, her former husband whom she believes is dead by now shows up from Abomey, having followed her through her tapestry hence complicating her marriage arrangement.

Once again, Amelia is faced with a herculean task of making a decision of whether to re-unite with Dossou, the father of their son – Ifemi or go on with her wedding plans to Marcos. She consults her aunt, Madame Titilayo, who advises her to follow her heart.

Amelia has no male relative or friend to consult. After a long soul searching, she decides to follow her former husband through the sea back to Danhomè, a decision that is hailed by Madame Titilayo as the best under the circumstances (412).

The Dossou-Marcos dilemma presents yet another circumstance in which a woman is bound to make a decision that has a lifetime impact. Given that there is male figure involved in making this crucial decision is suggestive of the changing times in which contemporary women no longer rely on men to decide for them what to do when faced with a quandary. It would have been unimaginable for Na Zavaton – the first generation woman, for instance, to make such an important decision without the input of a man. The contemporary woman, though is not ruled out of entering marriage relationship, does not enter into it as a weaker partner coerced to do so for need of provision and protection rather she does so as, perhaps, on equality platform since she has acquired her own wealth and freedom to choose either to marry or to stay single.

#### **4.3 Harmonization of Gender Proclivity**

People, particularly Africans, have always attached a lot of importance to the male child in almost all spheres of life. Neil Price observes that among most Kenyan tribes the announcement of birth of a boy was given more applause than that of a girl. He cites the Gikuyu of central Kenya as an example where five ululations signified birth of a boy while three signified that of a girl (420). This penchant for male children is replicated in most, if not all, Kenyan communities. The boy child is also allowed to inherit his father's property while the girl is expected to be married off and bring forth wealth for her brothers to use to

pay the bride price for their numerous wives. As such, failure to get a male child in a family was one of the many reasons why Africans practice(d) polygamy.

The boy child preference is demonstrable among African women writers in a bid to present a truthful account of the patriarchal inclination of the African community. There is a successive prominence of the boy child across the three generations of women already discussed in this thesis. It is, however, worth noting that even before women writers started demonstrating the importance of the girl child in a familial milieu, two prominent male writers, namely Chinua Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah* and Francis Imbuga's play, *Aminata* try to break the perceived norm proclaimed by men either consciously or subconsciously that men are superior to women.

Chinua Achebe creates Beatrice Okoh, a female character who beats all men in every endeavor she engages in. Firstly, Beatrice is given recognition after birth. Before her birth her parents, just like those of Akoko, have higher expectations for a boy. Akoko's father's infamous remark after a child is heard crying shortly after birth that [it is] "another rock for (his) sling" (another boy) summarizes the desire for male children. The same is, however, diluted by his about turn that "a home without a daughter is like a river without a source" (11). This desire for girl child parallels Beatrice's lack of celebration at birth. The birth of Beatrice, though begrudged, receives recognition from the beginning: the author informs the audience,

I didn't realize until much later that my mother bore me a huge grudge because I was a girl – her fifth in a row... but I must mention that in addition to Beatrice they

had given me another name at my baptism. Nwanyibuife- a female is also something. (81)

Despite the initial contempt with which she is received at birth, she is the only woman to achieve the highest education standards, beating even men as well, The author points out:

Beatrice Okoh...Senior Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Finance – the only person in the service, male or female, with a first class honours in English. And not from a local University but from Queen Mary College, University of London. Our Beatrice beat the English to their game. We are proud of her. (75)

Indeed the roles that Beatrice is assigned by the author prove that it is not only a male who is “something” but a female can be both something and someone.

Beatrice also acts as the “husband” of the widowed Elewa, the girlfriend to Ikem when she is widowed after Ikem is brutally murdered by agents of the vicious regime. She not only takes her in and takes care of her but also acts as the “father” of the newborn baby whom she names, against the prevailing traditions that such an undertaking is a preserve of men. Teresa Njoku argues that: “Beatrice names [Elewa’s] baby girl and thereby assumes a prerogative which is entirely male” (355). By so doing, she challenges this lifelong practice through acting to the contrary and thus Achebe, through the narrator, seems to be in support by posing, “I think our tradition is faulty there, it is safest to ask the mother what her child is or means or should be called” (225). She thus goes ahead to name her Amaechima – may the path never close. As Njoku points out: “In Igbo onomastics, [Amaechina] is largely a male name and a principle of primogeniture. Beatrice deliberately subverts this” (335). By transforming two women into “men”; Amaechina being given a

male name and hence assuming the responsibilities of a heir to his late father and Beatrice becoming Elewa's "husband" in the absence of Ikem, there is a beginning of re-writing of women's narratives by male authors.

Just like Achebe, Imbuga fronts Aminata as a girl whose importance in the society cannot be overemphasized. A seemingly progressive father, Pastor Ngoya, tests the waters regarding the women's inclusivity in the social arena by allowing women to partake in the chicken meal which is a preserve for men. He goes ahead to allow his daughter, Aminata, a lawyer by profession, to inherit his land upon his death. Further, a woman is poised to take over the leadership and thus preside over the inheritance.

The two male writers seem to have adopted the style of emasculating male characters in order to offer women a chance to demonstrate their prowess in leadership. Prominent men such as Ikem and Chris are emasculated by Achebe while Ababio and Agenge, the village fools, are emasculated by Imbuga.

I have used the two examples above to demonstrate that even before African women writers came out to challenge the proclivity of the boy child, male writers had become conscious of the need to re-think, re-evaluate and re-define the position of women within a patriarchal society by revising the way African women characters are depicted. In cognizant of the male author's efforts to include women in the social-political arena, African women writers craft a text that progressively demonstrates the gradual inclusion of women into the spheres of life that, at first, were a preserve for men.

The first generation precisely recognizes the importance of the male child uncontestedly. In *The River and the Source*, the chief metaphorically describes the

expected male child born to her second wife Aketch as [a]nother rock for [his] sling (11). The attributes of a rock exhibit the covetable space that the boy child is placed. Even though the chief tries to atone for his gender biased preference by remarking that a home without a daughter is like a spring without the source (11), it is evident where his heart is. Thus Akoko's brothers, definitely, have more importance attached to them than her.

The next generation brings in Nyabera who is pitted against her two brothers – Obura and Owang' Sino. The value attached to the boy child is demonstrated by the restlessness that characterizes the council of *Jodongo* as well as the chief's mother when the interval with which Akoko is conceiving is brought to the fore as a matter of concern (34). That the chief's stool is under threat of leaving the lineage of Maroko, and it eventually does, despite the fact that Nyabera survives to old age is evidence of how important the boy child is. Incidentally, there are some ventures in which she is unable to undertake in despite of the attempt by the author to elevate her over and above the male characters. The two male children by Akoko die under different circumstances – Obura in the war, Owang' Sino is choked by a fish (71). Owang' Sino's only surviving male child – Owuor Sino- (later Peter Owuor Kembo) is out of leadership contest as he joins Priesthood, and later becomes a Bishop (128, 184). The implication here is that he can neither continue with procreation nor can he take part in cultural practices of his family. Despite the attempt to project Nyabera as the familial pillar, there are some realms in which she cannot fit owing to the societal reality.

Elizabeth Awiti, the evocative of the women's third generation, is evidently way ahead of her women counterparts in previous generations with regards to the value attached to her

as a child rather than as a girl. She is taken to school alongside her cousin, Obura, without any preference being attached to the boy. The wall separating the two genders is evidently on the verge of collapsing as children, gender notwithstanding, are headed to occupy the same status. In her childhood, she seems to possess the wisdom to advise her cousin regarding his decision to become a priest and to break the news when his aunt (Nyabera) is around in case their grandmother reacts angrily (121).

The newly introduced formal education becomes an avenue through which her brilliance is demonstrated. She beats the odds to finish as the only girl in her class and performs excellently (130). Further, she is able to choose her life partner as opposed to what was happening with girls in the previous generation where the betrothal was done by the father and his sons without any input from the girl to be married. Once she enters into matrimony, Awiti becomes hands on wife. She demonstrates considerable amount of influence in making decisions affecting her family right from the time she is young in marriage. She is influential in deciding the modality of punishing their children as well as how and where their children should be brought up as is the case with their elder boys (178). She also emerges the source of wisdom when Vera seeks permission to go out with Tommy (208). Ideally, the third generation woman as represented by Elizabeth Awiti is hands-on parent and a recognized member of the society with immense influence not only in domestic affairs but also in day to day running of communal affairs. That notwithstanding, she has not reached the level of equality.

Vera and Wandia represent what I have preferred to call contemporary African woman or the fourth generation woman. The overt preference directed towards the male child has,

gradually, been supplanted with equality. The Vera we meet later in this text is, by all standards, as privileged as her brothers. Her choices as a young adult are respected by her parents and when she grows up and opts not to enter into the marriage institution, she is accepted as she is. She breaks the gender barrier by transcending the male dominion with excellent leadership skills that see her appointed as the first female school captain, and, later as an employee in the field of electronics engineering. The way her father treats her is equally a pointer to the status she occupies in the family. The belief by their mother that she is more reasonable than her twin sister Becky when, as a teenager, she differs with her is confirmed at her maturity (196). She does everything she engages in meticulously, conscious of other people's feelings.

Wandia is brought in to the family by virtue of marriage. She is married to Aoro Sigu, Mark Anthony Oloo Sigu's firstborn son. She emerges as a force to reckon with, first emerging the best in Anatomy class beating all her classmates including Aoro, her future husband (247). She later appears to change roles with males when, upon delay by Aoro to propose to her, she does the proposal herself (256). Later in their married life, she emerges as the main pillar in marriage especially in bringing up children. She brings in her professionalism as a doctor in ensuring a healthy growth of their children as well as Alicia and Johnny Becky's children whom they adopt after (Becky's) death. (284)

Wandia's go-getter personality is proved when she decides to go for further studies up to master's level in the country and for PhD abroad. By so doing she overshadows her husband in most of the spheres of life. Her success is the culmination of what her grandmother Akoko started off when she decided to seek justice from strangers, the white

DC, rather than allow her situation as a widow to be utilized to mistreat her. Thus patriarchal power that men used to lord over women has been diluted considerably among the contemporary women generation. The preference given to the boy child is no longer as pronounced as it was before due to women's accomplishment with or without the help of men which has brought about near equality among the two genders. Through Wandia who comes from Murang'a, and a different tribe from Akoko's, the metaphorical source of the river, the author demonstrates that women enablement is not specific to one lineage, one tribe or one region rather, it is a widespread affair set to empower women in their pursuit for equality and equity.

Women's elevation is continued in *Kintu*. The first generation has Babirye and Nnakato who are by all standards subdued by patriarchy. Kintu Kidida, their husband is a polygamous governor who considers women as part of his property. He marries them not as companions but as demarcation pillars for his territory (16). Even when he inadvertently kills Kalema, his foster son, Nnakato has no authority to question him (31). Her only duty is serving him food and massaging him with medicinal herbs to overcome the devastating effects of crossing *o Lwera* (51).

One of the headaches that face Kintu Kidida, just like Owuor Kembo of *The River and the Source*, is the person to inherit the throne after him. Unlike the Luo tradition which is hereditary, the Ganda tradition depends on the Ppookino to choose one among his sons to inherit the throne. Notably, although he has sired girls, they are not in contest for leadership position (28). Death of his only son by Nnakato, the heir apparent, complicates things with regards to his inheritance plans. When his wife Nnakato strangles herself, the

will to live is lost. Kintu abandons his duty as the governor and spends his remaining part of life in *o Lwera* loitering aimlessly, a devastated soul.

Based on these happenings in Kintu Kidida's home, it is evident that even among the Ganda, the penchant is given to the boy child. Women do not count both in familial and leadership hierarchy. The absence of Governor Kintu Kidida does not prompt his wives to get interested in taking up leadership. There are practically no women leaders and there appears not to be any thought towards that possibility. The absence of a patriarch in a family set up is thus disastrous to its continuity.

The second generation's woman in *Kintu* is a girl, Suubi, whom we encounter at first as sickly girl destined for premature death. Her teenage is troubled just like her schooling. She has to make do with starvation since she is brought to an already dying aunt, Kulata, against her (aunt's) wish. She denies her food, and sometimes shelter but above all the parental love she is so much in need of. Suubi has to make do with spending nights with Toofa, male stranger, at a very tender age of eleven (118). Toofa turns out to be a gangster who is later killed by the police prompting Suubi to become homeless again (121). Toofa's death prods Suubi to move to the garage and convert it into her new home. She is exposed to rats that infest the place hence her legs are severely gnawed at night by the rats. In spite of these hardships, she does not stop attending school.

On one of her trips to school, she is abducted by a man who pretends to have an intention of buying her shoes banking on the fact that her legs have been nibbled by rats in her poor shelter but in reality he wants to sacrifice her (126). She is saved from being

sacrificed by the fact that she had pierced her ear lobes which was considered a blemish (128).

Later when it is evident that aunt Kulata, her benefactor, is about to die, the landlady looks for a house help's job for her in a bid to get rid of her. This becomes the turning point for her as she gets an opportunity to demonstrate her prowess in education and prospers in it to the admiration of the Kiyagas, her foster parents. Eventually, she becomes their foster daughter with privileges just like their three children. When they eventually die, she participates in rituals just like her foster parent's children.

Suubi appears to be doing better than her siblings from her foster parents in their adulthood. The parents have also accepted her as their child and are proud of her. In spite of all these achievements, her success does not appear to be appreciated. Her brother is appreciated the more although unable to contribute much for his father's burial rituals on account of his being stingy. Her younger foster sister Katiiti is equally looked down upon with the narrator remarking during their father's burial rituals that she is broke because she does not have a man (161). The position and preference for the boy child can be said to be cemented in the customs of the Ganda at this point in history even when the girl appears to be doing better, she is subdued by the tradition.

The third generation woman in the novel features Faisi (Faith), a preacher who is inseparable from her husband, Reverend Kanani (Canaan). Her life is, however, intertwined with that of Ruth and Job. There is overt gain in terms of positioning of the girl child in the gender preference circle. Ideally, it is Kanani who is offered the leadership of the church, with Faisi being his principal helper; his pillar in offering spiritual nourishment

to congregation. Even when Kanani retires, Faisi demonstrates unequalled zeal in sowing seed in buses with or without the company of her husband (198). She is therefore a committed individual in her work.

Faisi's foray into the men's territory is challenged when the couple's twins engage in incest, resulting into birth of Yobu. To avoid the double shame in the church of having to contend with Reverend's children being caught in the sin of incest and getting a child out of wedlock, there are decisions that must be made to save the situation. Firstly, Ruth (Luusi) must be taken to her aunt Bweeza in Nakaseke - Bulemeezi village to be taken care of until she "unties" (201). This decision is carried out by Kanani without much of her involvement. She hides behind the fact that there is sowing (preaching) that she must do (198), though seemingly motherhood supersedes such engagements. The truth lies behind the patriarchal influence that is still prevalent in the family set up.

The upbringing of their grandson, Yobu, also sees her edged to the periphery, from the naming of the boy (219), to whom and how he will be taken care of while Ruth resumes her studies, to how he relates with his incestuous parents. In a new development, Faisi gets overruled by her husband to the delight of the children (220). Thus although the third generation woman seems to have trained her head into the affairs of the patriarchs, she is punctiliously subdued. Likewise, Ruth who involves herself in incest with her brother Job suffers a similar fate. She is forced to abandon school in order to nurse the pregnancy and bring forth their son Yobu (Nsoby). She, however bounces back once their son is born, goes back to school and completes her education. The threat by Kalemanzira the water vendor who appears to be determined to subjugate her by using her as a sex object does not

materialize. The two incidences demonstrate how the third generation, despite being threatened by patriarchal ideologies bounces back to defeat it.

The contemporary woman, the fourth generation featured in the novel is Kusi, otherwise known as General Salamander. She is Dr. Miisi's only surviving daughter (as we learn later that Kamu, his presumed living son is dead) a high ranking officer who has defied all odds to become an army general. She is the provider of her father's extended family which has numerous nephews and nieces who have been left behind by his eight late brothers and sisters killed by either war or the HIV/AIDS scourge. Despite her busy schedule, she remembers to be driven home to check on her aging father (363).

Kamu's brutal murder in the hands of the councilors is a painful experience to both General Salamander and her father Dr. Miisi. "Now as he walked behind Kamu's coffin, realization crept on him. Kusi had killed the men in Bwaise. She would not flinch at administering her sense of justice" (420). Despite her position as a woman, she moves out to avenge the death of her brother by killing the four councilors involved in his murder. By so doing, she takes up the responsibility construed to be that of a man.

When her father, just like Kintu of the old leaves home, he dares bequeath everything he owns to Kusi. Miisi's move to live around the newly constructed shrine is a source of worry for the ubiquitous grandchildren he has been living with. On confirming that Kusi is taking care of them, he announces that he has elevated her to an heir which against the Ganda traditions. Their conversation goes:

Miisi asks, 'how is my little army?'

'Asking for you.'

‘Are they in school?’

‘I have moved with them temporarily.’

‘Kusi, you are my heir, *kdto*.’ Miisi clicks his tongue with triumphant defiance. ‘I am the first Ganda man to elect a daughter for an heir. Put that down in history.’...

‘I had to lose all my sons to realize my daughter is a better heir than them... My sons had to die so I could see. (439)

One may make an observation that Miisi’s elevation of the girl child into the position of an heir is circumstantial rather than intentional since it comes as a result of his losing all his sons. But in spite of the circumstances, he has set precedence for Ganda and Africans in general that revises the perception of girls within a family set up. In view of this new development, the elevation of the boy child has been routed.

Forna’s *Ancestor Stones* features women characters who also change to align themselves with the happenings within their surroundings. Set in Sierra Leone, a country characterized by civil wars, the candid representation of women reveals women as being the victim caught in the mayhem. Hawa, the first generation woman comes out as besieged person, especially because as a woman she cannot be enlisted in the war. She has just lost her mother and then the white men – *potho* – come and turn the family upside down. Her two brothers-Idrissa and Ibrahim are enlisted into the army leaving her hapless since women are not eligible to be conscripted (76). Hawa describes an interesting scenario where they promise to write letters to her despite both parties being illiterate: “My brothers promised they would write as soon as they learned how. Nobody thought to ask how I would read their letters.” (77) Thus ideally this is a woman left in an irredeemable

situation. She envies her brothers who get an opportunity to work. She is left under the care of “her father’s people” meaning no one in particular.

The complacency with which Hawa is treated is an indication of the first generation woman’s concern from men who are expected to protect her. Despite being the one in need of tender care due to her insecurity arising from the ongoing war, men do not seem to include her in their security plan. It is assumed that Hawa will somehow grow, get married, and start her own family. A boy is nurtured with more concern because they are expected to marry and help in the family continuity.

The second generation woman, Serah, does not show signs of liberation of estranged women folk, at least at the beginning. Her unarranged marriage is conducted in the road on the bases of the fact that she steps away from the road in respect of Ya Namina’s husband, a renowned trader. She is getting admitted into a family of nine wives that the narrator remarks: “A tenth wife has no status. Not much better than a servant” (81). Serah’s allowing herself to be married off under no duress shows the devaluation of women that has been inculcated into their minds. Hence at this level preference continues to be given to men, whose freedom to do as they wish cuts across all the spheres of life.

Serah is married at a very young and the husband must wait for five years before she is brought to his room. The relationship between the two is never good. First the husband forces his young wife to play *warri* every night against her wish (82).

Later after rewarding him with two children, Serah, perhaps out of devaluation in her status as a servant, cheats with “Cementman”, the mason building her husband’s square houses (91). Although she does not manage to get the amount needed to compensate her husband

so that she can be free to re-marry, she sets precedence for future wives to re-think the ill-treatment meted on them by their husbands.

Serah-Isandari relationship shows a community in which the male child dominates everything. She is free to marry both “wives” and “servants” whose welfare he is not obliged to take care of. When a dispute arises, the woman is not given a chance to defend herself, rather what the patriarchy needs is a mere confession, which sometimes is coerced. In an apparent intimidation of the girl child, she is exposed to a men-only kind of tribunal – *sassa* – which imposes a fine of woman damage (93). Serah opts to leave her husband’s matrimonial home together with her children to look for the fine through engaging herself in business. She does not, however, get enough to redeem herself fully hence she is not able to re-marry due to the discriminatory customs. She may not have gained full independence but her new found liberty enables her to live as an independent woman.

That notwithstanding, her defiance foreshadows closing of the gap between the two genders.

The ideal representative of the third generation women is Mariama Pabla (Palaver) who gets an opportunity to interact with the white nuns in a formal school (132). The goal is set for the society to admit that change is inevitable and it comes with re-structuring of its hierarchy. The preference initially given to boys is slowly melting away especially because the missionaries, in their attempt to win Souls for Christ, cannot afford to be discriminatory. As such this being the time that formal education is introduced to Africans, a girls’ school is built as well.

In an apparent demonstration of the girl's importance in the Christian dispensation, the missionaries arrange for their baptism through the Pagan-Baby Project (132). Mariama is thus fully incorporated into the Christianity system, giving her a sense of belonging. It is no wonder when Mariama and her friend decide to consult a witchdoctor, the *moriman* because they are independent minded, capable of their own independent thinking. Life at this point in history no longer revolves around the boy child. Allowing women to study in a single sex school is a marker of paradigm shift. In the whole scenario, from students to teachers (nuns), there is no single man involved.

The change from the male gender preference to being accommodative to both genders in *Ancestor Stones* climaxes with the later day Asana who has, by all means, become the head of the family. The mature wizened Asana lives during the civil war in Sierra Leone when government forces are combing every village within the country. In her wisdom, she allows her children – Kadie and Ansuman to immigrate to Guinea for their safety (286). With no man in the family, she takes up the full management of the family. She even takes the risk of staying with, and fully taking care of the pregnant Adama in the midst of uncertainty brought about by civil war.

To manage the family, Asana has a shop in the nearby town which she takes the risk to operate when it is safe to do so. As the head of the family, she has had to make do with false alarms regarding Adama's labour pain which she must take care of. Sometimes when it is unsafe to go to the shop, she relies on Alpha who worked as an assistant teacher in the nearby school. Alpha would cycle his bicycle to meet her carrying lunch for both of them wrapped in aluminium pots (288).

Asana has taken up the headship of the family during a time when the brutality of war is climaxing. To achieve the headship, men are pushed into the periphery in order for women to prosper. Yanusy Ng'umbi argues that "[men] are silenced and pushed to the periphery as if they do not have anything to do with motherhood. We see Asana's daughter Adie and Asana's granddaughter, Adama being pregnant at different times, but the novel does not show men who are responsible for those pregnancies" (11). Asana encounters a heartbreaking experience where men are rounded up, escorted at gunpoint into a building, sprayed with petrol and then they are burned alive with those who try to escape being shot (290). Brutalities escalate day by day and when it becomes evident that the soldiers are about to attack their house, Asana lets the pregnant Adama under her watch to go and join their neighbours as she hides in her closet.

There is a scare of Asana's life as the soldiers visit her house, eat her food, slit open the throats of her chicken and eat them, loot her jewelry but opt not to burn her house like they were always doing. Throughout the night, they feast on their loot and dance to the music (296). When at long last they leave in the morning, Asana leaves her hiding place determined to ensure she performs her duty as the head of the family to Adama. She narrates;

I waited for two hours more, then I opened the lid of the box and climbed out. I plunged my arm into the water jar and retrieved the bundle. I allowed myself a few sips of water before I picked my way across the yard, through the banana grove and into the trees. I kept on walking. I left the path. I crossed the boundary into the sacred forest. It was a forbidden place, but what did that matter now? Things had

changed, perhaps forever. The old order had gone, those rules no longer applied. I had to find Adama, to help bring her baby into this world. (297)

Asana's action demonstrates a responsible family head who possesses knowledge of when to sacrifice herself and when to re-unite with her granddaughter for the welfare of the newborn. Again, her crossing into the sacred place without fear because change has come could be read metaphorically as the change that, among many other things, trounces the preference of the male child. As it stands now, it is evident that Asana has managed the family to the best of her ability given that it is a time when the civil war is at its peak.

Consequently, the family headship that has always belonged to the man is re-defined. It is demonstrated that under certain circumstances, a woman can take up familial headship position and still manage it effectively. Hence Asana marks the culmination of the precedence set by Akoko in *The River and the Source*. The subtle non-verbal prophecy made by Akoko's accomplishment when she successfully "mans" the family following the death of her husband and sons comes to pass through Asana.

Campbell – Fatoki's *Threat of Gold Beads*' first generation woman is Na Zavaton, King Gbehanzin's mother. In a characteristic disrespect of women at this historical point in time, she is exposed to inhumane treatment in which her only purpose is to act as the conduit through which the king is born. Abducted from Abeukuta kingdom, she is separated from her son and dismissed to vacate alone, without compensation to go back home after giving birth to Gbehanzin, the king to be (196).

Na Zavaton, in a risky venture, hatches a plan to make her way back to the kingdom once the King, her son, sits on the throne. She makes a mark on her son before leaving.

The cruel experience that the kingdom has been exposing her ilk to does not befall her as she meets with the Low one who feeds and takes care of her (197). Once her son grows up and takes over the throne, she takes the risk of coming back and after proving beyond reasonable doubt that she is, indeed, the king's mother gets accommodated into the kingdom (198). Many years later when the kingdom falls to French fighters, she gives herself as a living sacrifice in an attempt to save her son, an endeavour that doesn't work.

Na Zavaton's experience denotes a preference of the boy child of the first generation women. The tradition that exists in Danhomè Kingdom is meant to demean women. As long as the woman gives birth to a male child to become the future king, her where about is not a matter of concern to the kingdom.

The next generation features Ajoke, popularly known as Ajo. Ajoke is a child of two worlds. She starts her life a happy girl under her mother's love and protection. In spite of it being a time when formal education had just started to infiltrate African populace, her mother takes her to a missionary school. Her mother wishes that she joins the league of the few literate women of the time (236). The circumstances under which she found herself under the care of her loving mother are telling regarding the male child preference. It was after many miscarriages that Ajoke was born. And the father, under pressure to produce a heir, had married another wife. The narrator points out to Ajoke's little value attached to her because she is a girl: "Ajoke's father did not interfere in raising Ajoke, giving full rein to her mother to raise her. She was not male and would soon take up somebody's name" (235 – 6).

The Ajoke of Abeokuta does not enjoy a privileged position as a girl whose future is predetermined. She is, however, lucky to be advantaged as an only daughter of a progressive and focused mother who sees education as being of great import to her daughter. The practice of privileging the boy child continues.

The mature Ajoke is equally advantaged despite being an abductee from Abeokuta taken to Danhomè kingdom. As a young child, her school life is cut short by abductors from Abeokuta who transport her to Danhomè together with her new found friend, Bonlale, Dare's mother. King Gbehanzin takes interest in her. Unlike her mother-in-law whose duty was to conceive the king –to – be, the king takes her in as a wife. She becomes one of the most influential wives in the palace enjoying many privileges which include being one of the three King's advisors (168).

Going by the happenings between the mature Ajoke and King Gbehanzin, we can conclude that there is a remarkable softening with regards to the treatment that women receive. Nevertheless, the boy child's privilege continues as there is no thought of ever offering women a leadership position. Even when Ajoke attends meetings in the palace, she appears to do so as an *ex – officio* as the king has his male advisors.

The third generation woman is Amelia, the princess whose eminence is known in the palace. She emerges as the favourite daughter in the Kingdom full of children from a number of king's the wives. The same is demonstrated in the way he reacts when Amelia is beaten by palace girls who, in a bid to belittle Amelia, refer to her as a daughter of a slave (35). The king orders his soldiers to ensure they pay the ultimate price (42). Again, the king is extra-ordinarily close to Amelia, explaining to her in a remorseful way the

circumstances under which her mother, a slave from Abeokuta, became his wife. He implies that the three girls who refer to her as a daughter of a slave are right but makes it clear he does not consider her, together with her mother as slaves (41). He also sticks with her during her sickness and pays a lot of attention to her wedding to Dossou, which is unlike the king. He advocates for secrecy so that she does not get to know that she is indeed a daughter of a slave (her mother Ajoke was a slave from Abeukuta) and feels betrayed when her mother lets her into the secret. To justify his marriage to her, he explains that she was a wise girl who had taught him how to read English (41).

Amelia is juxtaposed against Akaba, one of the king's princes with whom they are close friends. Akaba participates in rituals for which Amelia is not allowed to take part in such as the initiation (42). He is also enlisted into the army, an exercise that Amelia cannot participate.

In spite of all this focus on Akaba the most prominent prince in the palace, it is uncontested that preference has shifted vastly to Amelia, the princess. Even when the war breaks and it becomes evident that the king is about to flee the kingdom, it is Amelia the princess rather than any prince that the king decides to save. Dare only joins her as an escort. Thus, there is a marked paradigm shift in terms of gender prominence in the third generation.

The fourth generation women which, encompasses the contemporary woman, is represented by the metamorphosed Amelia after beating the odds to make it to Abeokuta, being received by her aunt Titilayo (albeit unaware of their relationship), and settling as a business woman. Under the tutelage of her aunt, Amelia re-invents herself,

metamorphosing from the frightened girl who walks for many months and arrives at Abeokuta unsure of what the future holds for her into an international businesswoman. Although they go together with her step-brother Dare, his story is suppressed as that of Amelia gets attention. Dare does acquire formal education, relocates to Lagos and secures employment as an assistant accountant in the Railways (326), but he does not feature in positive exploits that the two foreigners engage in. Later on, he commits suicide leaving Amelia in the scene.

The Dare-Amelia representation in Abeokuta marks the paradigm shift in which Amelia, a girl, seems to outdo her brother in societal elevation. Consequently, in the fourth generation women dispensation, there is an overt shift from preference of boys over and above the girls. The ground is now even for the two genders to establish themselves in the changing universe.

#### **4.4 Death Motif and Merging of Dichotomies**

The primary texts under study are characterized by explicit death of male characters under different circumstances. The authors seem to cleverly sanction the death of male characters either physically or metaphorically in order to emasculate them and pave way for the girl child to prosper. Be it as it may, the absence of male characters from the scene creates an opportunity to merge the dichotomies that exist among these different genders.

In my reading of the four texts under study, I would like to read the deaths of male characters from a positive perspective; that their absence in the arena is a deliberate writing skill meant to demonstrate that the societal metamorphosis that African women have gone through over time has yielded individuals who are not threatened with dysfunction in the

absence of men from their lives. The same contrasts with other scholars who view the death motif as a negative depiction of male characters by women writers, a wish to have them wiped out of the earth as a basis of having women establish their reign, a major tenet in radical feminism. Whenever there is a void left by either a metaphorical or physical death of a man, women fill it without much ado. The death motif is prevalent in women writing, especially the generational historical novels.

Ogola's novel *The River and the Source* is characterized by a series of both physical and metaphorical deaths of male characters. Akoko's husband, Owuor Kembo, dies at an early age (69). His two male children also die at their prime ages – Obura Kembo in the white man's war (60), and Owang' Sino is choked by a fish meal at a tender age (71). In what I would wish to read as a metaphorical death, Peter Owuor Kembo becomes a priest who, ideally, is bound to be celibate. He is, therefore, emasculated by religion. This act paves way for her cousin Elizabeth Awiti to bear the responsibility of her forefathers' lineage. That Awiti, despite being a girl and married to a different family hence no longer belonging to Owuor Kembo's lineage, is the one who ensures the continuity of the metaphorical river as it meanders towards the ocean is which indicative of the beginning of reversal of fortunes for the two genders. Ogola thus uses her creativity to predict a future where the boy child will no longer be the crib of societal continuity. She metaphorically reverses the fortunes of the boy child, an aspect that is reflected outside the fictional world. The temporal setting and the implication inherent in the real world corroborates Ogola's position in her text.

The metaphorical death motif is furthered by the exemplification of contemporary African women. The later day parents are determined to provide their children with unrestricted formal education which has now proliferated among Africans. As such, exemplary performance in school is highly celebrated as it promises to usher in a professional who will depend on self to support their family. Most of the gendered prejudices have been eliminated at this point in history. Consequently, the girls' high performance is no longer frowned upon like it was the case with Awiti when girls were considered to be sources of income in form of bride price. It is against this backdrop that the author presents the family of Aoro Sigu, a prototype of the contemporary African families.

Metaphorical death motif is continued through Daniel, son of Aoro Sigu and Wandia Sigu. Daniel is a twin brother to Lisa and he is born with sickle-cell anemia which is a prelude for Down syndrome (283). His medical condition thus reduces his academic capabilities effectively paving way for his sister to, justifiably; excel in her academics while he trails behind with occasional Cs and Es (292). The growth to maturity of the representatives of the two genders is totally different, with Lisa following a success trajectory from childhood to adolescence and on to maturity while Daniel struggles.

Daniel's academic incapacitation seems to be a metaphorical weapon employed by the author to tame the historical male dominance witnessed in both fictional and real world. The metaphor of a mentally challenging condition is thus an avenue through which the girl child excels. While women excellence has just begun to gain momentum outside the fictional Africa, it becomes necessary for the author to tread carefully if she were to avoid

romanticizing women. Consequently, looking down upon the author as an individual who arbitrarily kills the male child is, in my opinion, going overboard with regards to creating equality and equity.

Makumbi's *Kintu* as well presents physical death to the contemporary patriarch – Miisi's children. In defense of his family lineage and the curse that is said to dog them, he opines that his children are killed by either HIV/AIDS or war. The last of Miisi's sons is Kamu Kintu who is killed by the jealous councilors in the outskirts of Kampala (xviii). For a long time, Miisi remains oblivious of his son's death, referring to him on several occasions without knowing that he is long dead and preserved in the mortuary (414). While witnessing his burial, he looks at the ten graves of his children and a sort of delirium seizes his mind (421). In this state of mind, he is able to focus all his energy on his daughter – Kusi.

Kamu's physical death can be read as an authorial tactic to create a conducive environment for the girl child to soar high. Kusi being the only Miisi's child alive thrusts her to the focus. She is celebrated throughout the time that she visits her father, literary taking up the duties that would have been performed by a male child.

Towards the end, the larger Kintu Kidida family organizes a family re-union to sacrifice to the ancestors, bring Kintu, the patriarch's remains home, and bury him properly given that having died in *oLwera* alone in a state of mental disturbance, he had not received proper burial. The family also organizes for proper burial of Nnakato the matriarch who, having committed suicide had to be buried in a sitting position where the body landed after the rope was cut (87). In such celebrations, male children are expected to be in the

forefront. But owing to the physical death of all the Miisi's other children, Kusi takes up the void left by his brothers. The author describes a grand entry into her father's compound when he sends for his two; presumably, remaining children unaware that Kamu is dead:

Two army cars – an open Jeep full of soldiers and a Mitsubishi Pajero with smoked windows – drove up to the house. The men in the Jeep jumped out and melted into the edge. The Pajero door opened and Kusi jumped out. She wore a camouflage; her forehead was covered by a black beret. She was so lanky and flat chested that her father saw no distinction between her and the men. But when her face cracked into a smile, Miisi saw his daughter. (363)

The author further divulges the information that Kusi had joined the rebels at the same time with her brothers. She was the only combatant in the family who survived. When the war ended, she refused to give up the gun saying she did not know how to do anything else, now she was a general.

The description of such a triumphal entry into the family by a girl buttresses the high esteem with which the contemporary African women have been given, especially by female authors, as they try to correct the misrepresentation done by the male authors of the past. That all her brothers with whom she joined the war at the same time are physically dead is indicative of how the death motif in Makumbi's novel has been used as a weapon for hitherto non-existent gender equity. Kusi is elevated to a point that even the kneeling of a woman while greeting a man which is the norm among the Ganda people is not applicable to her. When they get into the house and Kusi tries to greet her father formally, Miisi asks her not to kneel for him (364).

Apparently, Kanani Kintu, another member of Kintu clan is metaphorically dead. His death comes in form of joining the radical branch of Christianity – the Awakened which considers other branches as Asleep. Consequently, he and his wife, Faisi, are presented as incapacitated in terms of extended family functioning and representation, an important aspect in the largely communal African families. Kanaani's incapacitation paves way for his female cousin – Magda Bweeza to hedge him out as the family “pointman” and elder.

The readers' first encounter with Magda Bweeza is when his cousin, Kanani Kintu, takes their daughter Luusi to him to take care of her till she gives birth after she gets involved in incest with her twin brother – Yobu. The parents, being adherents of the Awakened sect, are unable to withstand the shame brought by their daughter's pregnancy out of wedlock. By agreeing to shoulder the burden of her intolerant cousin, Bweeza outpaces Kanani in demonstrating a humane personality. Thus Kanani is depicted as a person who values his respect as a Christian more than he does his family.

Later in the novel, the extended family of Kintu Kidida organizes a get together to get an opportunity to know each other as well as to break the curse that was pronounced by Kalimanzira, the Rwandese, following the controversial death of his son under the hands of his benefactor, Kintu Kidida, the Ppookino. During the scouting of Rakai District, the origin of Kintu family, Bweeza formally takes up the place of Kanani in their family branch. The author even accords Bweeza the title of an elder. The narrative goes:

Miisi had travelled with three other elders – Dr. Kityo Kintu, a retired dermatologist; Kitooke Kintu, a retired civil Engineer and Bweeza who was not

part of the elder's but turned up for the meeting anyway. Bweeza claimed to have come in place of Kanani Kintu, the head of branch, who had declined. (371)

That a woman is allowed to sit and participate in the affairs of the elders who have all along been men of high repute in the community is symptomatic of the extent to which contemporary African women have permeated to what was considered to be men's territory. It is in the same breath that Miisi would attempt to install Bweeza as a fully-fledged clan elder in place of Kanani. Though the other elders did not buy the idea at first, it opened an opportunity to bring to the fore the extent to which contemporary African women has usurped themselves into the corridors of power. Bweeza's remark that "Our branch of the clan is headed by a fool just because he is a man" (380) is a revelation of how women have had their eyes opened to see the community not from patriarchal lens but from the reality at the time. The foolishness Bweeza refers to is the metaphorical death that the author brings about to exonerate themselves from being accused of falling into the trap of gender misrepresentation inherent in earlier male authorship.

As the celebrations progresses, Bweeza undoubtedly becomes the first female elder, trouncing the official resistance that had ensued before. As the Cambridge University educated Muganda, the medium, explains to Miisi the circumstances under which he found himself acting as the connection between the living and the ancestors, the narrator observes; "At this point elders Kitooke and Kityo arrived with Bweeza who had carved out the office of the Great Aunt for herself and finally edged her way officially onto the elders' council" (384).

She even takes up responsibilities in the dispensation, first as the in-charge of laying and wrapping the remains of Nnakato, the matriarch, after she is exhumed to be given proper burial rites (384) and later as the caretaker of Suubi after the spirit of Babirye seizes her, breaking her fingers as she rolls on the ground under the spirit's seizure (396). Finally, when Miisi is gripped by sickness during Suubi's debacle, Bweeza takes up his place, effectively becoming the leader of the delegation. The narrator observes; "Miisi felt nausea rise again... he asked Bweeza who stood in outside the cubicle to take his corner... It was as if Bweeza was waiting for such an opportunity all along. She took Miisi's place with relish" (398).

Ideally, the convener and the chairman of the homecoming is metaphorically killed in order to pave way for Bweeza to take up the overall leadership. Observably, Bweeza takes leadership trajectory from the time Kanani fails to take up the responsibility of bringing up and encouraging her daughter Luusi, gradually hedging out both Kanani and Miisi to become the overall leader.

Death of male characters, both physically and metaphorically, thus enables the author to rewrite the content of African literature for whom the male writers have pushed women to the sideline. Use of death motif serves two purposes: it opens way for women to prosper as well as providing an opportunity for the audience to see the dispensability of men from the patriarchal reigns.

Death motif is also captured in Campbell – Fatoki's *Thread of Gold Bead's* as well. After the interruption of Danhomè Kingdom and subsequent relocation of Amelia to Abeokuta, Dare, her step-brother, becomes the only male figure in Amelia's life. He

literally takes care of her throughout the journey, under the tribulations they undergo in the home of Ake the King's army commander as well as in the home of Iya Alata, Ake's sister who accommodates them briefly before accusing Amelia of theft and sending them away. When they finally get comfort in Aunt Titilatyo's home, they take a different trajectory. Dare joins evening adult class (297). He goes on to be trained as an accountant subsequently relocating to Lagos to work in the Railways department as a trainee accountant (326).

Amelia takes the business route. She starts weaving tapestries on the loom that Madame Titilayo had bought her during her pregnancy (297). When her baby boy is born but she is convinced that he died immediately after birth because he was too weak, she eventually accepts and takes up her Aunt's businesses. From the time she takes over, she appears determined to conquer where few women dared to venture. The narrator points out

Having taken over most of the trading from Madame Titilayo, since her health began to deteriorate a few years ago, I'd had the opportunity to see how Lagos flourished. I travelled as far as Port Harcourt, *not minding the fact that very few women brave the unknown territories.* (my emphasis, 314)

With Dare far away, the two only interact when she visits him in Lagos during her numerous business trips across Nigeria. The two appear to have taken divergent views regarding their home place with Dare adopting everything Lagos including shedding off his Danhomèan accent in favour of the Lagos one (324). Dare is a victim of alienation while Amelia is open to accommodate both home and exile in her schedule and thoughts.

The diverse opinions are accelerated when Amelia visits Dare and informs him that she received a visitor from Abomey who could be having news from home. Dare's reaction is unanticipated. He retorts that they get the news they want from the newspaper and warns his sister against interacting with anybody from home, warning that people from home may have intentions of kidnapping her (327).

Dare appears unwavering on preventing his sister from accessing both worlds. For prosperity, interaction and re-union with her husband, Dossou, Dare must pave way for her. The discovery that he stole the gold bead that belongs to his aunt and that he was part of the conspiracy to hide Ifemi from her mother, Amelia, hence making her believe that her child died at birth, exposes him to lots of shame and mistrust. He opts for suicide (368).

Death of a close male relative who had a role of monitoring Amelia's life paves way for her to prosper both in her business and social life. She extends her business to other Nigerian towns as well as Benin without being limited by her brother's uncalled for advice. Socially, she is able to interact, date, and get engaged to Marcos, a Brazilian with whom she intends to tie the knot before they are interrupted on the eve of their wedding by arrival of, Dokpe, Dossou's friend and assistant (394). Later on, Dossou himself appears and offers to re-admit her into his life as his wife. In the middle of the dilemma that ensues as she tries to decide which of her husbands she should follow, Amelia remains independent, devoid of any man's influence. (402)

Amelia's decision to follow Dossou, her husband and father of their child, Ifemi, comes from her own consciousness. The decision is hailed by her aunt as the best under the prevailing circumstances although prior to Dossou's arrival, she had been in the forefront

in organizing the marriage between Amelia and Marcos (412). For the re-union of the two love birds to happen, Dare must be brought out of scene to minimize the patriarchal influence that he encapsulates.

Forna's *Ancestor Stone* also features death motif through the characters Ambrose and Serah. Both of them start interacting in England where they had gone to further their studies. Their interaction, now as a couple, continues when they fly back to their native country, Sierra Leone. Both are students in England under government scholarship. They enter into intimate relationship that results to pregnancy. Ambrose is presented as, metaphorically speaking, financially dead. On their wedding, Serah is forced to incur wedding expenses. Serah the narrator expounds

I spent far too much money on our wedding cake. Three tiers, with a little model bride and groom on top. The bride had ridged, yellow hair and blue eyes, the groom's face was a pink splodge under a slick of black. Ambrose laughed, joking they did not look much like us (216).

Ordinarily, the wedding expenses are catered for by the groom, and, perhaps, his friends. Taking up this duty thus foreshadows a marriage partner who must dig deeper into her purse to provide for a financially dead husband.

Soon Serah is called upon to make further financial sacrifice when Ambrose, together with other students from their country, due to financial crisis at home, fails to receive the coveted brown envelope meant to offer financial support while in a foreign country. In her narration, Serah explains: "I had given up my postgraduate course once Junior was born. Now I went to work at the Lyons Coffee Shop in order that Ambrose could finish his

studies” (218). Serah emerges as the financial saviour to Ambrose who finds himself under the threat of terminating his education prematurely. Through Serah’s financial support, Ambrose is able to finish his postgraduate course and together they travel home.

On graduation, the couple travels back home whereupon he is employed in the Attorney General’s office. The job seems to “resurrect” him and in an attempt to regain his position as the man of the family, discourages Serah from working. He encourages her to take care of their two children as he strives to provide for his family (little Yahya had been born after they returned to their country, 224).

Ambrose’s “resurrection” is, however, short lived as he involves himself in an extra-marital activity with Hannah, Serah’s best friend. Serah, while riding on a *poda poda* (minibus) notices Hannah driving the family car that Ambrose had promised he would teach her (Serah) how to drive. When she confronts him, Ambrose dismisses the issue, explaining to his wife that Hannah cannot threaten her position. She later confirms from gossips that indeed there existed an intimate relationship between the two:

I heard about it all in the months that followed. Everything. The gossips made sure of that. The shop where Hannah charged new clothes and shoes on Ambrose’s account, the bars they visited, and the parties Ambrose’s face-wiping friend took him to. Parties where men brought girls like Hannah. Parties for men like Ambrose – men who wanted the best of both worlds (230).

Irked by these revelations, Serah visits Hannah in her house to talk it out. But while waiting for her, she discovers that Ambrose has been dishing out family property among them a Congolese band record (Orchestra Bella Bella) and an umbrella with inscriptions

*James Smith and Sons* that she had given Ambrose as a gift. The visit escalates into a confrontation in which Serah beats her up (232).

This act makes Ambrose to send his wife away on argument that she had brought shame to the family. Serah and her two boys – Junior and Yaya – move out of their matrimonial home.

The act of Ambrose sending his family away can be viewed as his second metaphorical death. Once again, Serah reincarnates as the provider of her family. Her sister, Mary, hands back to her the bride price that had not been given to her mother over the time she was married. She uses it to start herself off in terms of rent and other familial needs. With good qualifications from England, Serah finds a job within a short time, pays for driving school fees, and buys herself a car (233). She is happy with her new found freedom.

I read Ambrose's act of relinquishing the obligation of providing for the family to a woman as metaphorical death in which he forfeits the duties the society has allocated the family man. His metaphorical death pushes him away from the scene as the family provider, while elevating Serah to "manhood." Given that Serah, without the help of a man, is able to acquire a car, considered to be a marker of status for many, is indicative of her elevation to the fore and a thrust of women from the peripheral position that Ambrose was working hard to push her to.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

A couple of factors have contributed towards the revision of gendered roles initially prevalent among twentieth century families. The end of the twentieth century and ushering in of the twenty-first century characterizes a remarkable infiltration into men's territory by

women. As a result of near equal education opportunities and religious freedom for men and women, women have got an opportunity to follow their heart without male figures breathing behind their back. Gendered professions have also been revised and re-defined. Professions such as armed forces, electrical engineers, and a PhD holder in the field of medicine who doubles as a university lecturer which were initially a preserve of men have accommodated women as well. There is, therefore, an explicit diffusion of patriarchal grip which opens up the field for women to gain entry into the top cream of the society. In the same vein, the preference initially attached to the boy child has melted since an educated girl child has demonstrated equal capability as that of the man. The misconceived worldview that the purpose of the girl is to get married, earn the family income via bride price, and procreate to continue the lineage of her husband's people has been revisited, revised, and redefined. This revision is demonstrated by some women characters who choose not to marry due to either religious or professional demands.

The family and the society at large, unlike in the past, accepts and respects women's personal choice. Stylistically, women writers have employed the death motif specifically on male characters as a weapon of justifying that the absence of male figures at the scene does not deter women from taking over the vacancies so created and striving to perfect the duties by the male figure. Thus, the successive change witnessed across time with regards to gender roles reaches its climax with contemporary woman who is, debatably, at par with the ideal African man.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In this final chapter, we make a recap of the major issues that have emerged during our study and isolate possible areas for further study.

#### **5.2 Summary**

This study affirmed that, indeed there has been significant metamorphosis of African women across a long period with regards to exclusion (and later) inclusion in political, psycho-social, economic and social spheres of life. Chapter two analyzed the predicament of pre-colonial women under the tight grip of patriarchy, basically, before sojourn of the whiteman in Africa. It established that the whiteman's style of leadership, formal education and religion started to dilute patriarchy. The study christened the submissive women characters as the first generation women and highlighted the circumstances under which they suffered in the hands of their male counterparts. It also identified nuances of gender heterodoxies at this early stage in African women.

In chapter three, the study interrogated the troubled metaphorical journey of women towards their fight for inclusivity into the spheres of life from which they had been excluded. The study examined the trajectory followed by the first and second generation women with structures such as formal education and religion introduced by the colonialists being examined as the catalysts that speed up their emancipation.

Chapter four explored the standpoint of the fourth generation woman, the contemporary woman, in relation to the metaphorical emancipation journey across the four generations.

This study revealed that African women writers have taken it upon themselves to give a truthful unromantisized account regarding changes that have taken place within their circles with regards to gender interplay. Different generations of African women show increasing participation in activities previously considered a preserve of men outside the fictional world. The writers' journey towards women inclusivity is, metaphorically speaking, implanted in some exceptional pre-colonial women who show signs of independent thinking and once it germinates, it grows progressively, budding and flowering until it bears fruits in the fourth generation women who have, arguably, equaled or even outdone men.

Further this study contested the prevailing proposition that African women have been pushed to the peripheral position. The study identified and analyzed female characters across the four novels and across the four generations to challenge this belief while agreeing that the pre-colonial woman had, indeed, been isolated albeit with some women showing gender heterodoxical characteristics but the African woman has continued to reinvent herself as time goes on to a point where she has been included in most of the spheres of life that matter. By so doing, the study set the primacy for re-thinking and reviewing the nearly universally accepted position that considers women as victims of patriarchy without putting into consideration the changes that have happened across time. This approach can be adopted through considering the position taken by this thesis because it has proved that indeed women were subjugated but the interplay of several factors including the introduction of European "civilization" and the packages that came with it

have enabled African women to gradually gain inclusion into patriarchal territory and stand to be counted.

### **5.3 Findings**

The first objective was to analyze whether the pre-colonial women were victimized by their male counterparts as represented in the novels under study. The research established that there was indeed a deliberate attempt to victimize women. The period being in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries when empires, kingdoms and chieftaincies characterized African micro-nations, the African woman was depicted as a victim the devastating results of numerous wars happening in Africa, socialization into accepting patriarchal ideology as a norm, and being offered the senior wife position whose leadership was restricted to fellow women folk. On a positive note, the study established that there were women who, as early as this time in history, demonstrated gender heterodoxies; preparing the way for the next generation's African woman to start fighting for her space.

The second objective set out to examine the cross-generational transmutation of women within several generations time frame for each of the four novels under study. The study found out that there is indeed a gradual change among African women that offers them an opportunity to start penetrating into the hitherto male domain. The second and third generation women have made forays into men's dominance towards attaining both equality and equity.

The third objective set out to explore the level of emancipation of the contemporary literate female characters in the four novels under study. The findings suggest that the fourth generation contemporary African woman has managed to re-define most of the

patriarchal structures that were responsible for her subjugation. The standpoint of the fourth generation woman is that there is near equality and equity between the two genders.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

In this thesis, we explored the interrelation of gender structures and the changes that have occurred in terms of gradual African women empowerment across a period of almost a century. To achieve this feat, we have utilized four historical novels written by African women from different African countries. The four novels' setting is in such a way that they engage four generations of women who cut across the four epochs of African countries namely; pre-colonial, colonial, postcolonial and contemporary African women. More specifically, this thesis examined the transmutations that women characters undergo across time. The study concluded that, the pre-colonial African woman is, seemingly, a victim of patriarchy with little privileges such a senior wife which is a leadership only restricted to women folk. Colonial period come with its packages in form of Christianity and formal education. Despite many challenges that women are exposed to, the few who manage to acquire formal education show signs of emancipation. During the postcolonial time, more opportunities for formal education open up even as retrogressive cultural practices that are a catalyst for women subjugation are reduced gradually paving way for the African woman to be included in most spheres of life. During the contemporary epoch which lies between the last decade of twentieth century and the present, there has been remarkable inclusivity for both genders with near equality and equity being achieved. In a nutshell, the study concludes that the changes occurring across the continent with regards to pursuit of gender equality and equity is well captured by African women writers as they depict how they

were treated by men and the changes that have taken place gradually placing them in their current position of emancipation.

### **5.5 Recommendations for Further Study**

This study limited itself to four novels, namely; *The River and the Source* by Margaret Ogola, *Kintu* by Jennifer Makumbi *Threads of Gold Beads* by Nike Campbell- Fatoki and *Ancestor Stones* by Aminata Forna. These are prolific distinguished African women authors especially in novel genre. I, therefore, recommend research on their other creative works to help in shedding more light on their overall representation of women. Further, I recommend that research be conducted from novels written by African women writers from the pre-dominantly Muslim North Africa whose style presents several generations of women over a period of time like the four which are from East and West Africa to establish whether the gradual empowerment of women cuts across the dominant religions or it is specific to Christianity influence.

The study has been done on the standpoint of New Historicist and feminist literary theories and as such, future studies on women metamorphosis in these texts can be projected on other theoretical frameworks.

Further, we suggest that a comparative study be conducted between these cross – generational African women works and those of their men counterparts whose works are set across a long period of time to establish whether their women character representation strikes a resemblance with that of their women counterparts. Such research will expand gender scholarship as well as establish whether men are bound to dance to the tunes of patriarchy by default at the expense of giving a truthful objective account of gender stance.

I also recommend that a comparative study be conducted to relate the use of language by women characters as opposed to the same by men in the four novels. By so doing, it will be possible to establish whether the authority aspect in women's utterances keep increasing gradually across generations and time in track with their actions as demonstrated in the study.

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## Appendix I: NACOSTI Research authorization



### NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Telephone: +254-20-2213471,  
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NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref. No. **NACOSTI/P/18/33427/25615**

Date:  
**4<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

Jeremiah Mutuku Muneeni  
Kenyatta University  
P.O. Box 43844-00100  
**NAIROBI**

#### RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on "*Redefining the African literary canon: A new historicist analysis of selected texts by African Women*," I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Kitui, Nairobi and Nakuru Counties** for the period ending **12<sup>th</sup> October, 2019**.

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioners and the County Directors of Education, Kitui, Nairobi and Nakuru Counties** before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit **two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf** of the research report/thesis to our office.

**CHARITY MUSEMBI  
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO**

Copy to:

The County Commissioners  
Selected Counties.

The County Directors of Education  
Selected Counties.

### Appendix II: NACOSTI Research Permit


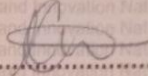
**THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:**  
**MR. JEREMIAH MUTUKU MUNEENI**  
of **KENYATTA UNIVERSITY, 0-90200**  
KITUI, has been permitted to conduct  
research in **Kitui , Nairobi, Nakuru**  
**Counties**

**Permit No : NACOSTI/P/18/33427/25615**  
**Date Of Issue : 4th April,2019**  
**Fee Received :Ksh 2000**

on the topic: **REDEFINING THE AFRICAN**  
**LITERARY CANON: A NEW HISTORICIST**  
**ANALYSIS OF SELECTED TEXTS BY**  
**AFRICAN WOMEN**

**for the period ending:**  
**12th. October,2019**

**Applicant's**  
**Signature**

  
  
**FOR: Director General**  
**National Commission for Science,**  
**Technology & Innovation**


**THE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION ACT, 2013**

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